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Examining White Privilege:
Participatory Action Research in Higher Education

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the Kalmanovitz School of Education
Saint Mary's College of California

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

By

Heather French

Spring, 2015

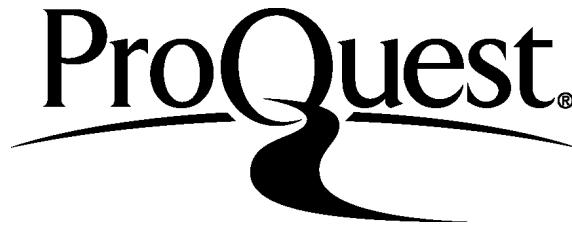
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EXAMINING WHITE PRIVILEGE:
PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH IN HIGHER EDUCATION

By
Heather French

April, 2015

APPROVED FOR THE
SAINT MARY'S COLLEGE OF CALIFORNIA
KALMANOVITZ SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

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Abstract

Examining White Privilege:
Participatory Action Research in Higher Education

By

Heather French

Ed.D. in Educational Leadership
Saint Mary's College of California, 2015
Dr. Sawako Suzuki, Chair

This Participatory Action Research (PAR) study engaged Student Affairs and other higher education professionals in the examination of whiteness by seeking to discover the impact that white privilege had on professional practice and to determine what practitioners did to interrupt institutional racism. Participants were 10 staff and faculty members at a small, religiously-affiliated college located in an urban area on the West Coast, referred to here as Rosewood Ascension College (RAC). During weekly group meetings over the course of 14 weeks, PAR group members read articles, watched videos, completed reflective journals, engaged in art projects, and participated in interviews in order to further explore the meaning and impact of white privilege on professional practice. Data sources included group sessions, individual follow-up interviews, and action items pursued by the group. The results of the study were threefold. First, over the course of the PAR project, participants gained deeper awareness of the ubiquity of whiteness and developed a clearer sense of their own racialized identities. Second, simultaneous to this internal process of self-discovery, participants experienced a sense of urgency to take action to address racism and white privilege within their own institution. Third, this commitment to action resulted in a series of outcomes pursued by PAR group members over the course of the following year, which ultimately influenced the direction of the College's strategic plan. This PAR project has implications for Student Affairs and other higher education

professionals aiming to establish authentic relationships with *all* students, to disrupt white privilege, and to create institutional change.

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Merle and Mary French. I know that any successes I've achieved have been built on the foundation which you provided. You taught me that everyone has valuable knowledge to contribute, regardless of their credentials. You taught me to keep moving forward, even in the face of adversity. And you taught me the importance of doing what is right even when it's hard, which for me is to recommit myself to pursuing racial justice every single day.

Acknowledgements

I first want to acknowledge and show gratitude to the members of my committee. To Dr. Sawako Suzuki, thank you for all of your guidance, time and attention, and for your sincere belief in me and this project. When you commented a few years ago that I had found my life's calling, I did not know then how profoundly that would resonate with me now... but as always, you were right. To Dr. Doug Paxton, thank you for sharing your expertise and perspective, and for continuing to challenge me from a place of compassion. The advice you offered me was immensely helpful and I so appreciated knowing that you understood my journey. And to Dr. Gloria Sosa, thank you for your support and for encouraging me to continue bringing this work forward in Student Affairs. I look forward to future opportunities to collaborate with and learn more from you as a scholar-practitioner.

Next, without the participants themselves, this project would never have happened. Not only did you give of your time, but you gave of yourselves. I learned so much from each of you and am humbled by your insight, courage, strength, and determination to make a difference. Please know that the impact you have had on me (and RAC) is something that I will always carry with me. Although I know I cannot return the favor in the same way, I at least hope that someday I might be able to give back to others as much as you contributed to this project.

To my loving family, thank you, thank you, thank you. To my wife, Angela, you have been my biggest cheerleader, supporter, confidant, and listening ear. I know more than anything that your love and support (and patience) has helped me make it to this point. You have surely earned this degree right along with me. And to my son, Simon, I cannot express the depth of my love for you, how filled with pride you make me when I see you critically reflecting on these important issues, and how blessed I feel to have seen you grow into the thoughtful,

compassionate, young man that you have become. Thank you both for walking along beside me and embracing this journey with me.

I must also offer a special acknowledgement to Michael Miller. I am acutely aware that the flexibility and encouragement you have shown me has provided me the space to achieve my goals. You have demonstrated your support for me and this project again and again, and for that I offer my sincerest gratitude.

Among my colleagues are two in particular who have dedicated hours of their time to provide me with specialized help and support with this project. Laura and Bridget, thank you so much for your belief in this work, your level of commitment, and the extent to which you each went to make this a stronger final product. I have always appreciated you as colleagues, and now through this process, have come to appreciate you as friends.

I must also thank two very important mentors in my professional journey who have guided me along my path as a social justice activist. Chuck and Jonathan, I do not believe I would have found the courage, conviction, or character to take on this project without your ongoing mentorship. You helped me to see the strength in myself to dig deep and do my own personal work, and you set an example for me every single day of how I aspire to live these values in both my personal and professional life.

And finally, to my family, friends, classmates, colleagues, neighbors, and all who have provided me with encouragement and support, thank you. I so appreciate you. It seemed that at every hurdle or challenge I encountered, there you were to help me keep going. This is surely one of the biggest endeavors I've ever attempted, and I've made it to this point with the help of your collective good energy, well-wishes, and belief in me. Thank you all so very much.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Developing authentic relationships within the shifting racial landscape of higher education has never been more complex, challenging and more full of possibilities for growth. Furthermore, developing authentic relationships within the complex racial landscape of our country at this particular time in history is of critical importance. With this in mind, the interest for this study stemmed from the national trend of increasing numbers of Students of Color amidst a consistently majority white faculty and staff population, which was dramatically evident in the demographic composition of the institution where this study took place. As a Student Affairs practitioner in higher education, it is a commonly heard refrain to hear colleagues refer to “meeting students where they are” (in terms of student development) in order to help them progress to the next level of personal growth. Key to this contact is the ability to establish authentic relationships with *all* students.

Authentic relationships in an educational setting, as defined by Cranton (2006), require five key elements: 1) having a strong sense of who we are as individuals, 2) awareness of “characteristics and preferences” of others, 3) ability to develop relationships that foster the learning of everyone involved, 4) being aware of the context of our work and how it shapes practice, and 5) having an openness to reflecting critically on self and on practice, including our values and assumptions (Cranton, pp. 6-7). Given the criteria put forth here, authentic relationships can only be achieved when one is willing to truly examine their own beliefs and biases.

Authentic relationships in diverse educational settings require white practitioners to be self-investigative about issues such as whiteness, conscious that white privilege is present in their relationships, and to hold an awareness of how institutional racism is perpetuated by white privilege. To this end, two leading organizations in the field of student affairs, the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) and the American College Personnel Association (ACPA), identified "Equity, Diversity and Inclusion" as one of ten core competencies that Student Affairs professionals aspire to attain (ACPA & NASPA, 2010). However, the question remains as to how higher education professionals come to understand the construct of whiteness, its impact on professional practice and the development of authentic relationships.

Background

A 2012 publication by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported that over the last four decades the percentage of Students of Color in higher education has been on the rise whereas the percentage of white college students has been slowly declining (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Meanwhile, the percentage of white faculty, staff and administrators at U.S. colleges and universities continues to be the highest of any other racial demographic (see Table 1) in every occupation (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). This is important to note as race and ethnicity play an increasingly significant role in determining campus climate. Campus climate, as defined in a study released by the University of California Office of the President, is the sum of “attitudes, behaviors and standards of faculty, staff, administrators and students concerning the level of respect for individual needs, abilities and potential” (Regents of the University of California, 2014). Indeed, it could be said that attitudes

about race and behaviors reinforcing privilege have been intricately woven into the fabric of university life.

Historically, access to higher education was predominantly afforded to wealthy white males (Gelber, 2007, p. 2252). The Brown vs. Board of Education ruling in 1954 symbolically conveyed that Students of Color were welcomed in institutions of higher education, the Higher Education Act of 1965 paved the way for the Educational Opportunities Program, and the Indian

Table 1

U.S. college and university employees, by occupation and race/ethnicity: Fall 2009

Primary occupation	Total	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/Pacific Islander	American Indian/Alaska Native
Total, all institutions	3,723,419	70%	10%	6%	6%	1%
Executive/Administrative	230,579	79%	9%	5%	3%	>1%
Faculty	1,439,144	75%	7%	4%	6%	>1%
Graduate assistants	342,393	51%	4%	4%	7%	>1%
Other professionals	770,033	71%	10%	5%	7%	>1%
Nonprofessional staff	941,270	64%	17%	10%	4%	>1%

Note. Adapted from “Digest of Education Statistics, 2010,” by U.S. Department of Education, 2011, NCES 2011-015, Table 256. Percentages shown are rounded to nearest number. Total percentages may not equal 100% as race/ethnicity was sometimes unknown or not reported by respondents in various occupations.

Education Act of 1972 provided funding for the development of Native American community colleges. However, over 60 years after desegregation, research shows that structural diversity, or the racial and ethnic demographics of a campus, still affects students’ college experience. For

example, Students of Color continue to experience challenges with persistence to degree completion disproportionately to white students (Park, 2009, p. 293). Given the still predominantly white nature of higher education, what implications does the correlation between structural diversity and the success of Students of Color have for white practitioners whose experiences do not reflect those of an increasingly diverse student body?

Campus Racial Climates

To further uncover the impact of diversity on college campuses, Harper and Hurtado (2007) examined 15 years of research on campus racial climates including 24 quantitative (50% multi-campus and 50% single-campus studies), nine qualitative (of which only one was a multi-campus study), and two mixed-methods (one multi-campus and one single-campus study) (Harper & Hurtado, pp. 10-11). Three primary themes emerged from the analysis: 1) differing perceptions of campus racial climate by white people and People of Color, 2) racial/ethnic minority student reports of prejudice and racism on college campuses, and 3) benefits related to facilitation of cross-racial engagement (Harper & Hurtado, pp. 12-14). Each of these themes highlighted the significance that race holds in determining both positive and negative campus climates. The campus climate and racial composition of one institution, discussed below, is of particular interest to me and of relevance to this dissertation.

The university setting in which I worked was very diverse with the student population being over 40% first generation in their families to attend college and nearly 50% of all students being Pell Grant eligible, which is an indicator of lower socioeconomic status. The total number of registered students at the time of this report was around 1,500 students in undergraduate, graduate, and adult degree programs. Additionally, numerical, or structural diversity was such

that there was no dominant ethnic/racial population on campus. Students self-identified their ethnic/racial identity on their admissions application using predetermined descriptive categories, resulting in the student body's ethnic/racial composition as follows: 24.5% white, 22.8% Black or African American, 21.9% Hispanic, 18.3% Asian, 7.2% Unknown/did not answer, 2.9% International, 1.3% Two or more races, and 1.1% American Indian/Alaska Native. And yet like so many other institutions, whiteness was still maintained as the dominant discourse on campus where the senior leadership in Student Affairs and throughout the university was overwhelmingly white, as is elaborated on below. Indeed, the contrast between the visibly white leadership and the diverse student body (recognized as one of the most diverse in the region) was quite noticeable.

Staff and faculty were given the option of disclosing their ethnic/racial identity on employment paperwork but it was not required. The Human Resources department confirmed via email that the university had no official records of staff and faculty ethnic/racial composition. Therefore, the following categorizations were based on my personal observation and may not accurately reflect how individuals self-identified. In the President's cabinet, there was one Person of Color and five people were white, including the Vice President for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management. There were 42 professional staff members in Student Affairs, of whom 55% ($n = 23$) were white and 45% ($n = 19$) were People of Color. These staffing figures do not include post-doctoral, graduate, and paraprofessional employees, who made up roughly one-third of the work force. If post-doctoral and graduate employees were included in the overall staff composition statistics, the percentage of white employees would be far greater than 55%.

What was evident was that the higher up the leadership ladder, the whiter the staff. And whereas education is thought by many to be the “great equalizer,” racial imbalance such as this is likely felt by People of Color to be decidedly unequal. Nevertheless, taking a top down view starting with the President’s cabinet, then on to management levels and individual members of departments, and finally the student body, one would observe that the racial composition of the groups becomes increasingly more diverse the further away they are from top leadership (see

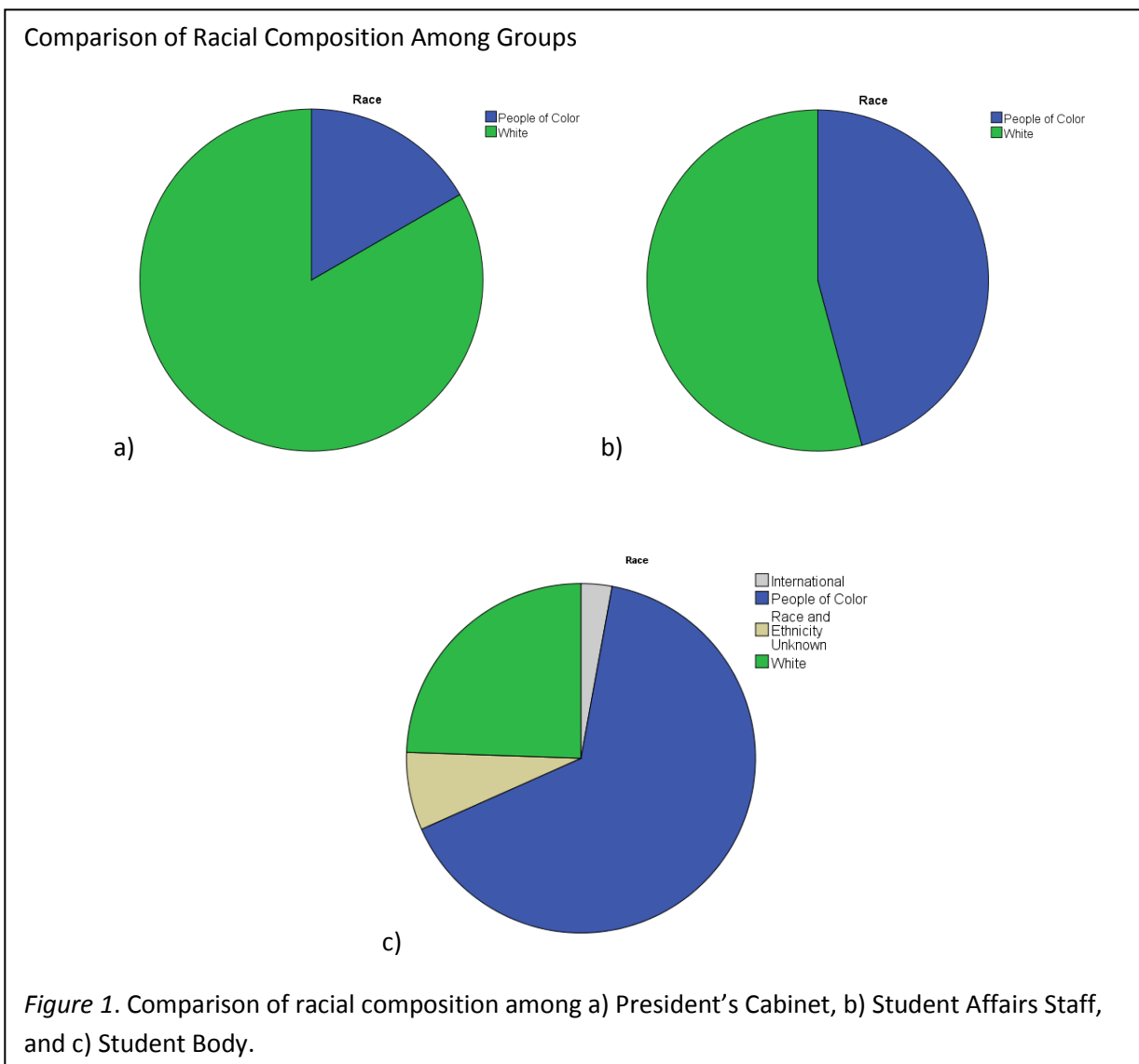


Figure 1).

While the categorical data of race and ethnicity is helpful as background to the problem, there is a need for more qualitative data that shares the voices and experiences of People of Color on the campus. As this project aimed to help higher education practitioners examine white privilege and impact change, it would be extremely useful to have real data that supports or highlights the differences in experiences of white people and People of Color on campus. To the best of my knowledge there was no recent institutional data that might demonstrate this, such as a campus climate survey, or a workplace satisfaction survey.

As postsecondary education demographics continue to shift toward greater diversity, the majority white members of the academy must consider how best to serve and support Students of Color. Although structural diversity is critical and there is a charge on many college campuses to increase the prevalence of faculty and staff of color (Jayakumar, Howard, Allen, & Han, 2009), colleges and universities cannot wait for the actualization of true structural diversity as the primary solution to increasing satisfaction and success of Students of Color. Furthermore, even if structural diversity is achieved the dominant paradigm in higher education is still a white paradigm.

Research has shown that the most successful educational environments for Students of Color *and* white students are those that intentionally create opportunities for cross-racial dialogue and engagement (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). This requires commitment and facilitation by all members of the academy, of whom the majority are white. In order for white practitioners to create such environments they must first understand the nature of white privilege as well as their contributions to and complicity in maintaining systems of power, privilege and oppression,

and then work to dismantle institutional racism. However, this is challenging for many as explained by Parker and Chambers (2007) because "living a white experience is so pervasive and normalized that it is usually difficult to see" (p. 10). Therefore, in order to uncover the invisible systems that hold white privilege in place, higher education professionals must explicitly examine whiteness so as to comprehend and take ownership of the multitudes of ways that white privilege permeates our society, our institutions, and our relationships.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to work with Student Affairs and other higher education professionals to make a practical difference in how white practitioners engaged the topic of white privilege, in creating a more positive campus climate for all students. Given the realities of college student, staff and faculty racial demographics (U.S. Department of Education, 2011/2012) and the emphasis by leading organizations in the field of Student Affairs on professional development around Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) (ACPA & NASPA, 2010), more information is needed on how practitioners come to understand white privilege and its impacts. Therefore, this study examined one method for practitioners in a university setting to explore and change the construct of whiteness.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to involve Student Affairs and other higher education professionals as collaborative researchers in exploring the construct of white privilege and how they can deepen their professional practice and movement towards inclusive community by implementing change initiatives addressing white privilege. This study employed a Participatory Action Research (PAR) model that "encourages the negotiation of power relations" (McFarlane

& Hansen, 2007, p. 88) and awareness of such power dynamics is necessary when deconstructing white privilege. Through this PAR the following research questions will be addressed:

1. Given that the majority of faculty and staff are white, and that the demographics of postsecondary education continues to shift away from the dominant white culture, what must white higher education professionals recognize, understand, and undertake in order to establish authentic relationships with *all* students?
2. What is the impact of white privilege on one's own life and on professional practice?
3. When educators understand how white privilege impacts practice, what do they do to address institutional racism and systems of inequity?

Positionality of Researcher

First and foremost, I position myself within the research as a white woman, coming to this project on white privilege with full recognition that I experience the world with inherent privileges afforded to me because of the color of my skin. I also come to this project with some understanding about marginalization yet recognizing the privilege I have had in transcending certain educational, economic and social challenges. For example, although I am a first generation college student having once navigated higher education with considerable difficulty, I am now a successful, educated woman employed in a senior level leadership position within higher education who is also seeking her doctorate. And although I grew up poor, I am now squarely situated in the middle class. Finally, I do identity as a lesbian and grew up in a rural New England town with conservative religious ideologies where differences were not easily

accepted, but I now live in one of the most progressive areas of the country where me, my partner and my son are considered to be an “average” family. Reflecting on who I am, what I bring to the table and where I hold privilege allows me to be more aware of, but by no means immune to, my biases and assumptions.

Additionally, I approach this PAR from the position of being an “insider in collaboration with other insiders” (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 31), as I was a staff member at this institution conducting this research project with other staff and faculty members from the same institution. This research positionality often takes shape within organizations as “inquiry groups” that exist with varying degrees of formality (Herr & Anderson, p. 36). Although this project is not a formal, institutionally-created group, the fact that I held a senior leadership position within the university may have unintentionally added an air of formality to the group that may not have otherwise been present. Furthermore, my position within the institution afforded me a certain power such as to be able to conduct this research on white privilege within and about my work setting.

Regarding the “insider in collaboration with other insiders” positionality, Herr and Anderson (2005) explained how researchers are responsible for helping the group work as a collaborative team rather than in isolation of one another, they provide opportunities for group members to engage in learning and awareness-building, and ultimately researchers support a variety of personal, professional, and organizational change efforts (Herr & Anderson, pp. 36-37). Indeed, the opportunity to increase personal awareness of white privilege, its impacts on professional practice, and taking actions toward institutional change were desired outcomes for

this research project. It is my belief that by investigating white privilege in collaboration with others we can find both greater support *from* and greater accountability *to* one another.

Theoretical Framework

Critical Race Theory (CRT) provides a theoretical framework for this study. Growing out of the Critical Legal Studies (CLS) movement of the 1970's, CRT emerged in the 1980's as a way to closely examine the legal and educational systems through the lens of race (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995, pp. xviii-xix). CRT is predicated on the assumption that white people and People of Color have distinctly different racialized experiences in our culture and that those differences result in inherent inequities. Indeed, CRT takes an activist stance on challenging dominant assumptions and white ideology (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, pp. 3-4). Therefore, CRT helped guide the initial thinking for this study of higher education professionals seeking to better understand and impact change to manifestations of white privilege in their own lives and within the context of university life.

There are several ways that CRT has been affirmed as the most appropriate orientation for this dissertation. First, there is a noticeable absence of the theme of race in the main theories that guide work in the field of Student Affairs (Patton, McEwen, Rendon, & Howard-Hamilton, 2007, p. 41), which makes conducting this study on white privilege through a CRT lens all the more compelling. Second, CRT asserts that race maintains a system of inequity in society and in educational domains specifically (Patton et al., p. 44). Therefore, it is especially important that CRT guides this project of educators deconstructing the system of white privilege. And third, the tenet of whiteness as property, or the idea that our society is based on property rights, asserts that education is essentially "owned" by white people (Patton et al., p. 45). Given that 70% of

employees in higher education in the United States are white (U.S. Department of Education, 2011) the need for this PAR and its firm grounding in CRT is critical.

Overview of Action Research Cycle

Participatory Action Research (PAR) was the research framework for this study, which first aimed to uncover Student Affairs and other higher education practitioners' understanding of whiteness and the ways that white racial privilege impacts professional practice, as well as collaborate on and implement change initiatives addressing white privilege within a university setting. Participants of the PAR group met once per week for one to two hours at a time for 14 weeks. McIntyre (1997) conducted a PAR study with a group of white aspiring teachers as a way of “confronting their white identities and challenging the meaning of being ‘white’” (p. 653) by using a very similar model in terms of duration and activities. Many elements of the design of my PAR project were modeled after McIntyre’s (1997) study.

Similarly, Paxton (2002) conducted a Collaborative Inquiry (CI) with six white people to examine the "system of thought that fosters racism and the lived experience of White people who try to transform this system of thought within themselves" (p. 4). As with Paxton’s (2002) study, my research seeks to utilize the process of action and reflection in order to help participants learn and grow through exploration of the meaning of whiteness and white privilege. Paxton’s study provided a way of thinking about this PAR and white privilege work in general as being a long-term, continual process that grows and deepens with each cycle of action and reflection.

Various activities during group meetings aimed to facilitate the action/reflection process, including discussion of shared readings on white privilege, viewing of videos on the topic, and undertaking hands-on activities in their own lives and work contexts. Additionally, participants

wrote reflection journals, participated in individual interviews, and completed an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Checklist (ACPA & NASPA, 2010) which was consistent with data collection methods in similar PAR studies (Cullen, 2008; McIntyre, 1997). As is true with PAR, the participants helped shape the overall direction of the project, including the type of activities the group engaged in and ultimately the action outcomes the group chose to pursue as a result of participating in this research project.

Limitations and Delimitations

A predicted delimitation of this study was limiting participation to only those currently working in Student Affairs at one institution. For this reason, the study included Student Affairs and other higher education professionals from that institution. However, this too imposed a boundary as the participants were drawn from only one setting. And while the goal of PAR is to create change in a particular setting, which allows for a manageable subpopulation to study, this also created limitations in terms of how applicable the findings may be to other professional environments. Other limitations were the timeframe for this study, potential weaknesses of the study design, the composition of this particular group of participants, and my own limitations as a PAR researcher.

First, the time frame for this study primarily occurred over the course of one summer. The availability of participants for weekly, on-going meetings was challenging during a time of year when many were busy with fall preparations and trying to carve out some vacation time away from work. Additionally, whereas the timeframe for a PAR would ideally be decided on by the group, I needed to impose a timeframe that permitted me to meet academic requirements and deadlines. Second, the design of this PAR was also a potential weakness. Although many Action

Research studies were reviewed before determining the framework for this PAR, no combination of previous examples can chart a reliable and predictable course that would allow me to see how this specific PAR would evolve.

The third limitation is the demographic composition of this particular group of participants. There are philosophical positions about the benefits of exploring white privilege within same or different racial groups. For example, proponents of conducting exclusively white groups may feel strongly that it is not the responsibility of People of Color to educate white folks about racism and privilege. Additionally, proponents of conducting exclusively white groups may purport that examining white privilege is a vulnerable process which may feel safer for white people to do amidst a homogeneous group of people who are wrestling with the same process. Alternately, proponents of Mixed-Race composition groups may express the importance of and equity in including voices of People of Color in discussions about racial privilege and oppression. This approach may potentially increase the accountability and authenticity of those participating in the inquiry. While I personally saw value in both approaches, this research project was open to any staff and faculty on campus. However, since those positions were primarily held by white people this was one limitation of my study.

Finally, I recognize my own limitations as a PAR researcher examining white privilege. I had not previously conducted an Action Research study of this nature, nor do I identify as an expert on the topic of white privilege. Although I had participated in Action Research in the past, this was the first time I engaged with a study as both a participant and as the primary researcher, and it seemed likely that unexpected challenges might arise as a result of my own inexperience, including balancing my roles of university administrator/insider in collaboration with other

insiders, and participant/researcher. Furthermore, while I had felt a calling to learn about my own white privilege for quite some time, I struggled with the confidence to be able to help others do the same.

Assumptions

The primary assumption I held in doing this research is that white people and People of Color experience the world differently due to no other reason than the color of their skin. With that, I also held the assumption that white people experience certain unearned societal privileges that People of Color do not. Furthermore, I assumed that it is the responsibility of white people to learn to recognize the ways in which they hold privilege and to leverage it whenever possible to disrupt systems that maintain racism and inequity. Finally, I assumed that white people hold ingrained and sometimes unconscious biases towards People of Color and that exploring their white privilege also requires them to examine their biases, which can be very difficult. These assumptions were based on my own personal knowledge and experiences, as well as scholarly study of the construct of white privilege.

Given that these were my foundational beliefs, I recognized that I held biases that may have inadvertently influenced the perception of these research findings and may have skewed my judgment of one outcome over another. In order to guard against this, I diligently maintained reflective memos of initial coding, notes about links to the literature, and an audit trail to track my perceptions of how the data evolved over time. Additionally, this study employed member checking, or the process of consulting with participants about their perceptions of the accuracy of my analysis, in order to enhance the legitimacy of the findings.

Significance

The results of this study are significant for three reasons. First, this PAR was conducted at an institution where the study of white privilege aligned with the university's professed core values of diversity and social justice; this PAR exemplified one way employees could demonstrate their commitment to the institution's mission and values through their work. Second, this project contributed to staffs' effectiveness and professional development. The exploration of white privilege is one essential step toward obtaining professional competency in the area of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, which is so foundational for Student Affairs and other higher education practitioners at this time in history. Finally, this study adds to the literature in the field of Student Affairs. Specifically, the use of PAR as a research methodology is highlighted as a way to explore how practitioners understand the impact of white privilege on one's own life and their professional practice and take action to make the school a more just and equitable place of learning for all students.

Definitions of Key Terms

anti-racist:	Activist stance against the “discrimination, segregation, persecution, or mistreatment” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 171) of People of Color.
People of Color:	A term used in the United States to refer to anyone who identifies as non-white. This includes but is not limited to African American and Black people; Asian, Asian American and Pacific Islanders; Latino/Latinas; Native American people, etc. (Cullen, 2008, p. 12).
privilege:	Unearned assets, special provisions and assurances afforded to people of the dominant group (McIntosh, 1988, pp. 3-4). In the

	United States the dominant groups include but are not limited to white people, men, Christians, wealthy people, heterosexual people, able bodied people, etc.
professional practice:	A term used to describe various aspects of individual performance, social conditions, values, traditions, methods, change processes, etc. that are common to those within the same field (Atweh, Kemmis & Weeks, 1998, pp. 24-27).
race:	Notion of a distinct biological type of human being, usually based on skin color or other physical characteristics (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 170).
racism:	Any program or practice of discrimination, segregation, persecution, or mistreatment based on membership in a race or ethnic group (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 171).
white privilege:	The unearned, often unconsciously held, societal and tangible benefits that white people receive because of the color of their skin.
whiteness:	The culture, attitudes, beliefs, ways of being and ways of viewing the world as a white person, otherwise known as white consciousness or a white paradigm.

Discussion of Terms

First, I would like to explain that some of these definitions may be considered subjective in nature depending on the perspective of the reader. Additionally, these terms are not meant to

be regarded as inflexible and may in fact be subject to modification, particularly in light of the co-constructive nature of PAR. Second, I would like to offer a note about my use of racial and ethnic identifiers. The Sixth Edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (2010) states that racial and ethnic groups such as “Black” and “White” are proper nouns and therefore these terms should be capitalized (American Psychological Association, p. 75). However, I made the intentional decision to use lowercase “white” throughout this document. I continue to capitalize all other racial and ethnic identifiers, as “both a reflection of reality and [out] of respect” for People of Color (DiversityInc, 2014). On the other hand, I used lowercase “white” to draw deliberate attention to the obliviousness and ambivalence that I perceive many white people to demonstrate towards their racial identity.

Chapter II

Literature Review

This literature review and Participatory Action Research (PAR) project focus on the exploration of white privilege and its impact on professional practice by exploring the concept of white privilege, ways of learning and educating about white privilege, and applications to organizational change and leadership in Student Affairs. This study worked with Student Affairs and other professionals in a college setting to explore their understanding of whiteness as an aspect of identify and how white privilege impacts professional practice. The following research questions were developed for this study:

1. Given that the majority of faculty and staff are white, and that the demographics of postsecondary education continues to shift away from the dominant white culture, what must white higher education professionals recognize, understand, and undertake in order to establish authentic relationships with *all* students?
2. What is the impact of white privilege on one's own life and on professional practice?
3. When educators understand how white privilege impacts practice, what do they do to address institutional racism and systems of inequity?

Sources and Searches

In conducting a review of the literature for this chapter, peer-reviewed articles were retrieved through ERIC, Education Full Text, and Sage databases and identified using Google Scholar. The following key words were used to search for relevant literature: white privilege, social justice and white privilege, white privilege and identity development, white privilege and

identity and development, Student Affairs and white privilege, Student Affairs and organizational change. *Student Services: A Handbook for the Profession* (Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2010) was also used to identify trends in the field of Student Affairs.

Overview of the Literature Review

This literature review is organized into three primary sections. In the first section, Critical Race Theory (CRT) is described as a theoretical framework for this study. In the second section, I review literature that seeks to deepen our understanding of whiteness and white privilege. And in the third section, I review literature on organizational change and leadership in Student Affairs. I conclude this chapter with a critique and summary of white privilege research in higher education.

Theoretical Framework

This study is informed by Critical Race Theory (CRT), which is based on the assumption that the construct of race is inextricably linked with power and privilege. CRT grew out of the Critical Legal Studies (CLS) movement in the 1970's (Crenshaw et al., 1995, pp. xviii-xix) in criticism of civil rights reform. CLS scholars had come from predominantly white, feminist perspectives from CLS's inception through the 1980's until their "critique of racial power" was turned inward and ideological differences began to surface between white scholars and scholars of color (Crenshaw et al., p. xxiv). Although CLS and CRT remained aligned in their "opposition to mainstream legal discourse" (Crenshaw et al., p.xxvii), CRT emerged with a distinct focus on race and its impact on the legal and educational systems.

CRT provides a lens through which to examine educational policy and practice and uncover areas where racial discrimination, exclusion, and injustice are present in educational

organizations and systems. In my PAR study, CRT was used as a framework to examine the construct of white privilege and its impact on professional practice in higher education. CRT calls for a disruption of “the dominant [white] narrative” and the “legitimization of narratives of discrimination” (Parker & Villalpando, 2007, p. 520). The following themes illustrate the role CRT plays in working toward a socially just higher education system.

First, CRT acknowledges the “centrality of race and racism” inherent in the structure and policies of American higher education (Parker & Villalpando, 2007, p. 520). CRT idealists and realists alike, although divided in their thinking on how to address racism, would both agree that race is one of the defining constructs of our society. Whereas idealists focus on changing the thinking that supports the social construction of race, realists believe that changing the structures that determine who receives “tangible benefits” is the best way to disrupt racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, pp. 20-21). Therefore, leaders in higher education may learn from CRT to identify ways that both material and cultural forces of racism are reinforced in academia.

Parker and Villalpando (2007) discuss how racism is ingrained in all aspects of U.S. higher education; systemically race dynamics are present in policies and practice and in the day-to-day, race is present in interpersonal interactions and rhetoric on college campuses (Parker & Villalpando, p. 520). One suggestion put forth by Williams (2008) to address the centrality of race is to appoint chief diversity officers or councils whose responsibilities include advisement on campus diversity policies (Williams, “Phase I,” para. 5). The presence of such a position on campus in itself helps create a climate where race can be brought into university conversations about equity and the student experience.

Second, CRT challenges universities' "dominant ideology" around "colorblindness [and] race neutrality" (Parker & Villalpando, 2007, p. 520). Frankenberg (1993) elaborates on this cultural phenomenon in her noteworthy book *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness*, where she asserts that colorblindness is essentially a form of color and power "evasiveness" which allows racial meritocracy myths to persist (Frankenberg, p. 14). Therefore, CRT necessarily challenges those in power to acknowledge the role race plays, including the challenges and successes students may experience in higher education. CRT offers a critique of the liberalist perspective which holds that everyone should be treated and regarded equally regardless of differences in past or present societal circumstances. Delgado and Stefancic (2012) suggest that maintaining colorblindness in spite of apparent differences in the racialized experiences of white people and People of Color allows only the most egregious cases of racial discrimination to be recognized, effectively continuing to hold People of Color in subordinate positions to white people (pp. 26-27).

Williams (2008) explains that universities generally only implement diversity plans in response to a crisis, not because they are proactive in recognizing the need for racial equality (Williams, "Introduction," para. 1). Additionally, when diversity plans are implemented they typically call for an increase in demographic composition rather than conceptualize diversity as an institutional change issue (Williams, "The Diversity Crisis Model," para. 2). The critical thing to remember is that when diversity is measured solely by the quantity of Students of Color on campus, increasing racial diversity does not require white educators to examine their own privilege and the ways that white privilege plays out on university campuses. In light of this CRT

tenet, institutions of higher education should consider how colorblindness or positions of race neutrality may impact diversity initiatives linked to college access and the success of all students.

Third, CRT stands for a “commitment to social justice and praxis” in higher education by seeking to “eliminate all forms of racial, gender, language, generation status, and class [or other] subordination” (Parker & Villalpando, 2007, p. 520). Similarly, Delgado and Stefancic (2012) describe the intersectionality of CRT as “the examination of race, sex, class, national origin, and sexual orientation, and how their combination plays out in various settings” (p. 57). This is not to suggest that racism is experienced in the same way as sexism, classism, etc. but rather this tenet suggests to higher education leaders that addressing only one area of inequity, however good intentioned, still leaves much unsolved. An example of a successful diversity change initiative that has been implemented as a means to address social injustices and inequality is the Equity Scorecard Project. The Equity Scorecard Project purports that differences in student outcomes are a result of disparate institutional practices, not an indication of deficiencies of Students of Color (Kezar, Glenn, Lester, & Nakamoto, 2008, p. 126), therefore it is a change in organizational structure and practice that would address inequities in student outcomes.

Fourth, CRT affirms that the lived experience of People of Color is a legitimate knowledge base that is central to understanding race subordination (Parker & Villalpando, 2007, p. 520). The storytelling movement in CRT serves several purposes: 1) members of the dominant racial group cannot comprehend the experiences of People of Color without hearing these powerful narratives that depict what it is like in the world of the other, 2) counterstorytelling provides a way to challenge destructive stereotypes and mistruths, and 3) it provides a medium for voices to be heard which may have otherwise been silenced, allowing for a solidarity among

those with shared experiences (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, pp. 45-49). Leaders hoping to impact change in higher education will be most successful when they include and understand the experiences and stories of students, staff and faculty of color, which inform campus climate.

Equally as important, Sensoy and DiAngelo (in press) caution practitioners of the inherent power dynamics at play when bringing diverse voices to the conversation. By questioning common guidelines often used to create safe spaces for dialogue such as “treat others as you would like to be treated” and “don’t take things personally,” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, p. 2) facilitators are actually reproducing the dominant discourse by assuming that a safe and respectful space can be achieved for all participants (Sensoy & DiAngelo, p. 5). Conversely, CRT affirms the lived experience of People of Color as a legitimate knowledge base that is central to understanding race subordination (Parker & Villalpando, p. 520). One college president shared the power of this tenet in his account of a meeting he took with a group of African-American students:

I knew they were upset about something. Other administrators were telling me not to take the meeting...there was this really tough looking guy who was wearing a cap and looking down the whole time. I kept trying to bring him out...Finally he said... “I really have something to say. Can’t we be a part of registration and orientation so that we can help the other black students feel more comfortable? Because African-American students find this to be a really isolating process.” This was the first time I learned that these two processes were alienating to students. (Kezar & Eckel, 2007, “Learning From Students,” para. 2)

This commitment to engaging with and learning from Students of Color demonstrates the institution's value of students' knowledge contribution and lived experiences.

And finally, CRT asserts that higher education must include “a historical context and interdisciplinary perspective” when analyzing current issues and challenges (Parker & Villalpando, 2007, p. 521). Delgado and Stefancic (2012) call attention to the historical context by explaining that the dominant culture can distort the racialized experience of “minority groups” to suit its purpose, for example, by regarding Middle Eastern people on one hand as “exotic, fetishized figures wearing veils” while at other times portraying them as “fanatical, religiously crazed terrorists” (p. 9). CRT urges educational leaders in academia to challenge this sort of ahistoricism in both research and practice. Kezar (2008) relates this CRT tenet to institutions operating from old fashioned and misinformed ideas thereby creating challenges in implementing diversity change initiatives (Kezar, “Use Data,” para. 2). To illustrate this misconception one interviewee in Kezar's (2008) study explained, “I kept sitting faculty and staff groups down, and saying, look at this data. You don't think we have any problems, but our retention and graduation rates are horrible. Faculty of color keep leaving here” (“Use Data,” para. 3). Therefore, it is essential that institutions look objectively at the historical context contributing to their current circumstances and then use data to assess and support diversity initiatives.

Framing this research project within a CRT context provided several important guidelines and reminders. First, we are humbly reminded that material and cultural forces of racism are regularly reinforced in higher education, even as we seek to be more inclusive. Similarly, we learn from CRT how positions of race neutrality can impact access and the overall college

experience for Students of Color. CRT also cautions that addressing inequity solely in terms of racism does not attend to the intersectionalities of identities. Finally, CRT urges educational leaders to include the experiences of students, staff and faculty who identify as People of Color, while being careful to challenge ahistoricism through interdisciplinary research and practice. The following studies provide examples of ways that CRT has framed and illuminated important considerations for research in higher education.

CRT Research

In an essay by Cambron-McCabe and McCarthy (2005), scholars in educational law and public policy, the authors draw on CRT to explore how educational leaders must prepare to face challenges in educational equity (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, p. 204). Specifically, CRT makes racism visible through the use of counternarratives to portray the racial realities of People of Color rather than allowing the stories of the dominant culture to speak for all (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, p. 204) thereby requiring educational leaders to develop adaptive techniques, skills and approaches to promoting social justice education (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, p. 215).

The results from Cambron-McCabe and McCarthy's (2005) arguments illuminate changes that are needed in leadership preparation programs to properly prepare educational leaders as social justice advocates and activists. First, Cambron-McCabe and McCarthy (2005) explained that leadership education programs until now have given only "token consideration to social justice concerns" and typically focus on the "deficit model" (p. 202) of solving problems in education. Therefore, real social justice discourse in education that promotes equity in schools and students' learning is needed.

Next, they suggest that intentional incorporation of diverse social justice perspectives in leader preparation programs are needed to shift the tendency from merely focusing on examining privilege and inequities to instead mobilizing and taking radical action to create change in schools (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, p. 203), which likewise, was the goal of my PAR study on white privilege. Additionally, leaders must develop a “practiced reflexivity” (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004, in Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, p. 214) that allows them to recognize and stand accountable for their actions.

Limitations included a lack of specific data and trends in current educational leader preparation programs, which would strengthen their arguments and more clearly outline what training programs, curriculum and experiences might entail. Therefore, the implication for Cambron-McCabe and McCarthy’s (2005) essay is that an important charge has been set forth for educational leaders with compelling evidence that suggests the challenges in education today may only be met through pursuit of equitable practices and the adoption of a social justice orientation. Finding effective approaches to engaging educational leaders with social justice issues such as white privilege will be necessary to create truly inclusive and equitable educational environments.

In an attempt to engage emerging Student Affairs practitioners with social justice work, Bondi (2012) conducted a qualitative study with white students who recently completed a graduate Student Affairs preparation program. Participants were graduates of a large, public, Midwestern land-grant institution with a 91% white student body. A total of eight participants (half male and half female) were interviewed about their experience with race and racism growing up, in the classroom and within their social spheres (Bondi, p. 400). Bondi’s study

investigating race and privilege among white Student Affairs practitioners was of particular interest as it provided a snapshot of perspectives that I anticipated from participants in my PAR project.

Bondi (2012) framed her interpretation of findings in Critical Race Theory, focusing greatly on one tenet, “whiteness as property” (p. 401). Importantly, Bondi (2012) acknowledged her privilege as a white woman and approached her use of CRT with caution so as not to misappropriate this construct for the further benefit of white people (Bondi, p. 401). The whiteness as property tenet holds that racism results in “material discrepancies” between white people and People of Color (Bondi, p. 399).

Harris (1995) explained these material discrepancies and pointed out four rights of whiteness as property: a) the right to disposition (or the right to pass along privileges to heirs), b) the right to use and enjoyment (or the right to use whiteness as they see fit), c) the right to status and property (or the right to have ones’ good reputation protected), d) the right to exclude (or the right to decide who is protected under law) (Harris, pp. 281-283). Protecting the assumed right of whiteness as property simultaneously ignores the right of inclusion for People of Color (Harris, p. 290). It is important for institutions of higher education to remember the whiteness as property tenet of CRT when constructing policies and standards of practice.

As a result of the participant interviews in Bondi’s (2012) study, three themes emerged that were consistent with the whiteness as property tenet of CRT: 1) At least I am ready to learn, 2) Let me contribute, and 3) Exclusion (Bondi, 2012, p. 402). First, participants indicated they felt ready to learn about racism and privilege but excused their own behavior by prioritizing their own right to learn over their Classmates of Color who expressed feeling offended by some of

their white peers' comments (Bondi, p. 402). Second, white students felt their contributions to class conversation about experiences of difference should be valued and centered on as much or more than stories shared by Students of Color (Bondi, p. 403). Third, all participants noted a racial divide among their cohort, with all of the white students sticking together and all of the Students of Color sticking together (Bondi, p. 404).

Limitations of the study included the small sample size and the author's subjectivity as a white woman conducting research on white privilege, which Bondi (2012) herself recognized as core to interpreting her findings (Bondi, p. 401). With that in mind, the findings resulted in several implications and recommendations for white students, staff and faculty in particular: a) have openness to learning about and from one another, b) think of deconstructing whiteness as a journey that is ongoing, c) always place individual experiences within a historical and educational context (Bondi, 2012, p. 407).

Additionally, intentional support in the classroom for Students of Color is essential when examining the impact of white privilege and internalized oppression. Further, Student Affairs preparation programs would benefit from intentional recruitment and resources aimed at Students of Color and attention to community building and intergroup dialogue (Bondi, 2012, p. 407). Each of these factors also served as important reminders to me when conducting this PAR project on white privilege, drawing on CRT to frame the problem and findings. In particular, the whiteness as property tenet provided a foundation for exploring the pervasiveness of white privilege in higher education, even in contexts where student demographics are richly, racially diverse.

Understanding Whiteness and White Privilege

When we are talking about racism, white students are disadvantaged in knowing or understanding; because I believe that systemic racism does not merely provide whites with an array of material and existential benefits, I thus regard them as, in a sense, disadvantaged subjects of antiracist education. (Jackson, 2008, p. 303)

Whiteness Provides Unearned Privileges

In the landmark paper by Peggy McIntosh (1988), male privilege and white privilege were compared and contrasted as the author examined their presence in her life and her awareness of white privilege. McIntosh (1998), approaching her reflections from a feminist perspective, explained that white privilege is not something that white people are taught to recognize but that it constitutes “an invisible package of unearned assets” that all white people have (McIntosh, p. 1). McIntosh wrote a list of 46 personal accounts of unearned white privilege (some “positive” which most anyone would want to enjoy, and some “negative” because in order for the privilege to be maintained it requires others to be underprivileged) including examples such as:

- “I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented” (McIntosh, 1988, p. 5).
- “Whether I use checks, credit cards, or cash, I can count on my skin color not to work against the appearance of financial reliability” (McIntosh, 1988, p. 6).
- “If my day, week, or year is going badly, I need not ask of each negative episode or situation whether it has racial overtones” (McIntosh, 1988, p. 8).

Although some of the items on McIntosh's list may now seem outdated, it does not take much effort to envision additional unearned white privileges that are perhaps more relevant for the current time.

While McIntosh (1988) was not taught (nor white people in general) to see the above examples as evidence of privilege or to see self as the oppressor, it is easier to see the disadvantage of others without questioning the connectedness of the two experiences (McIntosh, p. 4). Yet as with expectations placed on men to give up some of the power associated with their male privilege, McIntosh (1988) asked about acknowledging white privilege: "Having described it, what will I do to lessen or end it?" (McIntosh, pp. 2-3). With this question, McIntosh is asking what call to action those with privilege are prepared to pursue. The reality is that white privilege is something all white people share, but that most will not acknowledge despite the obviousness that People of Color do not benefit from the same privilege:

Whiteness imparts invisible advantage to both men and women. Yet Anglo-men and women in or aspiring to, educational leadership do not have to question their whiteness, or get asked to justify our dominance in leadership positions, even in multicultural schools. (Blackmore, 2010, p. 50)

A desire to understand dynamics of white privilege in the workplace led Blackmore (2010) to explore this topic further.

Similar to McIntosh (1998), Blackmore (2010) reflected on her own experience as a white administrator and situated herself in the literature by taking a "confessional autobiographical" approach as is customary for feminist scholars (Blackmore, p. 46). In this study, where the participants included the researcher and indigenous faculty at Deakin University

in Melbourne, Australia, Blackmore (2010) utilized a methodology which put self at the forefront of exploration rather than the other, and used concepts of the male-dominated and white-dominated academy to frame assertions that educational leaders must reflect on and make white privilege visible in order to create inclusivity and equity (Blackmore, pp. 47-50). While the use of personal experience and narrative was powerful in conveying main points, Blackmore may have strengthened her research by also incorporating a more traditional quantitative analysis of the data.

What Blackmore (2010) found is that administration stops short of achieving equitable practices by relying on “soft multiculturalism,” or the practice of using a token number of People of Color, to demonstrate their commitment to diversity rather than evaluating current power structures (Blackmore, p. 52) and culture. Indeed, many professional development or competency-based educational programs approach the issue from the perspective of “understanding the other” which fails to challenge the white leader’s position of dominance to the other (Blackmore, p. 56). Perhaps this is because “most [white people] want to be told about the non-threatening aspects of the other, but do not want to hear about racism or inequality which challenges their position” (Blackmore, p. 56). As McIntosh (1988) explained it, “the pressure to avoid it [white privilege] is great, for in facing it I must give up the myth of meritocracy” (p. 9). Therefore, white people must be vigilant and aware of this dichotomy of wanting to increase cultural competency while avoiding looking at themselves and their own position of advantage.

Both McIntosh’s (1988) paper and Blackmore’s (2010) study have practical significance for educational leaders interested in exploring whiteness as a construct, and specifically the impact of white privilege on practice. Both provide a framework for thinking about how “the

visible Other is constructed in relation to the invisible norm of whiteness” (Blackmore, p. 50) and put forth a call for change in approach to educational leadership. Next, Allen (2004) offers a perspective on whiteness and critical pedagogy that calls for further change in how white people come to understand and accept responsibility for their role in perpetuating white privilege on both individual and institutional levels.

Accepting Responsibility and Building Bridges

Using critical pedagogy, an educational philosophy and movement made most notable by Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* to address the consciousness of oppression and liberation, Allen (2004) a middle-class white person, examined white racial privilege from a race-radical perspective (Allen, pp. 121-124). Allen (2004) described several factors influencing white peoples’ ability to transcend white supremacist consciousness and to become “reborn into solidarity” with “race-radical People of Color” (p. 133). For example, as People of Color are those oppressed by white privilege, white people need the knowledge and joining of People of Color in order to truly understand the nature of whiteness (Allen, p. 124). Likewise, it is impossible to fully examine white privilege without understanding its relationship to People of Color.

Kendall (2006), who wrote a book based on her real-life experiences as a white woman growing up in the South becoming a white anti-racist educator, explains to white people that “if we only hear what we are saying, if we only have our perception, we begin to believe that what we’re saying is true and that everyone shares our views” (Kendall, p. 47). However, factors such as white distrust of leadership of color and white tendency to overlook or silence voices of color (Allen, 2004, p. 125) make the joining with People of Color difficult for many. Additionally, a

tendency for many well-meaning white people is to strive for images of benevolence while “reject[ing] People of Color who openly question white privilege” (Allen, p. 128). In *Understanding White Privilege: Creating Pathways to Authentic Relationships Across Race*, Kendall (2006) described a scenario she encountered as a diversity trainer that illustrated this phenomenon further.

During the lunch break on day two of the training presented by Kendall (2006), two women (one white and one Latina) went shopping and ended up at the same store in the same checkout line a few spaces apart from one another. The white woman observed the cashier request two forms of identification from the Latina woman in order to pay with her credit card and then the cashier advised that she keep her receipt handy so that security could verify her purchase on the way out. Conversely, the white woman was not asked for any identification when making her purchase nor was she warned of the security guard before leaving. When the training resumed the white woman shared her shock of experiencing first-hand what the training had been suggesting were differences in the racialized experiences of white people and People of Color. Kendall offered this context and explanation for the white woman’s shock:

Throughout the first part of the session Debbie and other whites had told the People of Color that they were “too sensitive” and were “always looking for race.” No matter how much the participants of color had tried to educate the white people, the white people had the privilege [and unconsciousness] to belittle and dismiss their concerns. (Kendall, 2006, p. 62)

Allen (2004) argued that so long as white people cannot be comfortable with People of Color naming racism, there is still a lot of work to do (Allen, p. 133). Given the challenges white

people face in accepting the racial realities of People of Color and accepting responsibility for their own white privilege, “the rebirth of the white person to solidarity with People of Color” (Allen, p. 129) may be a difficult process, but it is still possible. Perhaps most important of all, practitioners must first come with a genuine desire to have authentic relationships.

Kendall (2006) outlined straightforward rules for white people desiring solidarity with People of Color. First, when you make a mistake you need to name it publically, right away, both to model for other white people how to accept responsibility and to acknowledge your own humility (Kendall, p. 99). Likewise, Allen (2004) purports it is the first step for white people to admit that they are the oppressors (Allen, p. 129). Second, build your capacity to listen deeply to the truth and the meaning of lived experiences of those different from you even when you might initially disagree (Kendall, pp. 100-101) for there is no better way to learn. Third, set aside white guilt because it has no use when building bridges with People of Color. Guilt is generally a self-serving emotion and often turns the focus of conversation back to white interests. Instead, acknowledge past wrongs and then work to repair the harm however you can (Kendall, p. 103). Each of these suggestions (admitting our wrongs, listening deeply, and renouncing guilt) may seem simultaneously simplistic and also difficult to embody, however, by doing so it may wake people up to the different racial realities experienced by People of Color. With this in mind, having compassion for self and others is very important.

Kendall’s (2006) fourth suggestion was to nurture self-compassion and compassion for other white people engaging in self-reflection on white privilege (Kendall, pp. 104-105). Allen (2004) would agree the white people must engage in self-reflection in order to “unlearn a lifetime of problematic white subjectivity, ideology, and behavior” (Allen, p. 130) which will

surely require compassion. And finally, keep whiteness explicit by recognizing it as a lens through which you see the world every day (Kendall, p. 115). Allen (2004) urges going beyond just keeping whiteness explicit, but instead he challenges white people to risk their own safe positioning in the white community by “becoming traitors to the normative functioning of our group” (p. 130). For anyone seeking to examine the impact of their own racial privilege, Kendall’s (2006) and Allen’s (2004) suggestions are perhaps difficult but necessary action steps.

Pervasiveness and Invisibility of White Privilege

In her article *The Persistence of White Privilege*, Wildman (2005) drew from political science and feminist theories in her discussion of four socio-cultural factors that serve to reinforce and maintain the system of white privilege, which white people must learn to recognize and combat. These dynamics of privilege are so ingrained in daily life that to many white people they are in essence, transparent (Wildman, p. 248). The idea that one does not or should not see color is the first factor discussed (Wildman, p. 251). Just as conveyed by Frankenberg (1993), the contemporary push to colorblindness is represented by the misguided attitude that as a society we are at a point where we should be able to “move beyond race” (Wildman, p. 252). However, given the pervasiveness of white privilege, many wonder whether society will ever move beyond race and address the invisible systems that maintain privilege.

Author and activist Tim Wise (2008) discussed the concept of colorblindness in the U.S. education system in his memoir, *White Like Me: Reflections on Race from a Privileged Son*. Wise (2008) argued that by striving for colorblindness educators are underserving Students of Color as they are not taking into account the entirety of their experience:

The most commonly heard refrain from educators, in my experience with them, is something to the effect that they “treat all kids the same and don’t even see color” when they look at them. Putting aside the absurdity of the claim itself – studies have long indicated that we tend to make very fine distinctions based on color, and that we notice color differences almost immediately – colorblindness is, in fact, not the proper goal of fair-minded educators in the first place. The kids in those classrooms *do* have a race, and their race matters, because it says a lot about the kinds of challenges they are likely to face. (Wise, 2008 p. 21)

By focusing on colorblindness white people deter conversations on race and racism by inferring that these are no longer current societal problems and it ignores all together, thereby perpetuating, the system of white privilege (Wildman, 2005, p. 252). So whether or not society is ready to move beyond colorblindness as Wildman (2005) suggests it will be essential that we do so in order to disrupt the systems of white privilege.

Wildman (2005) explained that “individual-groups sleight of mind” is the second factor contributing to the persistence of white privilege (Wildman, p. 253). In our culture there is such an emphasis on individuality that it creates an idea of separation from the groups to which we belong in a way that favors white people. For example, it privileges individual white people to not have to identify with a larger group that oppresses People of Color. Conversely, it disadvantages People of Color to be perceived as experiencing isolated incidents of alleged mistreatment rather than viewing People of Color as a group which experiences systemic discrimination (Wildman, p. 254). This subtle shift in perception can have dramatic impacts, either beneficial or harmful.

Wise (2008) explained how in our culture it is touted that everyone has an equal chance to succeed. By acknowledging that inequities exist between white people and People of Color one can only conclude that either the problem lies within individuals for their own lack of success, or that the messaging we've received all along and the system itself consistently disadvantages entire groups of people:

If you're white and are willing to concede that the system is stacked against People of Color, that means it must be stacked in your favor, and to admit that is to open oneself up to all kinds of unproductive guilt and self-recrimination. (Wise, 2008, p. 64)

Furthermore, the ability to choose how we see it – to focus on individuals or the group – is indicative of one's white privilege (Wildman, 2005, p. 254). Again we see how this shift in perception can be either beneficial (for white people) or harmful (for People of Color).

The third factor contributing to the persistence of white privilege is what Wildman (2005) identified as the “comfort zone in whiteness” (p. 255). This dynamic may also be described as what it feels like to be at home, where “whiteness is just normal” (Wildman, p. 255). Similar to the experience of a fish where it is unaware that the water is its comfort zone, the lived daily experience of whiteness is this comfort zone for white people. Or as Wise (2008) described it, the comfort zone in whiteness is “about never being really out of place, of having access, and, more to the point, the sense that wherever you are, you belong” (p. 48). The comfort zone allows white people the privilege to never question whether their experience is the norm, it is assumed.

The final factor Wildman (2005) outlined is the tendency for white people to monopolize the center of attention (Wildman, p. 257). “Taking back the center” (Wildman, p. 257) is based on the assumption that the white agenda is always the right agenda; therefore white people feel

entitled to dominate the discourse. Wise (2008) described an experience that illustrates this, of a visit he made to a Midwestern university that had been challenged by the NCAA to change their team mascot from one that caricatured Native American people. The behavior of the student fans during the mascot's "final [farewell] dance" epitomized how white people take back the center:

Here were white people having an existential meltdown in front of millions of television viewers, all because a tradition that *wasn't even theirs* was being taken from them. They were going to be prevented from playing dress-up, and this fact was sending them into fits of apoplexy... . These were people who had likely never spent one second of their lives crying over the fact that indigenous peoples lost some 90 million souls, their traditional cultures, religions, and almost all of their land to make way for folks like us...

(Wise, 2008, p. 93)

In short, taking back the center is when white people take the focus away from sometimes outrageous injustices by dismissing and minimizing the claims of wrong-doing and instead turning the tables to their own white agendas.

We have now reviewed literature that deconstructs whiteness and white privilege, first by recognizing ways that whiteness provides unearned privileges (Blackmore, 2010; McIntosh, 1988), then by accepting responsibility for one's white privilege and building bridges with People of Color (Allen, 2004; Kendall, 2006), and finally by deepening our understanding of the pervasiveness of white privilege and the invisible systems that hold it in place (Wildman, 2005; Wise, 2008). For white people interested in learning about the impact of their own privilege, each of these are important stages of discovery. However, it should also be noted that white

privilege as a construct is not without critique: some would say it does not go far enough to address inequities, while some do not even see the merits in its claims.

White Supremacist Consciousness

Leonardo (2004) and Blum (2008) both suggest that the current discourse on white privilege inadequately addresses the inequity of racial realities. Leonardo (2004) explains that in order to look critically at white privilege we must also simultaneously examine “the conditions of white supremacy [that] make white privilege possible” (p. 137). The important distinction is that privilege implies something passively happened to someone, whereas supremacy implies there are processes and actions which actively maintain dominance of one group over another (Leonardo, pp. 137-138). Blum’s (2008) sentiments echo Leonardo’s work by suggesting that the current analysis too narrowly looks at privilege as an individual endeavor instead of looking systemically at the “structures that produce disparities” (p. 318). In other words, the larger system of white supremacist consciousness must be examined in order to fully understand the factors which allow for white privilege to persist. While the need to address the sources of white supremacist consciousness are apparent, the focus of my PAR research took a narrower approach to uncovering the meaning that individuals made of white privilege and defined an action plan to change the dominantly white paradigm in their professional practice.

Disbelief about white privilege. Contrary to the positions of Leonardo (2004) and Blum (2008) that white privilege is not in itself an adequate construct to evaluate racial disparities, scholars such as Campbell (2010) assert that the aforementioned structures have not even been proven to exist and claims of racial inequity have not been scientifically analyzed (Campbell, p. 503). Additionally, it is suggested that when institutions focus on white privilege they detract

from attention toward and advocacy for intellectual diversity (Campbell, p. 504). According to Campbell (2010) it is not an exploration of white privilege but rather the seeking of intellectual diversity that is the only “campaign for true diversity” (p. 504). While Campbell’s position may be considered by some to be equally as subjective and lacking the same scientific proof as he challenges white privilege work to demonstrate, the valuing of intellectual diversity as higher education institutions’ primary aim is not uncommon in academia.

The opposing viewpoints of Blum (2008), Campbell (2010) and Leonardo (2004) illustrate the varying dimensions of racial consciousness that may possibly be encountered when examining white privilege. Wildman (2005) explained that “the ability to choose whether to focus on ourselves as individuals or as group members reinforces white privilege” (p. 254). It seems to me that rationalizing white privilege as a falsity is representative of white privilege itself and that the inability to see it as such may be indicative of one’s racial identity development, discussed next. However, the manner in which one develops their racial identity is important to first understand.

Racial Identity Development

Thandeka (1999) provided an analysis in her book *Learning to be White: Money, Race, and God in America* which bridged connections between child development, human development and racial identity development. In short, Thandeka (1999) purports that white children are forced to understand early on that embracing relationships with People of Color and values different from those by which they were raised risks their ostracism and isolation from their white community. And because the human tendency is to seek connection, white people learn to suppress and deny any feelings of shame or guilt associated with rejecting People of

Color, in order to be loved and affirmed by their white community (Thandeka, 1999, pp. 17-19). Therefore, the formation of a white racial identity begins at childhood out of the necessity and desire to “remain within their own community – or at least not be abandoned by it” (Thandeka, 1999, p. 20).

Similarly, the *Encyclopedia of the Life Course and Human Development* (2009) explained that racial and ethnic identity, which are social constructs, have three primary components: 1) membership with a particular group, 2) beliefs about the group, and 3) action readiness, or the readiness to act in alignment with beliefs about the group (Oyserman & Oliver, 2009, p. 128). Racial and ethnic identities are closely related constructs which are part of one’s self-concept, and which may be more or less salient for different people (Oyserman & Oliver, p. 128). In other words, for some people their racial identity may be central to how they think of themselves while others may have been socialized not to consider their racial identity a prominent aspect of who they are at all.

Hardiman’s Model

Hardiman (1982) was the first white scholar to suggest a model for white racial identity development. As no other such research had been previously conducted, Hardiman’s (1982) dissertation offered an exploration of racial identity formation for white people based on social identity theory (Hardiman, p. vii). Using selected autobiographies that depicted various stages of racial identity development, five stages were identified which make up the basis for this theory: 1) no social consciousness, 2) acceptance, 3) resistance, 4) redefinition, and 5) internalization (Hardiman, p. viii). It should also be noted that Hardiman’s (1982) work has since been updated to reflect a synthesis of the evolving work around “racial identity in Black and White

Americans” which replaces the first stage of “no social consciousness” with “naïve” (Hardiman & Jackson, 1992, p. 23). While Hardiman’s work also outlines transitions between stages, the following descriptions focus solely on the five stages themselves, so as to illuminate its similarities and differences from other racial identity development models in subsequent sections of this literature review.

No social consciousness/naïve. First, the no social consciousness or naïve stage speaks to white people who have a lack of awareness of race or racism. Naiveté describes this stage well as it generally pertains to children who have less life experience and are just beginning to form a worldview influenced by social messages they receive about race (Hardiman, 1982, p. 157). This stage is thought to occur between birth and age four, when children “generally do not feel fearful, hostile, or either inferior or superior” (Hardiman & Jackson, 1992, pp. 24-25). Although white people most likely have an awareness of differences between white people and People of Color at this stage, they may feel confused if they feel anything at all about these differences (Hardiman, 1982, p. 161). In short, the no social consciousness or naïve stage is short-lived and rather benign.

Acceptance. The second stage, acceptance, is characterized by an “absorption, whether conscious or unconscious, of an ideology of racial dominance” (Hardiman & Jackson, 1992, p. 25). Hardiman (1982) explains that at the acceptance stage, “the beliefs and attitudes of White supremacy are part of the normal pattern of life” (p. 166) as these have been reinforced by parents, schools, the church and peers. For most, the acceptance stage is more of an unconscious experience where white people may not even consciously identify as white, however, in extreme cases of those who subscribe to the values of white supremacist organizations this stage can be

demonstrated by declaration of white pride and superiority (Hardiman & Jackson, 1992, p. 26).

Generally speaking, by this stage white people have learned how to follow the unwritten rules of white behavior.

Resistance. Stage three is identified as resistance, which as it sounds implies a resistance to one's own white identity and racist attitudes (Hardiman, 1982, p. 182). This is the stage where white people begin to question the worldview that they have accepted as true until this point, and recognize that racism exists. The two expressions of resistance are for white people to either feel powerless and that they cannot impact change and therefore do not take action (remain passive), or for white people to accept personal ownership of their own deeply held racist beliefs (Hardiman & Jackson, 1992, p. 28). It is not uncommon at this stage for white people to experience feelings of guilt, anger, and other negative emotions as well as challenges in their relationships with other white people (Hardiman, 1982, p. 189). Putting it simply, the resistance stage is about rejecting whiteness.

Redefinition. Redefinition, the fourth stage, is when white people begin to reconsider what their white identity means. Recognizing that up until this point their whiteness has been “defined in opposition to people who were labelled inferior, or in other words that their racial identity was based on the crutch of White supremacy (racism)” white people now turn their energy toward redefining their white identity (Hardiman, 1982, p. 194). At this stage white people recognize the uniqueness of all racial groups and begin to move away from the negative feelings of the resistance stage (Hardiman & Jackson, 1992, p. 31). White people can now accept responsibility for and redefine their white identity at this stage, as one that is not based on being different from People of Color.

Internalization. The fifth and final stage, internalization, is characterized by white peoples' integration of their new behaviors, attitudes and beliefs about race into their everyday lives (Hardiman, 1982, p. 200). A key distinction for white people in the internalization stage is "not seeing others as 'culturally different' and Whites as 'normal,' but rather understanding how White European American culture is different as well" (Hardiman & Jackson, 1992, p. 34). At this stage, white people strive to internalize a more balanced perspective of what it means to be white and this is in turn demonstrated by their actions against racial oppression.

As Hardiman and Jackson (1992) suggested there are multiple applications for educators using this model to frame their work with students. First, educators should aim to encourage and facilitate students' development regardless of their approximate stage of racial identity development (Hardiman & Jackson, p. 34). By understanding the nuances of each stage educators can better meet students where they are and help support their learning. Equally as important, higher education practitioners can use the model for self-reflection on their personal and professional experiences. Intentional application of the model can help practitioners understand what might be influencing the choices they make in working with students. Finally, having an understanding of this model will not only inform educators as to students' racial identity development at a particular point in time, but it also provides a sense of identity development in the broader context (Hardiman & Jackson, p. 35). For example, this model outlines stages that higher education professionals may also apply to students examining their multiple identities including gender identity, religious identification, sexual orientation, etc. With both Hardiman's (1982) model and Helms' (1984) model, presented next, it is important to consider how development does not always happen linearly in stages but rather each stage or

status can inform practitioners as to how best they can provide support and challenge to others exploring their white racial identity.

Helms' Model

Helms (1984), an African-American scholar, developed a model of white identity that was first proposed in the seminal article *Toward a Theoretical Explanation of the Effects of Race on Counseling: A Black and White Model*. Although the article speaks specifically to the dynamics between white and Black people, it may be applicable for white people in their interactions with People of Color in general. Whereas previously developed “culture-specific” counseling models had focused on helping counselors understand People of Color as a “problem” to be solved, Helms’ (1984) model emphasized that white people as well as People of Color have certain “cultural predispositions” that affect their racial consciousness (Helms, pp. 153-154). Although Helms’ work has since been updated to reflect the fluidity with which people can move between white identity statuses (Helms, 1995), the original model was conceived as a progression of five stages one may go through: contact, disintegration, reintegration, pseudo-independence, and autonomy (Helms, 1984, p. 155). The following description of white racial consciousness stages or statuses provide helpful context for the subsequent examination of studies related to white racial identity.

Contact. First, the contact stage/status is experienced when a white “person becomes aware that Black people exist” (Helms, 1984, p. 155). Although the contact stage/status could refer to the literal experience of a white person coming to know a Black person for the first time, it is also meant figuratively to indicate when a white person first develops a curiosity about Black people (Helms, p. 155). White people in this stage/status mostly focus on the other and do

not typically have any racial awareness about themselves, with the focus being either to acknowledge or ignore differences between white people and People of Color (Helms, p. 156). A white person in the contact stage/status may be hyperaware of another's race while having no awareness of their own.

Disintegration. Second, the disintegration stage/status, usually prompted by “confusing experiences with Black people or by negative reactions of White people to interracial associations,” results in white people coming to terms with the fact that they are indeed white (Helms, 1984, p. 156). In this stage/status it is not uncommon for people to experience white guilt over the realization that racism still exists (Helms, p. 156). As a result, white people typically respond in one of three ways: 1) overcompensate for their negative emotions by over-identifying with and trying to appropriate Black culture, 2) become overprotective of Black people so as to protect them from any further mistreatment, or 3) retreat to the previous stage/status and deemphasize racial differences (Helms, p. 156). White people experiencing the disintegration stage/status are aware of their whiteness but conflicted about what this means.

Reintegration. In the third stage/status, reintegration, white people tend to be “more positively biased toward [their] own racial group” and experience fear of the other, often thinking in terms of stereotypes while downplaying racial similarities (Helms, 1984, p. 156). Depending on whether the person leans into learning about their whiteness or whether they retreat from examining racial differences will determine a different result. The white person who engages in learning about whiteness at this stage/status will likely feel emotions such as fear and anger towards the other, but this should dissipate as the white person develops greater personal awareness. Contrarily, the white person who retreats from cross-racial interactions at this

stage/status may delay or deter further personal growth and awareness (Helms, p. 156). The white person experiencing the reintegration stage/status may feel at a crossroads in terms of how they regard their own whiteness and the racialized other.

Pseudo-independent. Fourth, the pseudo-independent stage/status, is when white people are interested in both their similarities with and differences from People of Color, but without the same “naiveté of the contact stage nor the vehemence of the reintegration stage” (Helms, 1984, p. 156). White people at this stage/status may adopt a certain passiveness to furthering their learning about or engagement with racial issues as the motivation that brought them to this stage/status in the first place is now unneeded. Yet this may not be the case if instead they further develop their capacity to think about, reflect upon, and work through their understanding of race (Helms, p. 156). The pseudo-independent stage/status is demonstrated by white people who can be open to learning about both commonalities and differences they share with People of Color.

Autonomy. Finally, autonomy, the fifth stage/status of white racial consciousness, is designated by white peoples’ acceptance of racial differences and similarities (Helms, 1984, p. 156). At this stage/status, white people do not see racial differences as inherently negative or positive but just accept them as truth. At this stage/status, it is the white person’s personal commitment that leads them to continually engaging in cross-racial dialogue and interactions, as an appreciation of diversity is now one of their values (Helms, p. 156). The autonomy stage/status may be thought of as the most accepting and respectful position that white people may hold.

It is important to consider that there are many reasons why any one person may be at a particular stage or status of white racial consciousness. For example, factors such as their own

personal readiness to engage with racial issues, the opportunities they may or may not have had for diverse cultural experiences, as well as “formal educational opportunities” all vary from person to person (Helms, 1984, p. 162). And while educational opportunities may be the most practical point of intervention to help someone grow in their own racial awareness, it is not possible to change or dictate anyone’s stage of consciousness (Helms, p. 162). However, Helms’ (1984) model can be one tool for framing the expanding consciousness of white people who are deconstructing and making meaning of their own whiteness. One final model is presented now as a tool for framing various continuums white people may experience when making meaning of whiteness, as opposed to distinct stages or statuses of racial identity development.

Todd and Abrams’ Model

Whereas Hardiman’s (1982) and Helms’ (1984) models focused on white identity development stages and consciousness, a study by Todd and Abrams (2011) presented a new framework to describe the experience of white people trying to understand whiteness. Participants were 22 college students enrolled in an introductory psychology course, evenly split in terms of gender, and ranging in age from 18-20 years old (Todd & Abrams, p. 359). The two researchers, a white male and a white female, situated their work in feminist and grounded theory which took into account their “values and goals for social change” (Todd & Abrams, pp. 358-359) and allowed them to be self-reflective about their own privilege in a way similar to McIntosh (1988) and Blackmore (2010).

Researchers interviewed each participant and asked them to indicate their level of agreement with some of the items in McIntosh’s (1988) white privilege checklist, and each participant completed several surveys focusing on race (Todd & Abrams, 2011, pp. 365-366). To

analyze the data researchers maintained journals of their expectations and biases, transcribed and individually coded all interviews, and worked together to agree upon interpretations (Todd & Abrams, p. 366). What they found is that participants tended to describe their racialized experiences and attitudes along one of six dialectics: a) whiteness and self, b) connection in Multi-Racial relationships, c) colorblindness, d) minimization of racism, e) structural inequality, and f) white privilege (Todd & Abrams, p. 370). The dialectics described here are not representative of particular statuses or stages of consciousness as with Hardiman (1982) and Helms (1984) but instead look at a variety of continuums.

Whiteness and sense of self. Whiteness and sense of self refers to how participants would identify on a continuum of white to not white (Todd & Abrams, 2011, p. 370). On this continuum some people may understand they are part of a larger group of white people, whereas others may have never even thought about their whiteness before. This dialectic asks how closely white people identify with their racial categorization.

Closeness and connection. The next dialectic, closeness and connection in Multi-Racial relationships, describes the perceived challenges and opportunities to create “close and deep” or “far and shallow” relationships with People of Color (Todd & Abrams, 2011, p. 372). People on one end of this continuum may either hold an awareness of race that allows them to establish Multi-Racial relationships, or they may feel excluded or hurt that they do not fit in when they have a less developed awareness of race (Todd & Abrams, pp. 372-374). This dialectic looks at whether white people form relationships with People of Color or not.

Color blind to color conscious. The third dialectic is a continuum from color blind to color conscious (Todd & Abrams, 2011, p. 374). In short, people on one end of the continuum

feel that race matters and people on the other end of the continuum feel that race does not matter. The continuum of colorblindness to color consciousness identifies how salient race is for people.

Minimization of racism. Minimization of racism is the fourth dialectic, which examines whether racism feels “close and personal” or “far away and abstract” (Todd & Abrams, 2011, pp. 376). One end of this continuum sees racism as relevant and present in our society, whereas the other end of this continuum does not think racism has much, if any, impact on society anymore (Todd & Abrams, p. 376). The minimization of racism continuum asks whether people feel racism is relevant today.

Structural inequality. The fifth dialectic is structural inequality and the continuum between perceiving society as being an “even playing field” or an “uneven playing field” for white people and People of Color (Todd & Abrams, 2011, p. 377). This difference might be acknowledged by one person assuming everyone can pull themselves up by their bootstraps if they try, versus another person recognizing that systemic inequalities might result in different opportunities for white people and People of Color. This dialectic investigates attitudes about racial equity.

White privilege. Finally, white privilege, or the continuum between understanding “I am advantaged” and “I am not advantaged” is the sixth dialectic (Todd & Abrams, 2011, p. 379). This dialectic surfaces in those who may fully see and accept their own white privilege, or it may present itself by denying privilege or only seeing it “in the form of outgroup disadvantage and ignoring ingroup advantage” (Todd & Abrams, p. 379). This dialectic looks at the perceptions that white people have of their own white privilege.

In summary, Hardiman's (1982) model of racial identity development is not meant to label students but rather to inform educators as to the differing perspectives that students and colleagues alike may have as they seek to understand their own and others' racialized experiences. Helms' (1984) model of racial identity stages or statuses can be another tool for framing the expanding consciousness of white people who are making meaning of their own whiteness. And finally, Todd and Abrams' (2011) model of the six dialectics may be helpful when used as a tool in working with white people experiencing tensions or challenges related to understanding their white identity (Todd & Abrams, p. 385). Each model may ultimately provide ways to challenge growth of perspective in white people deconstructing privilege, and are resources that educators may hold as reference so they are prepared for the myriad of responses when working with white people trying to understand their whiteness. Additionally, the models presented informed my assessment of whether PAR participants' understanding of their own white racial identity and privilege changed as a result of action and reflection. The following studies look further at the connections between racial identity stage/status and awareness of white privilege.

Racial Identity Development and White Privilege Awareness

Hays, Chang, and Havice (2008) involved 197 participants in their study which examined white privilege awareness as predicted by the white racial identity status of counselor trainees (Hays, Chang & Havice, p. 234). Participants all identified as white and ranged in age from 21 to 30 years old. Nine participants declined to state their gender, and the remaining identified as female (79.7%) and male (15.7%) (Hays et al., p. 238). As a counselor, the power dynamics in the client/therapist relationship can influence the ability to establish a trusting and beneficial

therapeutic relationship, and having an understanding of one's own white privilege allows for acknowledgment of racial power imbalances. For this reason, and because the majority of counselors entering the profession continue to be white, Hays et al. (2008) aimed to deepen understanding of how white counselors develop racial identity and white privilege awareness (Hays et al., p. 235). Researchers anticipated finding a certain relationship between participants' white racial privilege awareness and their white racial identity statuses.

Similarly, Carter, Helms, and Juby (2004) conducted a study that investigated the connection between white racial identity profiles and racist attitudes. Participants included 217 white college students enrolled in an introductory psychology course, of which 111 were male and 106 were female. Ages of the participants ranged from 16 to 61 years old, and participants reported coming from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds (28% lower class; 15.2% working class; 50.2% middle class; 30% upper middle class; and 1.8% upper class) (Carter, Helms, & Juby, p. 5). Again, just as with Hays et al. (2008), Carter et al. (2004) hypothesized that a particular relationship between participants' attitudes toward race and their racial identity profiles would emerge.

In the study by Carter et al. (2004) the White Racial Identity Attitude Scale (WRIAS) and the New Racism Scale (NRS) were administered to each participant along with a demographics questionnaire (Carter et al., p. 6). The WRIAS was used to measure participants' affiliation with the following five racial identity profiles as adapted from Helms' (1996) new profile scoring: contact, disintegration, reintegration, pseudo-independence, and autonomy, whereas the NRS assessed participants for beliefs and attitudes related to subtle or modern racism (Carter et al., p. 6). By using the two instruments, researchers hoped to uncover "whether various types of racial

identity status profiles would be related to modern racism attitudes and beliefs” (Carter et al., p. 10). The use of both the WRIAS and the NRS yielded some anticipated and some surprising results.

Hays et al. (2008) also used the WRIAS in developing four hypotheses that asked which of Helms’ (1984) original stages (contact, reintegration, immersion/emersion, and autonomy) most significantly predicted awareness of white racial privilege (Hays et al., p. 237). The WRIAS and the White Privilege Scale (WPS), based on McIntosh’s (1988) white privilege checklist, were administered to all participants (Hays et al., p. 238). What they found was that “Contact, Reintegration, and Immersion/Emersion statuses significantly predicted White privilege awareness” with a higher contact or reintegration status corresponding with lower white privilege awareness, and immersion/emersion statuses corresponding with higher white privilege awareness (Hays et al., p. 241). Hays et al. (2008) also found some predictable and some surprising results from using the combination of the WRIAS and WPS assessments.

Hays et al. (2008) found that the hypothesis associated with the autonomy status was not supported, which was unexpected to researchers as it was assumed that higher autonomy would predict higher white privilege awareness (Hays et al., p. 241). Likewise, Carter et al. (2004) uncovered similar results in that the “Autonomy type” ($n = 11$) yielded high racist attitudes which was “contrary to theory” as this status was thought to be more aligned with less racist attitudes (Carter et al., p. 13). One possible explanation was that these results could have been representative of a characteristic specific to the small group in the study, or that the results may have been false as there was a possibility that social desirability influenced participant responses

(Carter et al., pp. 13-14). In any case, the Autonomy status did not hold up to researchers' predictions when comparing scores on the WRIAS with the NRS or with the WPS.

The most common finding ($n = 73$) by Carter et al. (2004) was the "flat profile," meaning that those participants seemed to "rely equally on all racial identity schemas" (Carter et al., p. 9). This profile scored highest in beliefs and attitudes toward racism, which suggested that their attitudes toward race had not yet been fully formed (Carter et al., p. 12). These findings are further supported by Hays et al. (2008) who found that participants with higher contact or reintegration status correspond with lower white privilege awareness (Hays et al., p. 241). In both studies, the researchers found value in the use of profiles to better understand racial identity and attitudes in individuals and in groups who share profile types, even though some statuses were better predictors of white racial awareness and attitudes than were other statuses. Similarly, in my PAR project the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Checklist was intended to better understand participants' competencies and to provide important data regarding the racial awareness and attitudes of group members before and after participation in the PAR project.

Each of the racial identity development models discussed above provide a framework for identifying levels of awareness and an understanding of the experience of one's own white privilege. However, Paxton (2002) cautions of these models in his Collaborative Inquiry case study, described below, "White identity development provides a map of the territory, but what this inquiry, and the need for others along these lines can help provide, is an understanding of a process for moving across the territory of White identity development" (p. 89). Through the use of PAR, this dissertation endeavored to help white practitioners move across the terrain from

deconstructing white privilege to understanding its impacts on professional practice in higher education. The following studies provide models, questions, and challenges to consider.

White Privilege Research

Many aspects of the following research projects conducted by Cullen (2008), McIntyre (1997), Paxton (2002), and Robbins (2012) greatly influenced the design of my PAR study. Each study utilized Action Research (AR) as its methodology to explore the construct of white privilege, and each was situated in or connected to higher education. Additionally, three of the four studies included CRT as a theoretical framework from which to address the problem.

Cullen's Study

Cullen (2008) situated himself as a researcher/participant with “white, male, middle-class privilege” (p. 74) when he conducted a Participatory Action Research (PAR) project with five, white graduate students in a large Midwestern university, four of whom were in a Student Affairs preparation program and one was from a doctoral program and self-selected to be in the study (Cullen, pp. 46-47). Two participants were male, three were female, and only one of whom grew up in an environment exposed to diverse cultures (Cullen, pp. 63-72). Four participants were in their mid-to-late-20s and two were in their 30s (Cullen, p. 78). Cullen was interested in exploring white privilege among Student Affairs practitioners as he was conscious of their duty to create campus cultures that are inclusive of all students and which support the success of all students, regardless of racial identity. Therefore, the purpose of the study was to deconstruct white privilege as a way of furthering participants’ development of anti-racist identities as Student Affairs professionals (Cullen, p. 7). Cullen’s study was of particular interest to me as his

motivation for investigating white privilege among Student Affairs professionals was also a driving force for my research.

The PAR group met for a total of 30 hours over the course of seven meetings split across several weeks of one summer (Cullen, p. 171). In addition to the in-person group meetings, participants submitted reflections via WebCT and Cullen (2008) conducted initial and exit interviews with participants as well as administered the White Privilege Attitude Scale (WPAS) before and after the study (Cullen, pp. 51-53). Cullen (2008) found that the most challenging part of conducting the PAR project was actually the design and facilitation of the group meetings, as the content organically and continually emerged with the help of the participants (Cullen, p. 53).

Results of Cullen's (2008) study yielded themes and poignant moments for the group which were presented in chronological order, both for individual members and the group as a whole, in order to show the transformation and process that unfolded over time (Cullen, p. 85). Cullen (2008) approached the data analysis from a social constructivist, emancipatory paradigm (Cullen, p. 9) and examined findings from three distinct phases in which group meetings took on different characteristics. These were grouped together in the analysis as the first, middle, and final PAR group sessions (Cullen, pp. 85-116). At each phase the group members engaged in different activities which elicited different outcomes.

In the first PAR group sessions, members formed group norms, identified stereotypes, and began to examine the constructs of race and privilege (Cullen, 2008, pp. 87-93). This period of time spanned the entire first session and the first half of the second session (Cullen, p. 87). In the middle PAR group sessions, which spanned from the second half of the second session to the fifth session, the group moved to having more "sophisticated conversations about racism and

privilege” (Cullen, p. 93), dealt with feelings of white guilt that emerged, discussed the costs of privilege to whites and People of Color, and learned about ally development models (Cullen, p. 95-103). Whereas participants in earlier sessions seemed to engage on a more surface level, it was apparent that group dialogue and participants’ understanding of privilege deepened further along in the process.

In the final PAR group sessions, members yearned for more inter-group dialogue, began to build consensus around ideas for action, and identified barriers and strategies to changing their own racist beliefs and actions (Cullen, 2008, pp. 104-113). This period of time spanned from the end of the fourth session through the final meeting (Cullen, p. 104). Also pivotal to the group’s learning during the final PAR group sessions was their meeting with a “critical reference group of People of Color”: four people the researcher recruited from the university who provided feedback on potential action items to combat white privilege that the PAR group was considering (Cullen, p. 81). One of the themes that surfaced from that interaction was the PAR group’s tendency to focus on “institutional-level change” which seemed to be out of a desire to fix the problem, however, the critical reference group strongly encouraged the participants to continue working on deepening awareness of their own white privilege (Cullen, p. 82). A second theme that emerged was a sense of distrust toward PAR members from the critical reference group, as reflected on by Cullen (2008):

Having our dedication questioned was somewhat difficult to hear, but it also served as a reminder that one privilege of being white is that we can give up the anti-racist struggle at any point we choose, whereas People of Color don’t have the same luxury. (Cullen, 2008, p. 83)

As Cullen's (2008) group experienced, gathering critical feedback is essential in order to "be accountable to the communities of People of Color most affected by institutional and cultural racism" (Cullen, p. 82), even if the process of doing so may be jarring to white people whose intentions and commitment to anti-racist action are called into question.

Limitations of the study included the fact that participants self-selected to be in the study which sought to deconstruct whiteness, the potential challenges for an entirely white group to investigate white privilege, and the positionality of the researcher who was "acting from within the white, male, middle-class privileged subject position" (Cullen, 2008, p.11). Further, this study could have been strengthened by making more direct connections between the PAR outcomes and competencies for Student Affairs professionals.

Implications for Cullen's (2008) study include that PAR may be considered one of the most effective ways of addressing power and privilege in university settings (Cullen, p. 157). Important to note, however, is that while all participants in Cullen's (2008) study experienced a deepening of insight about white privilege as a result of participating in this project, not all participants experienced the same increases in awareness of their white privilege (Cullen, p. 123). Each individual came to the PAR group with different experiences and left the project utilizing the knowledge they gained in different ways. Their commitment to dialogue and to the PAR process allowed them inroads to conversations they may not have had otherwise (Cullen, p. 125). Additionally, participants reported feeling that they were better able to navigate difficult dialogues about race and privilege after the PAR project (Cullen, p. 129). With this in mind PAR seems to be an effective research methodology to illuminate the "privileging effects of privilege"

(Cullen, p. 132), or the ways that white privilege allows white people not to think about or question their privilege.

McIntyre's Study

McIntyre (1997) brought together a group of white aspiring teachers in a PAR study aimed at “confronting their white identities and challenging the meaning of being ‘white’” (p. 653). McIntyre was cognizant of the demographic landscape of education and that the majority of teaching professionals are white, often teaching diverse populations of students and attempting to present multicultural curriculum (McIntyre, pp. 653-654). Therefore, this study aimed to uncover teachers' understanding of whiteness, specifically the relationships between white racial consciousness and white privilege, and it explored how privilege showed up in their professional lives and its impact on teaching practice.

Participants included 13 white, female, undergraduate students from middle to upper-middle class backgrounds that were enrolled in a teacher preparation program (McIntyre, 1997, pp. 657-658). At the time of their participation in the research project, participants were also simultaneously completing their “practice teaching” requirement and were encouraged to reflect on that experience in relation to the research project (McIntyre, p. 658). McIntyre (1997) completed semi-structured interviews with each participant prior to the group convening, after which point the participants gathered once per week for two-hour sessions over a period of eight weeks where they read articles, had group discussion, and engaged in creative art projects and personal reflection as ways of making meaning of their whiteness (McIntyre, p. 658). PAR was intentionally chosen as the framework for this study as a means of creating change in education through an intentional process of action and reflection (McIntyre, p. 657).

McIntyre's (1997) study resulted in uncovering three major themes (McIntyre, p. 659). Data analysis, which was informed by social constructionist grounded theory, included initial reviews of taped sessions, transcription of recordings, and coding of themes. One of the themes that emerged, "Teacher Image" (p. 659) was presented at length in the analysis and is elaborated on here for its relevance to my PAR project. The theme of "Teacher Image" included how participants constructed meaning of their whiteness as it pertains to education as a whole, their teaching practice, and the meaning they made of being white educators (McIntyre, p. 660). Making meaning of whiteness and white privilege through PAR was illuminating in a number of ways.

Participants were all concerned with how they were perceived by Students of Color, and how as white teachers they could effectively serve a diverse population of students (McIntyre, 1997, p. 660). Participants spoke about wanting to be perceived as "good teachers" and to be received positively by Students of Color especially since many had not been exposed to "that kind of environment" (McIntyre, p. 661), or in other words, they were concerned about their aptitude to teach Students of Color in urban environments. These concerns were validated when attempts to use the topic of multicultural education to examine racism and white privilege within education as a whole revealed that participants could not make the connection between seeing themselves as white aspiring teachers and acknowledging that they are members of the dominant group which receives advantages in our educational system (McIntyre, p. 662). In a sense, the participants, through their inability to make connections between their whiteness and systems of privilege in education, unintentionally validated their stated concerns about their inaptitude to effectively work with Students of Color in urban environments.

McIntyre (1997) recounted an exchange between several participants in one of their earlier sessions which revealed how participants' teaching practice is affected when the "reproduction of whiteness and teaching intersect" (p. 665). Indeed, several participants shared anecdotes that illustrated their biases. For example, one participant discussed her experience being a white aspiring teacher in her urban practicum placement where all of the students were Haitian. She observed the students to be "unkempt" at times, to not have food, and to be craving attention (McIntyre, p. 665). Additionally, another participant explained her initial concerns with receiving an inner-city placement:

I was a little scared just because I didn't know what to expect – but going in there it was like so amazing how much more the kids need, you know what I mean? This little girl everyday at recess... She'd just wanna sit and like not necessarily tell me her problems but she just like wanted a friend to talk to... (McIntyre, 1997, p. 666)

In the above examples and other recounted stories it was apparent how these white aspiring teachers unknowingly viewed themselves as "white knights" working to save the Students of Color, who were simply "passive recipients of white teachers' good will" (McIntyre, p. 664). McIntyre's (1997) study revealed stereotypes held by white aspiring teachers about Students of Color, in contradiction to "participants' perceptions of themselves as caring and benevolent teachers" (p. 667).

Although it was the hope through the PAR process some of these beliefs would be challenged, McIntyre was surprised to find that shifts in white privilege awareness were subtle for most participants. In general, this study concluded with the majority of participants remaining fairly "colorblind" which allowed them to "think positively about themselves while dismissing

the life experiences of their Students of Color” which was disturbing to the researcher (McIntyre, 1997, p. 672). Additionally, as is the intention of PAR, it was hoped that participants would decide to collectively pursue some sort of action related to addressing racism, which only a few were motivated to do, which was further disheartening to the researcher (McIntyre, p. 675).

A limitation of the study that McIntyre (1997) discussed at length was her positionality as a researcher/participant, and as a white woman. She struggled with simultaneously working to create a space where participants could engage in meaningful dialogue about white privilege while also finding the appropriate balance of challenging participants’ white world views (McIntyre, p. 668). The implications of this study send a clear message about the importance of white educators intentionally examining white privilege and its impact on professional practice, and cautioned me to be mindful of my positionality when I conducted this PAR. While self-examination may be a fruitful exercise for all white people, it seems particularly important for white educators working with diverse populations to examine their own white privilege in order to examine their biases and assumptions in working with People of Color. And while McIntyre’s (1997) conclusions about the readiness of some educators to explore their own privilege may be seemingly discouraging, it may also be a helpful reframe to remember how sometimes this work is like planting a seed in order to allow growth to occur later.

Paxton’s Study

Paxton (2002), conducted a case study of a Collaborative Inquiry (CI) with six white people who examined the "system of thought that fosters racism and the lived experience of White people who try to transform this system of thought within themselves" (p. 4). CI, much like PAR, utilizes the "systematic process of action/reflection that helps people learn from

personal experience" (Paxton, p. 4) to explore the meaning of whiteness and white privilege. In the CI process, the researcher joins with the others in the group fully and together they engage as co-participants exploring a particular topic. The topic of inquiry for this CI group was "the exploration of White Supremacist Consciousness in ourselves" (Paxton, p. 15).

In particular, Paxton (2002), who identifies as white, was interested in understanding whether the CI process would provide opportunity for "transformative learning" and for change to occur in European-Americans' "habits of being" with regard to White Supremacist Consciousness (Paxton, p. 13). Notably, Paxton (2002) intentionally used the term "European-American" throughout the study as a way of "recognizing that as White people we have not earned the right to dismiss our racist past as is stubbornly represented by the term White" (p. 11). Essentially, this study examined the impact of CI on the transformation of White Supremacist Consciousness in European-American participants.

Participants interacted online and met in-person, semi-monthly, for approximately eight hours per month over a nine-month period. These sessions and final participant interviews conducted 18 months later were audio-recorded, transcribed and analyzed along with online discussion threads and written reflections (Paxton, 2002, p. 15). Paxton (2002) used both a case and cross-case analysis approach to analyzing the data from the CI group meetings in order to follow each person's experience over time and to examine particular aspects of the groups' process as a whole (Paxton, p. 128).

The results of Paxton's (2002) study uncovered the following three themes that emerged from the analysis: 1) being present, 2) redefining self through connection, and 3) new habits of being (Paxton, 2002, pp. 340-342). "Being present to experience" was described as "bearing

witness to each other's lives, in a non-judgmental, engaged and present manner [that] was essential to our process" (Paxton, p. 194). "Redefining self through connection" referred to the ability to connect to ones' own whiteness, to connect empathically with other people and to finding a sense of community and acceptance in others (Paxton, pp. 209-220). The third theme, new habits of being, is elaborated on here for it represented a desired outcome of my PAR project.

Paxton (2002) explained that new habits of being were developed from "a collection of practical knowing experiences" (p. 339) that come about when action and intention converge (Paxton, p. 342). Some of the ways in which Paxton saw transformation occurring in participants' habits of being was through them "being open and less righteous," demonstrating an "increased knowledge of systemic issues of racism," having "increased confidence in racially-charged situations," and by experiencing "increased options for communication" (Paxton, p. 142). The following anecdote highlights just how much transformation took place for one group member as a result of participating in the CI.

One CI group member had recounted an earlier experience when he had suggested a diversity activity to a group of colleagues that would have resulted in participants comparing their skin color as part of the exercise. He remembered his suggestion being met with shock and obvious resistance by Colleagues of Color, which led to conversation that deepened his understanding of the historical impacts of racism in the U.S. and its effects on his colleagues. The CI group member reflected on this moment, which became significant to the transformation of his consciousness and habits of being:

Who better to have made that kind of blunder, because in the long run, that is how one learns. And the learning might include some feelings of embarrassment and shame. To just have learning be about the things distanced from oneself, do you really learn it? (Paxton, 2002, p. 345)

By him sharing this experience with the group he not only demonstrated its impact on his own learning but it allowed for a deeper level of knowing to occur among the group members.

Paxton (2002) explained how this had illuminated for the group “the sheer degree of our not knowing and how our best intentions could run awry” and how when the participant shared his story the entire CI group “witnessed his shame together, through empathy, and this represented a different experience for us. We reflected upon it together. We knew the outcome was at odds with our intentions” (Paxton, p. 347). The powerful impact this experience had on the individual participants and the group suggests that CI may be a helpful process to bring about transformation in awareness of white privilege and supporting the new behaviors that would be aligned with participants’ values and intentions.

Some of the limitations of this study included the challenges inherent in communicating about the complexities of race, the uniqueness of the individuals in the group in that five of the six were members of the same doctoral program (Paxton, p. 16), as well as Paxton’s personal challenge of being both a participant and a researcher (Paxton, p. 19). Yet despite its limitations, the implications of Paxton’s (2002) study demonstrate how the CI process can allow for many powerful lessons to emerge, as well as the ability for participants to look deeply at their own whiteness and privilege and to acquire new ways of thinking about and acting to address racism.

Similar to the PAR process, participants were able to learn with and from one another in the CI by being present and bearing witness to one another's experience.

Robbins' Study

Robbins (2012), who identifies as a white woman (Robbins, p. xx) conducted her qualitative study of racial consciousness among Student Affairs women from a feminist, activist perspective (Robbins, p. xxviii) and was guided by a constructivist approach to grounded theory (Robbins, pp. 14-15). Interested by increasing numbers of Students of Color and proportionately greater percentage of white women in the field, Robbins (2012) aimed to develop a grounded theory of racial identity for white women in Student Affairs preparation programs (Robbins, pp. 12-14). The specific questions being asked included how racial identity develops over time, how white women in Student Affairs develop racial identities, and how factors such as power and privilege impact the development of white women's racial identities (Robbins, p. 72). Paying particular attention to the racial identity development of white women in Student Affairs is a relatively new area of research.

Participants were solicited from graduate Student Affairs preparation programs via an electronic mailing list for faculty where Robbins (2012) requested faculty assistance in recruiting student participants (Robbins, p. 95). A total of 135 people expressed interest in the study and 11 people were selected using theoretical sampling as a guide (Robbins, p. 96). The 11 participants all identified as white women, had completed one year of full-time education in a Student Affairs master's degree program and represented a diverse array of "social identity, geographic regions, age and life experiences, and other educational and professional experiences" (Robbins, p. 96).

This manageable sample size allowed Robbins the ability to engage in meaningful interviews of substance while still achieving quality data collection.

Robbins (2012) interviewed each participant two times using “intensive, semi-structured interviews” (p. 105). Initial interviews focused on pre-college experiences, whereas second interviews focused on time spent after college, as a working professional, and participants’ Student Affairs graduate program experiences (Robbins, p. 106). Both interviews were approached with a focus toward racial identity, with the second interview delving deeper into white privilege (Robbins, p. 106). An example of an initial interview question was “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?” (Robbins, p. 339). An example of a second interview question was “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?” (Robbins, p. 340).

The results of Robbins’ (2012) interviews, which were recorded, transcribed, and coded for themes (Robbins, 2012, p. 110), were shared back with participants by way of member checking to establish trustworthiness (Robbins, p. 116). From this process the following themes emerged: 1) Not Seeing Race, Not Registering Difference: “Everything Was Just So White”, 2) Peripheral Visions: Catching Glimpses of Race, 3) “Opening My Eyes”: (Dis)covering Racial Difference, Racism, and White Privilege, 4) “Now I Really See, So Now What Do I Do?”: Resisting, Engaging, and Transforming Racial Dissonance, and 5) Seeing “The Whole Spectrum of Things”: Looking Back and Looking Forward from a Changed Perspective (Robbins, pp. 151-

261). A summary of these themes, which span the spectrum of race awareness, are provided here.

The first theme, “Not Seeing Race, Not Seeing Difference: Everything Was Just So White,” was apparent for all participants. Robbins (2012) explains that this theme emerged because the significance of race was not something these women were at all aware of prior to college (Robbins, p. 152). Participants reported not ever having talked about race growing up, in some cases having little exposure to People of Color, and in other cases developing color blind attitudes toward race (Robbins, pp. 153-154). In each example it became clear that participants’ early life experiences carried no awareness of race.

The second theme, “Peripheral Visions: Catching Glimpses of Race,” indicated a point at which some participants began to notice differences in the racialized experiences of white people and People of Color (Robbins, 2012, p. 155). Interestingly, participants reported exposure to attitudes about race from male and female family members differently. Whereas male family members either held negative attitudes about race or exposed participants to difference through their work environments (Robbins, pp. 155-160), female family members portrayed a fear of the other or “conveyed a charitable attitude toward People of Color” (Robbins, p. 163). Participants also shared examples of having gained some perspective on racial differences through their own experiences with People of Color (Robbins, p. 155). As this theme emerged it confirmed that participants were gradually more aware of race through exposure to family and friends’ attitudes and experiences.

The theme of “Opening My Eyes: (Dis)covering Racial Difference, Racism, and White Privilege” was demonstrated by eight participants who described having specific experiences

either during college or while they were pursuing full-time work prior to graduate school that opened their eyes and “awakened” them to racial differences and the existence of white privilege (Robbins, 2012, p. 172). For some it was the opportunity to live with or among People of Color in college residence halls, for others it was exposure to new ideas in graduate coursework, and for others it was professional development opportunities and trainings that helped open their eyes to racial differences and white privilege (Robbins, pp. 172-191). Each of these participants’ examples confirmed the emergence of theme three in that poignant experiences were eye-opening with regard to race, racism and white privilege.

The fourth theme, “Now I Really See, So Now What Do I Do?: Resisting, Engaging, and Transforming Racial Dissonance,” emerged as a result of participants experiencing the aforementioned “eye-opening” events, which led to “racial dissonance: a state of discomfort and ambiguity about race and whiteness that stretched before participants like a great chasm” (Robbins, 2012, pp. 191-192). For many, this racial dissonance brought up feelings of anger and denial before ultimately leading to the development of strategies to address it (Robbins, p. 251). Essentially, after participants initially experienced an awakening of racial consciousness they didn’t know what to do to address what they saw as very complex and challenging issues related to race and privilege, but over time they began to see a way forward.

Seeing The Whole Spectrum of Things: Looking Back and Looking Forward from a Changed Perspective, emerged as the final theme which was succinctly described by one participant as having discovered a “conscious lens of whiteness” and by others as shaping a new “vision” for their lives that was conscious of race (Robbins, 2012, p. 254). Participants

demonstrated this theme by their resolution to make intentional decisions about their professional and personal lives in ways that are informed by their white privilege (Robbins, pp. 255-261).

A delimitation of the study is its grounding in qualitative research, which is not meant to be generalizable beyond the experience of the participants themselves (Robbins, 2012, p. 317). Additionally, a limitation of this study was that by solely focusing on white women, Robbins (2012) may have “reified racialized and gendered binaries” (p. 318) thereby marginalizing people who identify otherwise. The implications of Robbins’ (2012) study were indicated by the development of a grounded theory of racial identity for white women in Student Affairs preparation programs. In her study, she illuminated how “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” (Robbins, p. 261). Different from the other white privilege action research studies, Robbins reflected on rather than engaged with participants in exploring their white privilege. Nevertheless, this research presents relevant findings about the development of racial consciousness that also informs my study.

The influence of white privilege research on this PAR. The action research studies by Cullen (2008), McIntyre (1997), and Paxton (2002) and the qualitative study by Robbins (2012) elicited additional questions that I was eager to investigate further in this PAR study. Cullen’s PAR project with Student Affairs graduate students resulted in an increased awareness of white privilege but little connections were made between participants’ racial consciousness and its’ impact on professional practice, which raised concern over whether my PAR could address this same question. Conversely, with regard to McIntyre’s study, it was unknown whether the same

trends in lack of participant awareness and motivation to take action would emerge from my PAR project. Paxton's findings demonstrated how participants experienced a transformation in habits of being as a result of participating in the CI, however, questions arose about whether another action research project could achieve a similar rapport among participants and depth of inquiry in the time allotted. Finally, Robbins' findings provided me a hopeful developmental framework for what the transformation of PAR participants could look like, however, unlike participants' varied experiences in Robbins' study this PAR project aimed to be the critical experience which deepened reflection about racial consciousness and informed action.

Indeed, each of these studies affirmed that the emergence of racial consciousness over time and its effects on one's personal life and professional practice continues to be an important and compelling area of study. The following first looks at higher education as one setting for promoting organizational change and diversity initiatives. Second, the role that Student Affairs professional organizations and training programs play in preparing practitioners to be competent in the areas of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion will be examined. And third, PAR will be explored as a means to transform white racial consciousness among Student Affairs and other higher education professionals.

Organizational Change and Leadership in Higher Education

The need for change in the U.S. higher education system is greater than ever before. Current driving forces of change in higher education include such important issues as affordability, institutional demographics and diversity initiatives on college campuses, as well as moving from operating as departmental siloes to collaborative structures within branches such as Student Affairs (Craig, 2004; Kezar, 2005). In crafting an approach to respond to these drivers,

colleges and universities must pay attention to institutional culture and internal structures in order to affect change on an organizational level (Eckel & Kezar, 2002; Kuk & Banning, 2009).

Eckel and Kezar's (2002) research discussed how institutional culture within higher education influences approaches to change strategies (Eckel & Kezar, para. 4), which was relevant to my project as the university culture in which this PAR took place was likely to influence the approach to implementing change initiatives agreed upon by participants. Specifically, Eckel and Kezar asked whether change initiatives might be moved forward or inhibited by adherence to institutions' cultural norms and expectations (Eckel & Kezar, para. 4). It seems probable that institutional culture would have an impact on how change occurs on college campuses, and depending on the culture change could be received either more or less favorably.

The six institutions studied were part of the "ACE Project on Leadership and Institutional Transformation" which was comprised of 23 participating colleges and universities (Eckel & Kezar, 2002, "Case Selection Criteria," para. 1). Participants were selected using purposeful sampling based on progress toward change, ability to collect data on the change process, representation of different institution types, and sharing common change initiatives (Eckel & Kezar, "Case Selection Criteria," para. 1). Limitations of the study included sampling based on self-selection, participants not representing a wide variety of institutions, and that self-reported data may be biased (Eckel & Kezar, "Limitations," para. 1). Although results may not be generalizable, the array of change strategies represented may still be informative for those institutions in early stages of implementing change processes.

Whereas similar studies focused on “one size fits all” strategies, or showcased highly contextualized approaches, Eckel and Kezar (2002) focused on the relationship between cultural norms and institutional change (Eckel & Kezar, para. 4). An ethnographic approach to data collection over a five and a half year period yielded detailed case analyses (Eckel & Kezar, “Data Collection and Analysis,” para. 1). Results supported the researchers’ assumptions that change strategies were more effective when they aligned with institutional culture (Eckel & Kezar, “Discussion,” para. 6). As Eckel and Kezar pointed out, this suggests the importance of “getting on the balcony” (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009, p. 7) to see the cultural patterns on the institutional dance floor so as to be perceptive and effective organizational change agents. In short, it is essential to first know the campus culture and to then select change strategies conducive to that culture.

Kezar (2005) was also interested in examining campus culture and inquired about the role of collaboration in institutional culture. Specifically, Kezar (2005) wondered how institutions in higher education can move away from operating in a siloed fashion and move toward becoming organizational cultures that embrace collaboration (Kezar, “Reorganizing for Collaboration,” para. 9)? To answer this question, Kezar (2005) solicited nominations of colleges and universities that were showing promise in this area, receiving 30 nominations of institutions that were seen as being models for collaboration (Kezar, “About the Study,” para. 2). Staff from nominated schools completed preliminary surveys, from which seven were selected for interviews based on progress toward collaboration (Kezar, “About the Study,” para. 2). Finally, four schools whose collaborative efforts were perceived as having “unusual depth and quality” (Kezar, “About the Study,” para. 3) were chosen for further study.

Although the methodology and data analysis lacked detail, Kezar's (2005) findings presented eight organizational characteristics that were determined to "help in organizing for collaboration" (Kezar, "Organizational Features That Help," para. 3). Three characteristics were noted as being most important: 1) having a mission statement that supports collaboration, 2) encouraging networking and coalition building, and 3) having integrated structures in place such as cross-campus centers or institutes (Kezar, "Organizational Features That Help," para. 16). Kezar (2005) suggested that institutions can respond to external driving forces of change using these methods (Kezar, "Why Now," para. 2). Admittedly, this would likely involve significant changes in current structures for many colleges and universities.

In examining organizational change within Student Affairs, Kuk and Banning (2009) noted that "there is no singular organizational structure model that is used by, or 'fits' all, Student Affairs operations" (p. 96). However, in their study they attempted to identify three related questions about organizational structures: 1) what are some of the current structures of Student Affairs organizations, 2) what organizational changes have been made within Student Affairs practice, and 3) what strengths and limitations exist in the current structures (Kuk & Banning, p. 96)?

Senior Student Affairs Officers (SSAOs) from 240 institutions of different types were surveyed electronically, of which 90 responded. Kuk and Banning (2009) found that across all institution types there appear to be some shared structural designs within Student Affairs (Kuk & Banning, p. 108). However, unlike Kezar's (2005) call for collaboration, institutions in this study:

... rarely appeared structurally as well integrated and cross functional programs and services. While some respondents indicated that they had committees and task forces to deal with these issues, few organizations appeared to be designed to address cross unit or divisional collaboration. (Kuk & Banning, 2009, p. 109)

Although most organizational structures have not necessarily changed much in the last 30 years, the issues that Student Affairs practitioners face have changed, as has the higher education system as a whole (Kuk & Banning, p. 110). Recognizing the need to redesign Student Affairs organizational structure, SSAO's reported they would make the following changes if they could: bring other units under Student Affairs, create Assistant Vice President positions, reduce direct reports to senior administrators, create functional teams, increase collaboration, and "create changes to support student retention, student success, and student learning" (Kuk & Banning, p. 106). While Kuk and Banning (2009) did not find much evidence of cross-functional collaboration in the institutions they surveyed, the desire for organizational change seems to be present.

The urgency to create change in higher education is present across all institutional types regardless of culture and structure. Eckel and Kezar (2002) illuminate the importance of alignment between cultural norms and institutional change strategies. Further, universities noted as demonstrating progress towards change more often have missions that express collaboration as a cultural value (Kezar, 2005). Finally, trends in Student Affairs indicate that reorganizing structures to work cross functionally and collaboratively may be desirable goals for meeting student needs (Kuk & Banning, 2009). In summary, these studies analyzing culture and institutional change confirm how impactful it can be to connect change initiatives to institutional

mission, and that collaboration across units, rather than operating within siloes, is more likely to yield desired results. Therefore, my PAR project drew clear links between the university's value of social justice and the investigation of white privilege. Additionally, this PAR project sought to engage members from across the campus community in administering action outcomes. Next, a look at current diversity initiatives provides further insight into the challenges and effectiveness of organizational change in higher education.

Diversity Change Initiatives

An organizational change topic of increasing importance and prevalence is how to promote institutional diversity initiatives that meet the needs of universities and their students. Building on the aforementioned multi-year, multi-campus study of racial climates that was introduced earlier in Chapter I, Harper and Hurtado (2007) conducted a qualitative study at five, large institutions, some rural and some urban, across three geographic regions (Harper & Hurtado, p. 15). Although all five institutions were classified as Predominantly White Institutions (PWI's), 278 students and 41 staff members of diverse racial backgrounds participated in interviews and focus groups (Harper & Hurtado, p. 15). The student focus groups were racially homogenous (i.e., all Asian American, or all African American, or all Latino, or all white, etc.) and the staff focus group was mixed in terms of racial composition, however, it was noted that only 5 of the 41 staff participants were white (Harper & Hurtado, p. 15). One consideration of the method of homogeneous groupings is whether it led participants to experience comfort, common understanding, and support from one another, thereby allowing greater transparency of feelings pertaining to the campus racial climate than would typically be expressed (Harper & Hurtado, p. 15).

Limitations of the study included the possibility that individual participants may not have felt comfortable sharing different opinions from others in the focus groups (Harper & Hurtado, 2007, p. 15). Additionally, the sampling method for white students in particular was questionable as they were recruited only from existing student leader groups (Harper & Hurtado, p. 16). Future research may counter these factors by varying methods of soliciting feedback and increasing outreach to white students from the population at large.

The study examined how current students experienced the three themes which emerged from their meta-analysis and resulted in uncovering nine new racial climate themes common across the five participating campuses: 1) Cross-race consensus regarding institutional negligence, 2) race as a four-letter word and an avoidable topic, 3) self-reports of racial segregation, 4) gaps in social satisfaction by race, 5) reputational legacies for racism, 6) white student overestimation of minority student satisfaction, 7) the pervasiveness of whiteness in space, curricula, and activities, 8) unexplored qualitative realities of race in institutional assessment, and 9) the consciousness-powerlessness paradox among racial/ethnic minority staff (Harper & Hurtado, 2007, pp. 16-19). The three most relevant themes pertaining to this dissertation are explored below.

First, Harper and Hurtado (2007) report that “almost all of the students interviewed deemed their institutions negligent in the educational processes leading to racial understanding, both inside and outside the classroom” and instead felt there were unrealistic expectations that students would automatically engage in cross-racial dialogue on their own (Harper & Hurtado, p. 16). Frustration increased where students felt there to be incongruences between institutions’ espoused and lived values of diversity (Harper & Hurtado, p. 16). In short, white students and

Students of Color felt it critical for there to be assistance and an intentional process through which they engaged with students of diverse backgrounds (Harper & Hurtado, p. 16).

Researchers felt that these findings made a strong case for greater transparency in learning outcomes and learning environments on college and university campuses (Harper & Hurtado, p. 19). This finding seems it would be of paramount concern to institutions that proclaim diversity as a core value while struggling to embody it in practice.

Second, race is something that simply is not talked about on college campuses. Students and staff alike indicated that race was a taboo topic unless in the context of ethnic studies courses (Harper & Hurtado, 2007, p. 16). Whether it was due to the historical impact of racism in a specific geographic region, or because of institutional or state politics or the like, campuses remain largely silent when it comes to racism and privilege (Harper & Hurtado, p. 16). Contrarily, researchers challenged “faculty and staff in academic affairs, Student Affairs, multicultural affairs, and other units to consider their roles as accomplices in the cyclical reproduction of racism and institutional negligence [by remaining silent]” (Harper & Hurtado, p. 21). Echoing back to the first theme, faculty, staff and administrators cannot expect students to engage in meaningful cross-racial dialogue when they do not speak openly about race themselves.

Third, the staff interviewed all seemed aware of the challenging circumstances that Students of Color reported. However, most felt powerless to take any serious action for fear of being singled out as a troublemaker or worse, getting fired (Harper & Hurtado, 2007, p. 19). One white staff member explained “it is the sort of thing that will piss the upper administration off and make them leery of you for raising the issue” (Harper & Hurtado, p. 19). For these reasons,

staff across the five campuses agreed that people remain largely silent on the issue of race (Harper & Hurtado, p. 19). Researchers suggested that “senior administrative support, collaboration, and visible action are among the core elements requisite for transformational change in higher education” (Harper & Hurtado, pp. 19-20). Therefore, staff and faculty at all levels as well as administrative leadership must participate in the transformation of a campus’s racial climate.

The first theme was demonstrated by at least eight studies which found white students reported higher overall satisfaction and experienced less discrimination and differential treatment at their respective colleges and universities than did Students of Color (Harper & Hurtado, 2007, p. 12). The second theme surfaced in approximately 14 studies where Students of Color reported experiencing microaggressions (subtle verbal and nonverbal dismissals and insults) on their campuses, perceptions towards them as receiving special consideration in admissions and “race-laden accusations [and stereotypes] of intellectual inferiority from White peers and faculty” (Harper & Hurtado, p. 13). And finally the third theme drawn from studies conducted at over 10 universities illustrated how students from institutions that deliberately created diverse campuses and provided intentional opportunities for cross-race dialogue experienced benefits that students from other institutions may not including “cognitive, psychosocial, and interpersonal gains that are useful during and after college” (Harper & Hurtado, p. 14).

In light of these findings which show Students of Color experience higher rates of stereotyping and misperceptions and less overall satisfaction with the college experience than do white students, white practitioners must consider how they can best work with and support students whose backgrounds are not their own. Furthermore, given that research demonstrates

the benefits of structural diversity when campuses purposely create meaningful cross-racial interactions, and given that white practitioners make up the majority in the academy, it seems they hold a great deal of power in ensuring that campuses engage in deliberate engagement of diversity and in examining forces which detract from positive campus racial climates.

Kezar et al. (2008) were interested in exploring what specific contextual features need to be addressed in order to implement equity initiatives on college campuses that might respond to the type of campus climate concerns raised by Harper and Hurtado (2007). Specifically, the study focused on implementing the Equity Scorecard Project which used student performance data broken down according to race and ethnicity to inform what campus interventions they were to offer (Kezar et al., p. 126). The use of the Equity Scorecard is meant to provide an indication of a college campus's readiness for change and their ability to implement diversity initiatives.

The researchers utilized purposeful sampling of institutions participating in this action research project, with most being at "Stage I Diversity," or "achieving a racially and ethnically diverse student body" as opposed to "achieving equity in education outcomes for historically disenfranchised [students]" (Kezar et al., 2008, p. 157). In total, 14 colleges and universities were selected based on the following criteria: "(a) institutional variety; (b) Stage I Diversity; and (c) willingness to have the implementation process observed over a 5-year period" (Kezar et al., p. 134). A case study approach to data collection was used, with researchers taking extensive notes from approximately 25 meetings at each of the fourteen institutions (Kezar et al., p. 136). Notes were transcribed, coded and analyzed by four researchers for trustworthiness (Kezar et al., p. 138).

Limitations of the study were that researchers did not collect any data outside of meeting observations, and that the results may not be as applicable for universities with low numbers of underrepresented students (Kezar et al., 2008, p. 140). However, six themes of contextual features emerged across the institutions that led to the creation of a model for change implementation. The features necessary to implement a successful equity project are: the knowledge required of team members to implement the change, the human and fiscal resources needed to implement the change, the readiness of the institution to learn and implement changes, the role of key supporters of the project, and finally, the perceptions of diversity and relationships among groups on campus (Kezar et al., pp. 140-143).

In a separate study, Kezar (2008) questioned whether current change strategies adequately addressed the politics that emerge on college campuses around diversity initiatives. Therefore, the role of university presidents was examined to determine strategies used when advancing diversity agendas amidst politically charged climates (Kezar, para. 1). To do this, Kezar (2008) conducted “elite interviews” of college presidents on 27 campuses (Kezar, “Methodology,” para. 1). Participants were selected using three criteria: presidents had to have had significant experience and demonstrated progress toward diversity goals; presidents represented a variety of institutional types at varying stages of meeting their diversity goals; and finally, the presidents were known for their reflective leadership practices (Kezar, “Sample,” para. 1). Data were collected from tape recorded, two-hour phone interviews (Kezar, “Data Collection,” para. 1) which were subsequently transcribed and analyzed using Boyatzis’s thematic analysis (Kezar, “Analysis,” para. 1).

Kezar (2008) explained that a limitation of the study was the elite sampling method, which yielded results not necessarily generalizable to other leaders as presidents hold more positional power and influence (Kezar, “Trustworthiness and Limitations,” para. 2). However, the six most important strategies presidents use to move a diversity agenda forward in a politicized climate were highlighted. First, presidents build coalitions who support their agendas (Kezar, “Develop Coalitions and Advocates,” para. 1). Second, they regularly assess the political pulse of the campus to gauge the level of support (Kezar, “Take the Political Pulse,” para. 1). Third, presidents need to anticipate resistance from entities and individuals on campus (Kezar, “Anticipate Resistance,” para. 1). Fourth, they used data smartly to neutralize politics and support their agendas (Kezar, “Use Data,” para. 1). Fifth, presidents recognized the power in showcasing their successes to fuel the movement (Kezar, “Public Relations,” para. 1). Sixth, presidents can use the political tension to challenge old thinking and unearth interest groups who can help move the diversity initiatives to the forefront of campus conversation (Kezar, “Capitalize on Controversy,” para. 1). Together, these strategies provide a framework for implementing diversity change initiatives on campuses amidst a political climate.

Kezar and Eckel (2007) investigated systematic approaches to effecting change when they asked how institutions could increase graduation rates for African-American and Hispanic students (Kezar & Eckel, para. 3). This relevant diversity question was approached through one-hour interviews with nearly 30 university presidents recognized by their peers as leaders for campus-wide efforts to ensuring the success of Students of Color (Kezar & Eckel, para. 3). Detailed information pertaining to the sampling, methodology, and analysis was lacking, highlighting possible limitations to generalizability of the findings.

Themes from the interviews revealed five things universities could do to help underrepresented students succeed. First, presidents in this study indicated that leaders need to: collect, track, and analyze data so as to let it guide decision-making (Kezar & Eckel, 2007, “Learning From Data,” para. 4). Next, they must get to know the needs of the students by listening deeply and learning from them (Kezar & Eckel, “Learning From Students,” para. 1). Thirdly, universities should identify all those committed to helping Students of Color succeed, with the aim of strengthening partnerships and sharing responsibility (Kezar & Eckel, “Acting On New Learning,” para. 3). Fourth, they should also prepare for controversy and position it as a learning opportunity (Kezar & Eckel, “Controversy As A Learning Opportunity,” para. 3). And finally, universities need to consider campus climate in pacing the implementation of the diversity initiative (Kezar & Eckel, “Know When And How To Act,” para. 1). Holding these suggestions in mind, it would seem most effective that whatever strategies universities employ to support the success of Students of Color, they must also align with the mission.

Organizational change can be realized when diversity is reflected as a value in university missions and when diversity change initiatives are supported by senior administrators (Kezar, Glenn, Lester, & Nakamoto, 2008; Kezar, 2008). Models for successful equity projects and strategies for promoting diversity on college campuses provide templates and tools to create organizational change in higher education. Next, four organizational frames (Birnbaum, 1988; Bolman and Deal, 2008) are presented as a means to better understand the nuances of organizational change and strategies for leading diversity change initiatives in higher education.

Organizational frames. Bolman and Deal (2008) presented four organizational frames that provide further context to the challenges with eliciting change in higher education. The

structural frame takes a bureaucratic approach to organizational design, adhering to set rules within a hierarchy and approaching tasks uniformly (Bolman & Deal, pp.47-48). The human resource frame focuses on the needs of people as well as the organization, and suggests that good relationships and a “good fit” benefit everyone (Bolman & Deal, p. 122). The political frame asserts that conflicting values and scarcity of resources results in members forming coalitions in order to further their agendas (Bolman & Deal, pp. 194-195). And finally the symbolic frame examines culture and meaning-making as a way of addressing ambiguity in organizations (Bolman & Deal, p. 253). Viewing organizational change in higher education through each of the four frames allows for a richer analysis of the change process.

Structural frame. The structural frame assumes that “specialization and appropriate division of labor” rather than collaboration are keys to organizational success (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p 47). There are certainly venues in higher education where this model would hold value, for example in large public universities, as it is often this type of institution where adhering to structure is essential in day-to-day operations. Birnbaum (1988) described this type of university as “the bureaucratic institution” where roles are defined by organizational charts, colleagues interact mostly with those closest to their unit, “people filling roles can be replaced by others (as long as they are technically competent) without having a noticeable impact on the functioning of the university” (p. 111), and policies and procedures are highly codified (Birnbaum, pp. 107-111). However, Kezar (2005) noted the importance of moving from bureaucratic structures and siloed units to having organizational cultures that support collaboration (Kezar, “Reorganizing for Collaboration,” para. 9). In order to meet the changing needs of a diverse student body and to provide services for the success of *all* students, universities must consider this paradigm shift.

Political frame. The political frame assumes a competition for scarce resources (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 195). Similarly, Birnbaum (1988) contended that political institutions operate based on who has power, often within a state of “uncertainty, dissension and conflict” (p. 132). Uncertainty exists because no one has access to all the information needed all of the time (Birnbaum, p. 139); dissension is experienced when groups feel there is unequal allocation of resources (Birnbaum, p. 138); and conflict comes from coalitions with different agendas and levels of influence (Birnbaum, p. 140). To this end, Kezar (2008) explained how “faculty, staff, and students from dominant groups often perceive the development of specific programs for groups that have been traditionally underrepresented on campus as taking away resources and support from dominant groups” (Kezar, para. 3) or, in some cases, perceived as not needed or simply too difficult to engage. This illustrates how diversity initiatives may be seen as highly political issues on college campuses and also alludes to the insidiousness of white privilege on college campuses, which makes leading for social justice all the more critical.

Symbolic frame. The symbolic frame operates on the assumption that “events and processes are often more important for what is expressed than for what is produced” (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 253). In “anarchical institutions” where goals and decision-making are unclear, a symbolic approach “may be sufficient given the limited aims or the limited interest of social actors in the organization. These factors, taken together, suggest that symbolic administrative responses may, in fact, be sufficient in most instances” (Pfeffer, 1981, in Birnbaum, 1988, p. 166). A more traditional solution to satisfying diversity inequities in higher education has been simply to increase the number of underrepresented groups on college campuses (Kezar et al., 2008, p. 125). However, while the outcome of such efforts yields a more diverse campus

composition, universities should proceed knowing that this visual symbol of diversity does not indicate that equity truly exists, or that students are truly flourishing.

Human resource frame. The human resource frame assumes that peoples' needs should be recognized and that individuals are valued by the organization (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 122). Birnbaum (1988) would liken this frame to "collegial" institutions that value the democratic and consensus-building process and that make decisions with "thoroughness and deliberation" (p.88). To this end, university presidents indicated that learning directly from the students themselves about what they need is one of the most effective strategies for supporting Students of Color (Kezar & Eckel, 2007, "Learning From Students," para. 1). This strategy demonstrates how students as well as staff and faculty, within the human resource frame, are valued by the institution for their presence and perspective.

When viewing organizational change in higher education through these four frames, themes of relationships and vision become salient. The structural frame operates as a hierarchy (in which change could be initiated from the top down), whereas the human resource frame is demonstrated as a collegial environment (in which people work collaboratively and coalitions easily form). Conversely, the political frame highlights disparate visions within universities (each motivated by power and control), whereas the symbolic frame suggests that a shared vision can be demonstrated in multiple ways (and all of which may meaningfully contribute to the success of students).

Important lessons about implementing diversity initiatives are learned by reviewing the literature on organizational change in higher education. First, it is essential to learn about the needs of the community by hearing directly from students, staff and faculty, as well as seek

guidance and support for change initiatives from diversity experts and allies. Secondly, in order for a diversity change initiative to move forward, there must be a commitment by the institution to look critically at the historical context and inequities on campus in order to make an informed diversity plan. Third, change initiatives which are aligned with institutional culture and mission tend to experience the greatest success (Eckel & Kezar, 2002; Kezar, 2005).

Fourth, institutions whose university missions support collaboration are more likely to experience the coalition building needed to implement and sustain change initiatives (Kezar, 2005). Fifth, there is no one formula for matching institutional type with division or departmental organizational structure; what works for one institution may not work for another. However, there is some agreement that moving towards a more collaborative model to meet the needs of students and to address issues of diversity is important (Kezar et al., 2008; Kuk & Banning, 2009). And finally, it will be important to identify specific strategies for implementing diversity initiatives on campuses of varying institutional types and composition. Much research focuses on institutions that have already demonstrated some progress toward meeting diversity goals. However, universities with low numbers of underrepresented students or in early stages of implementing diversity initiatives should be studied for how they implement a successful equity project. One area within academia that is on the forefront of leading for diversity and social justice is Student Affairs.

Student Affairs Professional Organizations and Training Programs

It can be argued that within academia Student Affairs professionals are the foremost advocates for students. The National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) promotes the personal growth and development of all students (National Association of Student

Personnel Administrators, 2013) and the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) holds that outreach on issues of concern for students are among some of their core values (American College Personnel Association, 2013). In order to “meet students where they are” and help them progress to the next level of personal growth, practitioners must be able to establish authentic relationships with students. In order to effectively advocate for *all* students, white practitioners must hold an understanding of their own identities and areas of privilege, be able to identify and challenge institutional racism, and examine the impact that privilege has on professional practice.

However, it is not enough to simply see cultural awareness as the solution to inequity and to focus understanding on the other, as by doing so, white practitioners are exempt from self-examination and are not impelled to reflect upon their own cultural experiences (Parker & Chambers, 2007, p. 15). Furthermore, focusing on the other provides practitioners an opportunity to outwardly affirm their values of equity and inclusion while simultaneously allowing their unconscious biases to go unchecked. Unconscious or implicit bias is the result of prejudices we unknowingly hold, usually resulting in unfair assumptions or treatment toward one group of people over another (Butler, 2012, p. 5). Therefore, in order to best serve all students and be effective at fostering campus climates that encourage cross-racial dialogue and engagement, white practitioners need to be self-investigative about whiteness and their unconscious biases, mindful that white privilege is present in their relationships, and aware of how institutional racism is perpetuated by white privilege. The two largest organizations for the field of Student Affairs, NASPA and ACPA, have laid forth important guidelines for professionals related to understanding racial privilege and other equity concerns.

ACPA and NASPA. A joint task force of ACPA and NASPA identified 10 core competencies that Student Affairs professionals should aspire to attain (National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, 2010). The competencies indicated “professional knowledge, skills, and, in some cases, attitudes expected of Student Affairs professionals” (ACPA & NASPA, 2010, p. 3) that were designated within three competency area levels of increasing complexity: basic, intermediate, and advanced (ACPA & NASPA, p. 4). The document, which may be used in developing professional development plans, crafting job descriptions, and providing structure for training and mentoring (ACPA & NASPA, p. 5), also indirectly communicates the values of Student Affairs as a field. The following looks at the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion competency area as it pertains most closely to this PAR project on white privilege.

Equity, diversity and inclusion. As defined by ACPA and NASPA (2010),

The Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) competency area includes the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to create learning environments that are enriched with diverse views and people. It is also designed to create an institutional ethos that accepts and celebrates differences among people, helping to free them of any misconceptions and prejudices. (ACPA & NASPA, 2010, p. 10)

Examples of each of the three competency levels are now presented along with their connections to this PAR project.

At the basic level, this might include being able to “assess and address one’s own awareness of EDI, and articulate one’s own differences and similarities with others” and being able to “recognize social systems and their influence on people of diverse backgrounds” (ACPA

& NASPA, 2010, p. 10). Relating these competencies to this PAR project we can see how recognizing white privilege, and seeking to understand the systems that maintain that privilege, are both Student Affairs competencies.

At the intermediate level, one should be able to “identify systemic barriers to equality and inclusiveness, and then advocate for and implement means of dismantling them” as well as “facilitate others’ learning and practice of social justice concepts” (ACPA & NASPA, 2010, p. 11). With regard to this PAR project, participants demonstrated intermediate level competencies by identifying areas of racial inequity on campus and the causes for that inequity, then proposed change initiatives and engaged other members of the campus community in conversations about white privilege.

Demonstration of competencies at the advanced level might include practitioners being able to “ensure that elements of EDI are demonstrated throughout institutional mission, goals, and programs” and be able to “provide leadership in fostering an institutional culture that supports the free and open exchange of ideas and beliefs, and where issues of power and privilege are identified and addressed” (ACPA & NASPA, 2010, p. 11). Members of this PAR project demonstrated advanced level competencies by advocating that race is explicitly addressed as part of an institutional commitment to diversity as well as leading by example in various contexts to create space for dialogue about the impact of white privilege on the campus. Exactly how one develops these competencies is still largely up to the individual, although in more recent years many Student Affairs training programs have included some elements of diversity training into their curriculum.

Training programs. Flowers (2003) conducted a national study to determine the extent to which Student Affairs preparation programs included diversity-related curriculum. A course met these requirements if it “was developed and taught with the expressed intent of promoting the development of culturally proficient student affairs professionals who are knowledgeable and sensitive to the histories, circumstances, and needs of culturally and racially diverse individuals” (Flowers, p. 75). In total, 78 schools met the initial criteria for the study which included having a minimum of four content courses focusing on student services, at least one full-time faculty in a leadership role in the program, two years of coursework, and a minimum of one practicum or internship experience (Flowers, pp. 75-76). Of the 53 schools that completed and returned a survey, 39 (74%) required diversity coursework; all of whom stated that only one diversity course was required to fulfill program requirements (Flowers, p. 77). Although it may be true that more Student Affairs preparation programs have incorporated diversity curriculum requirements in the years following Flowers’ (2003) study, there are still lessons to be gleaned from the data.

First, diversity courses must give adequate time and attention to investigating the various cultural groups and identity theories with which Student Affairs practitioners will work. Second, preparation programs must intentionally integrate relevant diversity topics across all curriculums (Flowers, 2003, p. 78). Beyond that, what is of highest importance is how Student Affairs preparation programs are helping students apply what they are learning. Gayles and Kelly (2007) discussed the importance of including opportunities for applying theory to practice as one of three considerations for Student Affairs training programs.

Gayles and Kelly (2007) conducted four focus groups at two national Student Affairs conferences that included a total of 37 participants: 22 graduate students, 14 Student Affairs practitioners and one faculty member (Gayles & Kelly, pp. 196-197). The questions that were posed focused on the experiences participants had with diversity in the curriculum of Student Affairs preparation programs (Gayles & Kelly, p. 197). Of those interviewed, not all attended graduate programs where diversity coursework was required; some chose elective coursework around the topic of diversity, and still others answered the questions based on their personal rather than scholastic experience (Gayles & Kelly, p. 199). From these focus groups emerged three major themes: 1) diversity requirements, 2) course design, and 3) theory to practice (Gayles & Kelly, pp. 203-205). Each of these findings, presented below, corresponds with recommendations for Student Affairs training programs.

The first finding suggests that diversity curriculum should be implemented in all graduate preparation programs for Student Affairs practitioners. All those interviewed expressed the importance of this component for their own development, and of those whose program didn't offer or require it they sought diversity coursework outside of their degree program (Gayles & Kelly, 2007, p. 203). The second finding suggested specific topics to include in diversity coursework, as well as the following learning outcomes for diversity curriculum: 1) exploration of multiple identities and their intersections, 2) examining power, privilege and oppression, 3) analyzing one's own privilege, and 4) developing "personal action plan[s] for social change" (Gayles & Kelly, p. 204). Finally, the third finding expresses the importance of providing opportunities for students to apply theory to practice through such experiences as internships and

practicum placements (Gayles & Kelly, p. 205). The challenge moving forward is that while many programs do some of these things, few programs do all of these things.

A recent search on the NASPA database of U.S. graduate programs in Student Affairs or related programs found 192 results (National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, 2013), which gives a sense of the magnitude of changes required in order to bring all Student Affairs preparation programs into alignment with the suggestions provided above. Although a large-scale overhaul of Student Affairs preparation programs is impractical and unlikely, there are some high impact practices that can still provide opportunity for Student Affairs and other higher education professionals to gain competencies in the areas of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. For example, it is unlikely that all practitioners within Student Affairs at the institution where my PAR took place received equitable training and exposure to diversity curriculum as described by Gayles and Kelly (2007). However, there are practices that can allow for greater competency development in the areas of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. The following discussion examines PAR as one such transformative practice for deconstructing white privilege and its impact on professional practice.

Participatory Action Research (PAR)

My study involved Student Affairs and other higher education professionals as collaborative researchers in a Participatory Action Research (PAR) project designed to explore the impacts of white privilege. PAR evolved out of Action Research (AR), which emerged as a research methodology in the mid-1900's from the work of social psychologist pioneer, Kurt Lewin, in *Field Theory in Social Science*. PAR is a type of action research that involves stakeholders within a specific community who are coming together to address some type of

problem. James, Milenkiewicz, and Bucknam (2008) provided a compelling list of characteristics of PAR which demonstrates how it may be the research methodology most aligned with social justice praxis, as it values and affirms:

- The belief in human capacity
- The unyielding commitment to social justice and equity
- The value of collaborative work both to individual educators and to their schools
- The norms of professional and public accountability
- Mutual inquiry as a means to honor others, empower ourselves, and adapt to a changing educational environment. (James, Milenkiewicz, & Bucknam, 2008, p. 2)

For all of these reasons, PAR also seemed most suited as a research methodology to explore the impact of white privilege on professional practice. To further expand on this discussion a group of white scholar-practitioners, the European-American Collaborative Challenging Whiteness (2005), offered evidence of key behaviors which position PAR as most suited to explore white privilege. The following five “first-person inquiry behaviors” are enhanced and deepened through group-based inquiry (European-American Collaborative Challenging Whiteness, 2005, p. 249) such as PAR.

First, “living in the inquiry” is reference to the groups’ ability to hold one another accountable to maintaining day-to-day awareness of white privilege (European-American Collaborative Challenging Whiteness, p. 249). Second, “practicing new behaviors” includes recognizing discrepancies between espoused values of anti-racism and change-oriented behaviors (European-American Collaborative Challenging Whiteness, p. 250). Third, “reflecting-

in-action” is a skill that allows participants to challenge their white identities and focus on desired behaviors (European-American Collaborative Challenging Whiteness, p. 250). Fourth, “conceptualizing new learning” is a benefit experienced by longer-term inquiry groups through their access to multiple perspectives, group language and metaphors which deepen meaning about white consciousness (European-American Collaborative Challenging Whiteness, p. 250). And fifth, “staying present to a range of emotional responses” means participants’ being open to experiencing feelings such as anger, grief, vulnerability, etc. while knowing that the other members can provide support around these challenges and legitimize personal experience and knowledge (European-American Collaborative Challenging Whiteness, p. 250). These interrelated behaviors combined with a practice of critical humility, or the state of being both committed and confident while also open to the partial and evolving nature of knowledge about white privilege, can be transformative of participants’ thoughts and behaviors (European-American Collaborative Challenging Whiteness, p. 250).

PAR is usually undertaken as a means to find solutions to situations resulting from “conflicting values and an unequal distribution of resources and power” (Herr and Anderson, 2005, p. 4). PAR assumes that those involved have “expert” and “local” knowledge that can inform and contribute to a solution (Kidd & Kral, 2005; Torre, 2008). Put simply, PAR happens when “you get the people affected by a problem together, figure out what is going on as a group, and then do something about it” (Kidd & Kral, p. 187). While both qualitative and quantitative measures may be included in a PAR study, it is the action outcomes of PAR that distinguish it from other types of research (James et al., 2008, p. 14). Whereas the field of action research includes various forms of inquiry such as action science, appreciative inquiry, CI, practitioner

research, etc. (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 2), and whereas action research in general includes some aspects of developing an action plan, implementing the action plan, observing the effects of the action plan, and reflecting on the effects of the action plan (Herr & Anderson, p. 5), PAR is distinct from other forms of Action Research because of its co-constructive nature (McIntyre, 2008, p. 15), the team's "joint decision to engage in individual and/or collective action that leads to a useful solution that benefits the people involved" (p. 1), and because of PAR's ability to influence social change. With regard to my research study, both CRT and PAR tenets are met as it addressed the unequal distribution of power and brought forward racial inequities through the examination of white privilege.

Four main principles of PAR must be considered when doing this type of research. First, those participating in PAR share a "collective commitment" to addressing the problem at hand (McIntyre, 2008, p. 1). To demonstrate this point, Torre (2008) explains that each participant must voluntarily join the project and be committed to exploring power and difference both within the group itself and with regard to the research topic at hand (Torre, p. 109). Second, PAR members have both a desire and a willingness to "engage in self- and collective reflection" in order to thoroughly investigate the issue under consideration (McIntyre, p. 1). To this end, group members often deepen their learning and personal growth with the unfolding of the PAR process (Torre, p. 109) which provides support for the utilization of PAR as a tool for both professional development and organizational change (James et al., 2008, p. 3).

Third, participants engaging in PAR come to a decision together about whether they will embark on action outcomes as a group or individually that will help to address the presenting problem (McIntyre, 2008, p. 1). Kidd and Kral (2005) define action as it relates to PAR as "any

concerted effort to remove some impediment that hampers the growth of a group or people, be it structural or ideological” (p. 189) which could range from policy changes to changes in ways of thinking. And fourth, PAR leads to the development of “alliances between researchers and participants in the planning, implementation, and dissemination of the research process” (McIntyre, p. 1). Furthermore, Torre (2008) explains that PAR makes “the political nature of knowledge production explicit” by challenging and redefining who has the authority to create and disseminate knowledge (Torre, p. 112), which is especially poignant considering the resistance and denial of white privilege by many white people. Although it may seem presented here to be a linear process of steps to follow, the PAR process is actually made of cycles of action and reflection, which by using a “logic model” as a guide (James et al., 2008, p. 35) can assist the researcher in implementing the PAR process. However, regardless of the tools used, it is critical to embrace PAR as a research methodology conducted *with* not *on* participants.

Applying these tenets to this PAR on white privilege required first soliciting participants who demonstrated a shared commitment to investigating the impacts of white privilege. Additionally, participants expressed a willingness to engage in self-reflective activities such as journals and interviews and to engage in collective reflection through group discussions. As my research progressed the PAR group decided together what individual and collective actions would be taken to address the impact of white privilege in our own lives and on the campus. And finally, the PAR members worked collaboratively in navigating the PAR project, moving forward with action outcomes, and sharing the research. Again, PAR is a cyclical “process of questioning, reflecting, dialoguing, and decision making” (McIntyre, 2008, p. 6) and it can be expected that the process may move between these stages somewhat fluidly.

PAR is one research practice that aligns closely with values of social justice and has the capability of impacting change within the participants themselves as well as creating change within their community. Three factors which contribute to the transformational potential of PAR were outlined by McIntyre (2008). First, PAR approaches the problem from “*possibility* theory rather than *predictability* theory” (Wadsworth, 1998, “The Action Element,” para. 3). All participants bring knowledge to the table that can inform solutions; no single person or voice is more important than another. Second, the PAR process, as with AR in general, allows participants to “insert themselves into the research process as subjects of their own history” (McIntyre, p. 67) as well as learn from their own experience. Each person brings with them their own unique experiences which are valued as true and meaningful, while also recognizing that it may be similar or different from others’ experiences and perspectives (McIntyre, p. 68). Finally, PAR allows people “the freedom to explore and value how *they* experience their individual and collective realities” (McIntyre, p. 68). This freedom is expressed by participants’ ability to be creative and innovative, to disagree with or challenge one another, and to influence the direction of the group (McIntyre, p. 68). While many of these qualities may also be true of other types of Action Research, PAR is particularly suited to creating interventions and affecting social change.

First, the theory of possibility inherent in the PAR process is a liberating framework from which to do white privilege work. One of the most powerful aspects of PAR is that it is a co-constructed experience; participants each bring a unique perspective and through this process gain self-confidence in their combined abilities to contribute to the project as researchers (action) and to leverage their privilege (change). Second, PAR recognizes there are multiple ways to approach any problem. While the experiences of this PAR group clearly did not reflect the

experiences of all people examining white privilege, it was no less true or meaningful for them. And finally, PAR allows the group to determine how best to move forward in examining white privilege and its impacts on professional practice, as well as to decide individually and collectively what they are going to do about it.

PAR has the potential to be a transformative practice, but it is also not without critique. Many challenges with the PAR framework may be seen as limitations including: finding a balance between the researcher negating control and participants asserting power, navigating a shared process with shared ownership (Savin-Baden & Wimpenny, 2007, pp. 340-341), addressing disagreements and values conflicts between PAR members or between researcher and participants, sustaining participant commitments to cycles of action and reflection amidst challenges with time and competing interests (Kidd & Kral, 2005, pp. 190-191), and the readiness of the participants to engage in a self-directed inquiry on white privilege. Each of these challenges serve as cautionary advice to PAR researchers, although it is unlikely that all of these limitations can be accounted for in any one project. Also important to note is that each of these critiques may be relevant when engaging the subject of white privilege in any manner. Nevertheless, the potential rewards to individuals, groups and systems engaging in PAR are powerful motivators to pursue this transformative practice.

Summary and Conclusion

Studies exploring the impact of white privilege on Student Affairs practice have only begun to enter the literature in recent years. In compliment to shifting demographics resulting in increasingly diverse student bodies and with acknowledgment of the predominantly white higher education workforce, the field of Student Affairs has rightly laid forth an expectation of

competency development in the areas of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (ACPA & NASPA, 2010). This PAR contributed to greater knowledge by examining how Student Affairs and other higher education practitioners made meaning of white privilege and used that knowledge as leverage to affect practice, with the goal of creating change to systems of racism and privilege at one institution. Additionally, the review of literature on CRT, white privilege, and organizational change in higher education influenced my understanding of the issue of white privilege and how it pertains to conducting a PAR among Student Affairs and other higher education professionals.

The tenets of CRT illuminate important and necessary considerations for Student Affairs practice. First, CRT asserts that race dynamics are present in our legal and educational systems and that equity cannot be discussed without also discussing race and white privilege (Crenshaw et al., 1995). Second, the “whiteness as property” (Bondi, 2012) tenet is an important lens through which to examine this PAR as the staff and faculty who represent the institution are predominantly white and the student body is richly, racially diverse. Third, CRT negates a colorblind mentality by bringing the voices and experiences of People of Color into the conversations about equity in education (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). And finally, CRT requires educational leaders to move beyond simply having diversity appreciation to advocating for truly socially just practices (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005; Parker & Villalpando, 2007). Approaching this PAR project from a CRT perspective helped to raise these important questions for consideration:

1. Given that the majority of faculty and staff are white, and that the demographics of postsecondary education continues to shift away from the dominant white

culture, what must white higher education professionals recognize, understand, and undertake in order to establish authentic relationships with *all* students?

2. What is the impact of white privilege on one's own life and on professional practice?
3. When educators understand how white privilege impacts practice, what do they do to address institutional racism and systems of inequity?

For all of these reasons, CRT provides a framework for examining leadership for equity and provides insight to this PAR project. Many studies and scholarly writings examining the construct of whiteness, white racial identity and white privilege (Allen, 2004; Blackmore, 2010; Blum, 2008; Hardiman, 1982; Helms, 1984; Kendall, 2006; Leonardo, 2004; McIntosh, 1988; Todd & Abrams, 2011; Wildman, 2005; Wise, 2008) informed the direction of my research. Additionally, certain action research and qualitative studies that explored the construct of white privilege in higher education settings (Cullen, 2008; McIntyre, 1997; Paxton, 2002; Robbins, 2012) were very influential on the design of this PAR project.

Student Affairs practitioners were the participants in Cullen's (2008) PAR study which explored their development of anti-racist identities. Findings from this study support PAR as a transformative practice, but remind us that each participant brings varying levels of awareness of white privilege to the project and therefore they each leave having experienced different gains. McIntyre's (1997) findings in working with white aspiring teachers illustrate how deeply the challenges of addressing equity run, even in well-meaning educational training programs. Her PAR study is a reminder that there is still much work to be done to infuse equity and inclusion throughout academia and into the lived experiences of white educators.

Paxton (2002), utilizing action and reflection with his CI group, demonstrated how individuals could come to a new understanding of themselves and their own whiteness through a collective process. The opportunity for a similar outcome to occur in this PAR project was very encouraging. And finally, Robbins (2012), looking at white privilege and the development of racial identities among women in Student Affairs outlined a theoretical framework for white practitioners exploring privilege. This was a useful point of comparison for the analysis of my PAR on exploring white privilege and its impact on professional practice.

Finally, strategies for implementing organizational change and diversity initiatives within Student Affairs were explored to uncover best practices that may be applied and challenges that may be anticipated in exploring white privilege in a higher education setting. Increasing collaboration across departments, getting administrator buy-in, and aligning initiatives with the university mission emerged as themes for promising practices in leading change initiatives on college campuses (Craig, 2004; Eckel & Kezar, 2002; Kezar, 2005; Kuk & Banning, 2009). When leading diversity change initiatives in particular, Harper and Hurtado (2007) highlighted the necessity of being attuned to the campus racial climate; Kezar et al. (2008) explored the Equity Scorecard Project as one means for addressing campus racial climate; and Kezar (2008) offered lessons learned from campuses moving diversity agendas forward amidst politically charged climates.

Each section of this literature review informed the development of my PAR project. First, it was apparent that CRT must be the theoretical framework to guide this study, as without it white practitioners can passively remain unquestioning of their privilege. Second, there is much to learn from the literature on action research and white privilege which not only helped craft my

research design but also points to important areas of emphasis and future research. And finally, the literature provided appropriate caution as well as strategies for navigating campus culture and climate around diversity and change initiatives. Holding all of these factors in mind, this PAR project aimed to deconstruct white privilege and examine its impact on Student Affairs practice in higher education.

Chapter III

Methods

This study employed a Participatory Action Research model with Student Affairs and other higher education professionals to explore their understanding of white privilege and its impact on their professional practice. Through this PAR the following research questions were addressed:

1. Given that the majority of faculty and staff are white, and that the demographics of postsecondary education continues to shift away from the dominant white culture, what must white higher education professionals recognize, understand, and undertake in order to establish authentic relationships with *all* students?
2. What is the impact of white privilege on one's own life and on professional practice?
3. When educators understand how white privilege impacts practice, what do they do to address institutional racism and systems of inequity?

This chapter is organized into five primary sections. In the first section, details about the setting and context for this study will be outlined. In the second section, I present the rationale for selecting a Participatory Action Research design. The third section describes who the participants are and how they were selected. In the fourth section, data collection strategies are described and explained. And finally, in the fifth section procedures are addressed.

Setting

The study took place at a small, private, religiously-affiliated university in the Pacific Northwest. The university, referred to from this point forward as Rosewood Ascension College,

is an urban, Masters granting institution grounded in the liberal arts. Rosewood Ascension College holds a strong commitment to social justice and has demonstrated this through its long-standing history of service to underserved populations in the local community. The university believes in the transformative power of education and operates as an open enrollment institution in order to ensure college access to a very diverse student body.

Rosewood Ascension College (RAC) recently received a distinction of being one of the most diverse universities in the region. The student population is richly, racially diverse, such that there is no one majority culture on campus. Even so, just as with most colleges and universities in the country, the staff and faculty demographics at RAC are predominantly white. With this in mind, this campus was intentionally selected as the setting for this PAR for three reasons.

First, exploring the impact of white privilege on professional practice at an institution whose student body is incredibly racially diverse and whose staff and faculty are predominantly white is ideally relevant for this PAR. Second, the purpose of this study aligned with RAC's value of social justice, and it is essential that any change initiative align with institutional values in order to be effective. And third, RAC has a history of taking action to address needs in the community, and given the college's demographics, examination of the impact of white racial privilege on professional practice seemed to be a need within the university community itself.

Rationale for Research Design

Participatory Action Research is a methodology that reflects the need for social change, that recognizes the inherent abilities within people to address challenges in their own communities, and that allows for transformation to occur on many levels including within

individual participants, the research group, and the community as a whole. Therefore, PAR was a logical and well-suited methodological approach to examining the research questions posed in this study.

PAR as a Tool for Social Justice

Participatory Action Research has been effectively utilized as a research methodology to address problems and create solutions by and for marginalized groups. Situating themselves in the literature as “academics and activists” and researchers with “personal experience as disabled women,” McFarlane and Hansen (2007) explained that “PAR is often successful in making links with ‘hard to reach’, marginalized groups” and that this approach to research “encourages power relations and gives added weight to the voice of the researched” (p. 88). In their PAR with 67 women from Scotland and Canada, McFarlane and Hansen (2007) discussed how working with women with disabilities enabled participants to develop a sense of agency through sharing and reflecting on their personal experiences (p. 92). PAR is also a useful and important strategy for engaging members of privileged groups in examining the invisible power structures that benefit them.

Ozanne and Saatcioglu (2008) explained that PAR operates from the assumption that “people have the potential for agency but may be unaware of constraints on their freedom” (p. 425). With regard to white practitioners examining the impact of white privilege on their professional practice, I would assert that they too have the potential for agency but may be unaware of the constraints on their liberation from oppressive beliefs, attitudes and behaviors. Thus, PAR was an appropriate methodology for this purpose as it provided a means of “consciousness-raising and reflection” that is necessary for white higher education practitioners

to develop the “capacity to challenge unjust power structures” (p. 425) within their personal lives and within the institutions in which they work.

PAR as a Tool for Educational Change

There are three primary reasons why PAR was the most well-suited model for educational change. First, PAR encouraged and inspired the development of “community[s] of practice in schools” (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002, as cited in James, Milenkiewicz & Bucknam, 2008, p. 10). Professional practice encompasses various aspects of performance including individual performance and behaviors, social interactions, the intentions and values driving one’s work, the specific language and traditions inherent in one’s profession, and the ability to respond to change (Kemmis and Wilkenson, 1998, pp. 26-27). Therefore, PAR allowed for the investigation and evolution of these modes of professional practice.

Second, PAR provided an opportunity for professional development for participants from a variety of backgrounds (James, Milenkiewicz & Bucknam, 2008, p. 10). It fostered the development of “collaborative professional research community[s]” (Grundy, 1998, p. 41) that worked together from different disciplines to craft possible solutions to a problem impacting all of them. In this regard, PAR had the potential to illicit more motivation to improve and commitment to the process than may have occurred in participants by experiencing more traditional one-time professional development opportunities.

Third, PAR “improve[s] the involvement, expertise, and sense of professionalism” experienced by its members (Greenwood & Levin, 1998; James, 2006a/2006b/2006c; Zuber-Skerrit, 1992, in James, Milenkiewicz and Bucknam, 2008, p. 10). It moves practitioners away from making decisions based on anecdotal or intuitive information and instead encourages

working from a scientific and data-driven decision-making framework (Herr & Anderson, 2005, pp. 66-67). In this regard, PAR professionalized practice.

PAR as a Research Paradigm

PAR has been described as “multiple sequences of reflecting, planning, acting, and observing” (McTaggart, 1997, as cited in Kidd & Kral, 2005, p. 189). While this description may sound oversimplified and leaves much open to interpretation that is in fact both the process and method of PAR. The exact modes of participation vary greatly from one PAR project to the next (Kidd & Kral, 2005, p. 189) and due to the collaborative nature of the process it has also been likened to “designing the plane while flying it” (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 69). With that in mind, the following section reviews the data collection strategies that were employed in this PAR.

Data Collection

The majority of data collected for this research project was qualitative and data was collected in several ways. First, as the primary researcher, I am considered the main instrument for data collection in that I am the person responsible for facilitating the project and collecting data, and all interpretations are made through the lens of my own experience (Saldana, 2011, p. 22). Second, group meetings, which were audio-recorded and transcribed, served as the largest source of data for this project.

Third, initial individual interviews, which were audio-recorded and transcribed, were conducted by randomly selected PAR group members prior to the second group meeting. This allowed for participants to establish relationships and build rapport with at least one other PAR member quickly in the process. Additionally, by members interviewing one another it allowed

me as the primary researcher to maintain a more neutral position among the group members, and limited the extent to which the initial process may have unintentionally reinforced a strict researcher/subject dichotomy, less so than had I personally conducted the initial individual interviews. The guide that was used for the initial interviews was based off of McIntyre's (1997) study and can be found in Appendix A.

Fourth, individual follow up interviews were conducted by me and were also recorded and transcribed. The guide used for follow up interview questions, based off of Robbins' (2012) and Paxton's (2002) studies, can be found in Appendix B. Fifth, my own reflective journal about the process of conducting PAR and memos regarding changing in my thinking over time were used as data sources. Sixth, documents from the field site (Saldana, 2012, p. 54) that are pertaining to the topic of study and PAR action outcomes were used as data sources.

Two other data sources were collected but were incomplete and therefore not useable as originally intended. First, reflective journals were to be submitted by participants, however, several participants did not complete them. Additionally, journal prompts were meant to be time sensitive and participants could not go back and answer at a later time. For these reasons I did not include journal entries in the analysis. A copy of the reflective journal prompts, adapted from Parker and Chambers (2007), can be found in Appendix C.

The only quantitative data source collected was the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Checklist. The checklist, discussed previously in Chapter II, was excerpted from ACPA and NASPA's (2010) list of 10 core professional competencies. Participants completed the checklist by self-identifying their knowledge, skills and attitudes which were designated on the checklist as basic, intermediate, or advanced level competencies (ACPA & NASPA, 2010, p. 4). The

knowledge, skills, and attitudes in this competency area are “needed to create learning environments that are enriched with diverse views and people...[and are] designed to create an institutional ethos that accepts and celebrates differences among people, helping to free them of any misconceptions and prejudices” (ACPA & NASPA, 2010, p. 10). ACPA and NASPA (2010) explained that the checklist is meant to be used in establishing professional development plans, crafting job descriptions, and providing structure for training and mentoring (p. 5). The pre and post results were intended to measure any increases in self-reported EDI competencies that participants may have experienced as a result of participating in this PAR project, however, most participants did not complete the Checklist so I did not include this data in the analysis.

The initial interview transcripts, journal submissions and EDI checklists were submitted to and coded by a third party in order to preserve the anonymity of the individual participants. This choice was made in efforts to maintain neutrality as both a PAR participant and as the primary researcher; to prevent me from unintentionally establishing power imbalances inherent in researcher/subject relationships. Additionally, by utilizing a third party to collect and code submissions throughout the primary research phase I hoped to reduce any possible biases that I may have otherwise experienced as a participant alongside co-participants, while simultaneously being privy to private information about individuals. This choice did pose a dilemma for me however, as by maintaining anonymous submissions of initial interview transcripts, reflective journals and checklists it was not possible to analyze any one person’s complete data set including these sources as well as the group interview and follow up individual interview transcripts.

Finally, I made the choice to personally conduct the follow up interviews with each individual participant at approximately one year from the end date of the primary research phase. This not only allowed me direct access to the interview transcriptions for cross-analysis with other data sources, but more importantly it reconnected me with the participants to learn first-hand how their involvement in this PAR impacted their personal understanding of white privilege and their professional practice; it allowed me an opportunity to gauge their continued interest in pursuing PAR action outcomes; and it provided an opportunity to conduct member checks on initial findings.

Participants

Participants were Rosewood Ascension College staff and faculty members over the age of 18 years old. The original intention of the study was to recruit solely within Student Affairs by sending an email announcement about the study to staff members in Student Affairs and generating interest by word of mouth. After not receiving a previously determined minimum of five volunteers by my initial deadline, I switched to a secondary method of recruitment. By sending an email announcement inviting participation from any employee on campus I was able to generate additional interest from colleagues in academic affairs, including faculty. The result was a total participant group of 10 staff and faculty members: five participants worked in Student Affairs; three participants were from Academic Affairs (two of whom had previously worked in Student Affairs); and two participants were faculty members.

Participant Demographics

The study was open to any staff and faculty at RAC and there were no demographic criterion for participation. Many more people expressed interest than were able to participate, but

due to limitations in their own schedules or because they responded after the PAR had already begun the primary research phase they were not included. For these reasons, the demographics of the PAR group had the potential to be more diverse if more people who had initially expressed interest could have participated.

With regard to seniority at the institution, participants' years of service at the college ranged from two years to 15 or more years of service. Of the 10 participants, seven identified as heterosexual and three were in committed, same-sex relationships. In terms of gender composition, the participant pool was heavily female with only one participant identifying as male. In terms of age, the majority of the participants' ages fell between their early 30's to mid-40's, with only one participant being younger and one participant being older than the average range. And finally, the racial composition of the group was predominantly white with all but two participants identifying as white. Two participants did identify as Multi-Racial (Latina and white) of which one also acknowledged that she at times "passed" as white.

Procedures

Participants met once per week for one to two hours at a time, over a period of approximately 14 weeks, which was considered the primary research phase. Various activities during group meetings aimed to facilitate the action and reflection process, including discussion of shared readings on white privilege, viewing of videos on the topic, and hands-on activities. An example of a shared reading is *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack* by Peggy McIntosh. An example of a video watched by the group is *Pathology of White Privilege* by Tim Wise. McIntyre (1997) explained that symbolic art such as visual designs may be used as tools for "living out the participatory process" (p. 658). With that in mind, an example of an activity

done during the group meetings included making white clay models that symbolized what whiteness meant to each person (Parker & Chambers , 2006).

At the end of the primary research phase participants decided on a set of action outcomes that they wanted to pursue as a result of the PAR experience. Some of those action items included providing recommendations to the strategic planning group at RAC, offering campus presentations on the PAR experience and on white privilege as well as assisting with the data analysis process. Following the development of action outcomes, the PAR group came together informally on three separate occasions to support one another in their exploration of the impact of white privilege on their professional practice and to provide updates on pursuit of action outcomes.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

In order to establish credibility and trustworthiness I aimed to demonstrate the honesty and authenticity of findings and to ensure that the research was conducted with rigor and integrity (Saldana, 2012, p. 136). In addition to the multiple methods of data gathering mentioned previously, there were two additional factors that contributed to credibility and trustworthiness. First, invitations were extended to all PAR group members to participate in the initial coding of transcripts and identifying of emergent themes. Two members elected to participate in this process. After a brief training on establishing codes, or the process of using either a word or phrase to represent portions of the data (Saldana, 2012, pp. 95-96), the two participants individually read all group session transcripts and developed their own initial coding. Then on two separate occasions the three of us joined together in a discussion and came to group consensus about emergent themes.

Second, I engaged in member checking by reviewing preliminary themes with participants in person during their follow-up interviews, and I extended an email invitation to all participants to review and provide feedback on the initial written analysis. Saldana (2012) describes member checking as the “corroboration of data analysis with the participants themselves” (p. 135). While each of the participants shared responses to preliminary themes during their follow-up interviews, only one participant provided feedback on the written analysis. Upon receiving PAR group member feedback I then attempted to incorporate those perspectives into my interpretation and presentation of the findings. Finally, I aimed to be transparent about my decision-making as a researcher and challenges experienced in the research process. This process of auditing my findings (Saldana, 2012, p. 136) was done by comparing them against my reflective journals about the research process and memos about my understanding of the data. The following chapter looks at the research findings which emerged from this multi-faceted process.

Chapter IV

Data Collection and Analysis

Before delving into findings, I feel it necessary to acknowledge the societal context in which this project took place, including several high-profile racialized incidents that occurred on the West Coast and nationally, before, during, and after the project. The totality of these events weighed heavily on the consciousness and hearts of the members of this research group, as they have for many people. I would wager that for most People of Color who followed these news stories, and African-Americans in particular, these incidents came not as a surprise but rather with great pain and anger for the disregard of lives lost and for the continued and blatant injustices faced by People of Color. I would also assert that for the majority of white people reflecting on these incidents, they likely found ways to ignore, excuse, or justify the outcomes, consciously or unconsciously, thereby further marginalizing and trivializing the incredibly unjust and even dangerous racial realities of African-Americans and People of Color in our country.

First, in 2009, 22-year-old, unarmed, African-American man, Oscar Grant III, was fatally shot by white Police Officer Johannes Mehserle in California, igniting protests around the country. The jury's verdict in 2010 found Mehserle guilty of the littlest of all possible charges, involuntary manslaughter. Second, in 2012, 17-year-old, unarmed, African-American teenager, Trayvon Martin was fatally shot by George Zimmerman, a Hispanic-identified man with white skin privilege who was a Neighborhood Watch volunteer in Florida. In 2013, during the time of the PAR group's primary research phase, Zimmerman was found not guilty by the jury, again sparking national protests. Third, also in 2013, 13-year-old Latino youth, Andy Lopez was holding an airsoft rifle believed to be real and was shot and killed by white Police Officer Erick

Gelhaus in California. No charges were filed against Gelhaus, resulting in protests around the state.

Fourth, 18-year-old, unarmed, African-American teenager, Michael Brown was shot and killed by white Police Officer Darren Wilson in Missouri in 2014. Protests ensued for weeks after the shooting and following the grand jury decision not to indict Wilson. Fifth, also in 2014, 12-year-old, African-American youth, Tamir Rice was holding an airsoft rifle believed to be real and was fatally shot by white Police Officer Timothy Loehmann in Ohio. The shooting was last known to be under internal review by the Police Department with no word as to whether criminal charges would be filed. Sixth, again in 2014, 43-year-old, unarmed, African-American male, Eric Garner was killed after being put in a choke hold by white Police Officer Daniel Pantaleo in New York. Protests were sparked in New York and across the country following the grand jury's decision not to indict Pantaleo.

It is important to call attention to these incidents in the discussion of findings as we could no more easily separate ourselves, or the PAR process, from the realities of the world in which we live. During the primary research phase and throughout subsequent action items, we reacted to and were informed by these stories. Sadly, these tragic incidents mentioned are but a few among many in the history of racial profiling and use of force by white people in positions of power to silence, subdue, and kill People of Color, and in particular African-American males in our country. I include the names and stories of these men and boys with deep respect and condolences.

Overview of Findings

The purpose of this Participatory Action Research (PAR) project was to engage Student Affairs and other higher education professionals as collaborative researchers in examining the impact of white privilege on their professional practice and implementing action outcomes that address white privilege. The specific research questions addressed were:

1. Given that the majority of faculty and staff are white, and that the demographics of postsecondary education continues to shift away from the dominant white culture, what must white higher education professionals recognize, understand, and undertake in order to establish authentic relationships with *all* students?
2. What is the impact of white privilege on one's own life and on professional practice?
3. When educators understand how white privilege impacts practice, what do they do to address institutional racism and systems of inequity?

In this chapter, each participant is first introduced in a narrative summarizing their unique characteristics and relationship to Rosewood Ascension College (RAC), drawing on their own words from PAR group sessions (i.e., the primary research phase) and follow up interviews to the extent possible. Second, members' experiences with "Moving Toward Understanding" of their own racialized identities, the pervasiveness of white privilege, and what it means to be a racial justice ally is discussed. Third, the theme of "Moving Toward Action" is examined in terms of how members came to recognize the need for action and how to impact change in their own lives and on the campus. Fourth, the primary research phase is deconstructed and the group's challenges and successes with the PAR process are analyzed. Finally, the chapter

concludes with a summary of action outcomes decided on and pursued by various members of the research group.

Participant Profiles

As referenced in Chapter III, participants were Student Affairs and other higher education professionals from RAC. In total, 10 individuals of varying ages, representing a wide range in number of years serving their profession and serving the College, participated in this study. Five participants including myself were current Student Affairs practitioners. Five participants (two of whom previously worked in Student Affairs) were current Faculty, Staff, or Administrators from Academic Affairs. In this section I introduce each participant in a narrative profile, aiming to emphasize their various identities by drawing on their own voices as represented in PAR group sessions and follow up interviews. Although pseudonyms are used to protect their anonymity, having a fuller sense of who each participant is will provide context and deeper meaning to the findings.

Heather

I came to the PAR group serving in the unique role of researcher/participant. As such, I am the only participant using my name of record. I am a first-generation college student and the youngest of eight children. My upbringing in a rural, all-white, New England community afforded me little interaction with People of Color until I attended college outside of Boston, MA. During my late teenage years, in my ignorance of white privilege and on a naïve quest to understand difference, I gravitated towards hip-hop culture and African-American men in particular. At the time I could not comprehend why I felt disapproval from my African-American

female peers, nor could I understand the impact of my actions in a larger racialized context.

However, the lessons those years taught me have helped shape the person I am today.

Now at age 40, I consciously identify as white so as to remind myself of the responsibility that my racial identity brings. Additionally, I consciously identify as middle-class and educated; recognizing that both of these privileges have also distanced me from my roots in some ways. Finally, I identify as lesbian and am married to my long-time partner. Together we are raising my teenage son and feel the importance of instilling in him awareness of the privilege that his identity as a straight, white, middle-class male brings.

Although I worked at RAC for just a few years, I have been in the profession for much longer, having found my career in Student Affairs when I was in my early twenties. As an aspiring Chief Student Affairs Officer I consider it my responsibility to be an advocate for all students. The question came to me in recent years of how I could authentically and adequately advocate for *all* students, including Students of Color, when there are obvious differences in our racialized experiences. It is this question that propelled me on my journey to understanding white privilege and its impact on my professional practice.

Holly

Holly is a Student Affairs professional and one of three PAR participants who attended RAC for both their undergraduate and graduate degrees. She has been working with event management and college access programs ever since obtaining her MA degree three years previous. She “grew up” at RAC and this is the only place she has ever worked. Holly is in her mid-twenties and identifies as a heterosexual, white female.

For Holly, participating in this project marked the first time she had ever talked about white privilege, and the space created by the group to have this conversation was very impactful for her:

When you actually verbalize it and have a conversation with somebody it makes it so real. So just that whole process of - which unfortunately I feel like this conversation is always so much of an internal dialogue because people are afraid to talk about it and afraid of offending somebody, and afraid of what somebody's going to think about them if they share their experiences or what has happened to them - that it's been so internal. So actually having that verbal conversation with somebody face to face and being able to be so real is such a learning experience. And it's taken 26 years for that to happen so it's very interesting to me.

Her ties and allegiance to RAC are heartfelt and deeply meaningful to her. As she reflected further on her time at the College she began to see it differently through the lens of white privilege, "we say well, we're one of the most diverse institutions. We don't have a problem, we're already diverse... I feel like we kind of pat ourselves on the back a lot, and then the conversation just kind of stops there." Yet she remained filled with hope that RAC was moving in the right direction.

June

June is a heterosexual, white female in her early forties. She is proud of her East Coast roots and her Italian-American heritage. June is the second participant to have attended RAC for both her undergraduate and graduate degrees. Her ties to the College are very personal as it is

where she met her husband and father to their two children. June has worked in Student Affairs at RAC for several years and has invested much of her time and energy into the institution.

In many ways June is liberal, open-minded, and has a thirst for knowledge. As a result of her participation in the project she came up against a learning edge and wrestled with how to make sense of her white privilege:

[Something] I really have been struggling a lot with is just definitions and how we define people. And being defined as a white woman. Which I know is what I am, what I am viewed as, but it is something that I have never really thought of myself as, until I was an adult. Because I never really felt like I fit in for a variety of reasons. Culturally, I never felt like I fit in moving here from New York, being full Italian, my family uses a lot of strange words and things, from Italian and Yiddish. Like all these different things.

And I never really felt like I fit into dominant culture, so that has always been kind of this disconnect for me, even though I know I enjoy the privilege of my skin color.

Additionally, being able to speak her mind and “walking the talk” is very important to June.

Over the course of the initial research phase her frustration toward the institution increased as she believed RAC was not serving Students of Color as well as they purported:

I always think of it as a social justice issue as well as a racism problem or a privilege problem. The fact is we keep saying we're really, we bring a lot of First Gen students, and a lot of First Gen students are from Families of Color. And it's just that we're not, we're not doing what we say we're doing. And it's just not ok.

June is aware of the inherent risk this poses for her to speak out when her opinions may reflect unfavorably on the institution.

Kate

Kate is a white female in her mid-forties who is in a long-time committed relationship with another member of the research group, Minnie. Kate has worked at RAC for over a decade and recently moved over to Academic Affairs after spending much of her earlier career in Student Affairs. She is well established at the College and has strong relationships with many colleagues across campus; creating a safe space for colleagues in the PAR group to explore privilege is important to Kate:

I think this is sort of inherent in all of us being at this table but, pledging support that we're all working through it and we're all struggling with it. And we raised issues about feeling vulnerable and that relationships might change, and if we could all try to just be ok.

Kate recognizes the privilege that her upper-middle class background afforded her to travel, attend prestigious schools, and live in desirable areas both in adolescence and adulthood. Kate comes from a long line of academicians and she herself is typically more cerebral in her approach to examining white privilege. "I feel like I come to this process generally straddling awareness and learning... And as I often do I tended to intellectualize rather than talk about emotions."

She is one of two members of this research team sitting on the College's strategic planning group (SPG) and is becoming a champion of important issues around diversity and privilege. "It has been really interesting to go on several occasions from this meeting [PAR] to that meeting [SPG]. Um, I think that it makes me in some ways, more frustrated but also more

courageous about raising things or pointing out things that, I might not have before.” She takes the work of the PAR group very seriously and wants to make a difference.

Lake

Lake is the only male member of the group and a life-long resident of the metropolitan area in which RAC is situated. He is white, heterosexual, and liberal in his beliefs and values. Lake is employed within Academic Affairs and works with students both inside and outside of the classroom. He comes to the PAR group with an intellectual understanding of racism and white privilege and begins to grapple with the ways in which his privileged identity has shaped his experience:

I think it's part of this very white obsession and idea that racism is something that is either in your heart or not, you're either racist or you're not. You can be *not* racist and benefit from systematized racism. So, regardless of their personal feelings or how they engage with other people or what they do, they may be still benefitting. I, I don't doubt that in many ways, in ways I don't even realize in my own life, I've benefitted from white privilege.

Lake is conscious of his presence as a tall, educated white male and approaches his participation in the group cautiously. “I come across as this know-it-all white guy who like, uses the right language but is, you know, talks too much. I don't know, that is one of my worries actually is that I am that guy.”

Among some of Lake's family members as well as the professional association in which he is a member, there seems to be an acknowledgment that privilege exists but that does not necessarily translate into action. Lake is willing to engage others in dialogue about white

privilege but notices how conversations can be easily averted. Consequently, he sometimes feels limited in the impact that he can have, “there are only so many things that I can personally do.”

Lisa

Lisa is a Multi-Racial female in her early thirties who has worked at RAC for the last few years. This is her first job in Student Affairs as well as her first time working in Higher Education in any capacity. She identifies as heterosexual, a feminist, and is married to a Latino male. Lisa feels connected to her Latino heritage and also has strong feelings about the influence of white privilege on her upbringing.

I'm a person who can look white in a lot of situations, and I can look brown in some other situations. And from such a young age I tried to attach myself to whiteness, and really wore myself out emotionally, and spiritually, trying to attach myself to an identity that wasn't mine and it didn't really want me.

Lisa is an activist in many regards, passionately advocating for such issues as prisoner rights and income inequality. At times Lisa expresses frustration about having to have this conversation in the first place. “I feel really angry... I feel really frustrated with how much talk there is about this topic and yet how much of a problem it still is.” And at other times she is deeply introspective and overcome with emotions as she reflects on her identity and the impact of white privilege on her racialized experience.

Lisa sees that some of the efforts put forth to serve students at RAC, including Students of Color, are done with good intentions. However, she feels strongly that staff and faculty “make a lot of assumptions at Rosewood Ascension about the right way, or the one way, or what a

student knows or what they don't know.” Lisa feels this approach is misguided, laden with privilege, and does not serve the students well.

Minnie

Minnie is a white female in her early thirties. She is in a life-partnership with Kate, who is also a member of the PAR group. Minnie grew up in a predominantly white New England community, in a working class family. While the earlier part of her career was not in higher education, she has worked at RAC for the last several years, first in Student Affairs and now in Academic Affairs.

Although a bit reserved, Minnie is contemplative and thinks deeply about the impact of white privilege on her own life. “It's important to me too, to have to be intentional and consciously think about and then articulate the privilege that I have as a white person and to have to think about that.” She is also empathic and feels the weight that exploring white privilege holds for PAR group members. “Um, this work is hard. And it is okay that it is hard. And even if it is not it is just a different hard. It is a different meaning and different kind of gravity to it, that's all.”

Minnie comes to the group with an openness to learn and commits fully to the experience. As the PAR process unfolds she finds herself feeling unsettled as she approaches a learning edge. “I am smashing up against my own limitations...my own limitations with like my knowledge base for things. And with my like, skill sets and, um, I don't know, like, feeling responsible.” Almost simultaneous to her internal process, Minnie is also beginning to see RAC in a new light.

Muzzie

Muzzie is a heterosexual, married, white, female in her mid-forties. She is a feminist, quite free-spirited, and always tries to see the best in people. Muzzie has been on the faculty at RAC for over 10 years. Although she is dedicated to examining power and privilege in the classroom, she approaches the work of the PAR group cautiously:

I think the last three weeks my stomach has been churning. Because even though you work, well I work a lot in my classroom and in my relationships and engage in it, to name that I'm working on it in a study that says this is the focus of my consciousness right now is, yah.

As Muzzie is not yet tenured, she is concerned about the level of risk in identifying possible inequities at the institution. “Probably the biggest risk is: will I do something that will cause me to lose my job?” She is a member of the SPG along with Kate. Muzzie finds the PAR experience to help her think more critically about the work of the SPG:

Certainly you know for me, going from here into those SPG meetings, changed my lens. When I, the days that I had been here and then went right into those particular meetings, my lens was far more pruned and certainly fierce.

Muzzie is mother to a young son in whom she encourages fluidity of gender expression; she herself holds gender as her most salient identity category. “On the first day of almost all of my classes I stand up and say this is the lens through which I see the world. And usually white comes second for me, woman comes first.” However, initially she has trouble owning her white identity:

I also was really challenged by the term "white." It's an identifier, a category, much like Latina or Black or Asian and it may or may not fit, which may or may not have anything to do with who you really are. Um, so it just activated a lot.

Sarah

Sarah is a white woman in her late-fifties and the most senior member of the PAR group, having been at RAC for nearly three decades. She is from a liberal-minded family of Irish, working-class roots. She is a tenured faculty member and racial justice activist, firmly established as a leader in her field with strong ties to African-American communities on and off campus. Sarah has clear ideas about what actions white people need to take in order to impact change:

It's way more unlikely if white people start talking about racism that there would be that kind of repercussions to us than there would be to other people... Because a lot more white people in the United States need to get used to the idea that we can speak up and probably won't land in jail or the unemployment line, or whatever.

Sarah has seen RAC go through periods of both progress and stagnation, and she is eager to see the institution take action to affect change. "I mean if we effectively disrupt white privilege there's likely to be some ramifications because we're likely to do some things differently."

She has a strong voice in the group and pushes others to think critically about whiteness and to identify specific actions they can take to interrupt privilege:

I do believe we need to do the internal exploration of understanding who we are, why we're in denial, what the true facts are. We need to be armed with those facts so when we go out and say something people don't say you don't know what you're talking about...

But we do need to do something as allies, you know. That part of creating what it means for white people who have this understanding to actually act as allies.

Sarah appreciates how being involved in the PAR project has helped to expand her on-campus network of people concerned about racism. “So it’s given me maybe more insight into how we might do things here, or who might be other allies who would want to do something here.”

However, she also seems at times disappointed by the pace and direction in which the group is moving.

Theresa

Theresa is a heterosexual, married, female in her early thirties with long-time ties to RAC. She is an alumna, having completed both her undergraduate and graduate degrees at the College, and has worked in Student Affairs at RAC in various capacities over several years.

Theresa is proud of her Multi-Racial heritage and is very cognizant that her racial identity is different than most others in the PAR group. “I am just as much Mexican as I am white.”

Meanwhile, she is also pondering the powerful realization that her son will go through the world with a different racialized experience than she:

I’ve never considered, I never even considered him white, until I was looking at his picture. I am looking at his class picture of all these happy smiley faces, and he’s one of the only white kids. So, it was very, it was something that stayed on my mind for quite a long time. I’m still, like I just don’t, his experience is going to be so different.

Theresa is invested in ensuring that the overall student experience at RAC is positive and is particularly concerned about success rates for Students of Color. “These are the students who we are admitting, we have to educate them where they’re at and we have to love them for who

they are.” She wishes for faculty and staff to acknowledge and honor the unique experience and story of each student and to not hold them to unfair expectations. “We have to meet them where they are. We can’t say: this is my standard, and you suck.” Theresa sees value in the work of the PAR group but also feels urgency for change to happen on campus. “So it would be helpful for me...if we could decide if there was going to be an action and what sort of timeline there would be for that.”

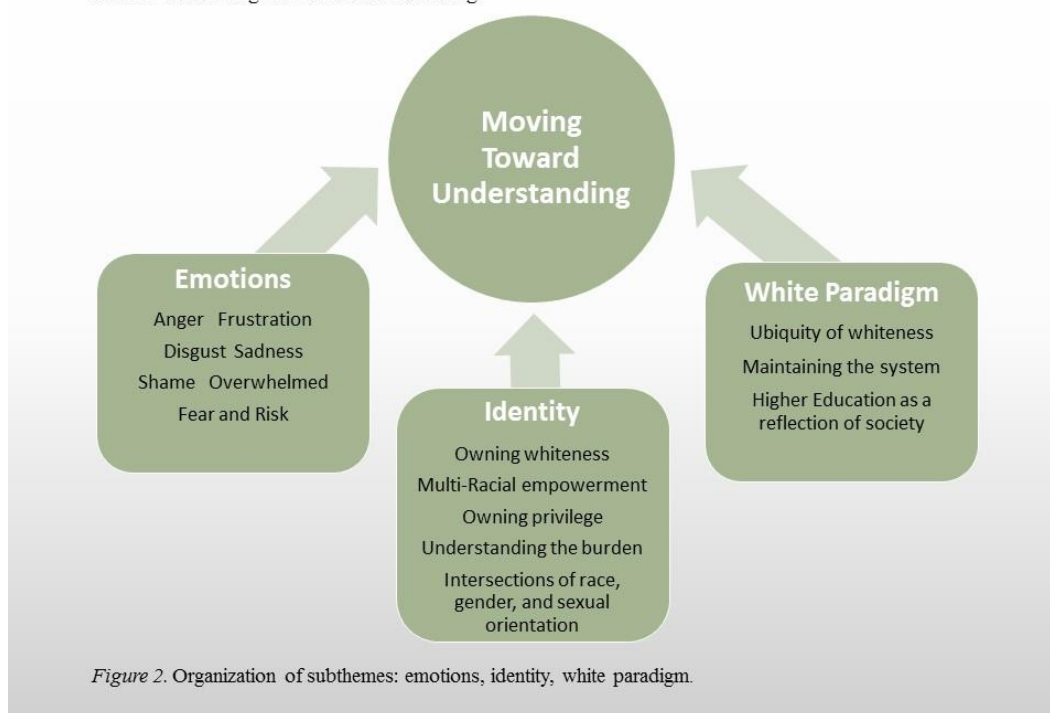
The original intention of the project was to focus exclusively on Student Affairs practitioners. However, I found that recruitment needed to expand beyond the division in order to gather a critical mass of participants. In the end, this particular mix of people and the diversity of perspectives and experiences in the group added value to the project that may not have been present in a group solely focused on Student Affairs practitioners.

Moving Toward Understanding

The first overarching theme that emerged from the data, “Moving Toward Understanding,” represented the continuum of awareness that members experienced over time concerning their own racialized identities, the ubiquity of whiteness, and what it meant for them to be allies for racial justice. To help conceptualize the presentation of this theme, an organizational chart allows us to see how each subtheme relates to “Moving Toward Understanding” (see Figure 2).

“Emotions” were a strong influence over members’ ability to develop greater awareness and served as one gateway to understanding. At times emotions had the ability to stifle or shut down the conversation. Conversely, emotions could serve as powerful propellants for members

Theme 1: Moving Toward Understanding



to see new perspectives. “Identity” was another critical concept that members grappled with which contributed to a deepened understanding of race, gender and privilege. Labels and racial identifiers, the intersections of multiple identities, and the complexities of raising white males were relevant topics that addressed various aspects of identity. Finally, members’ ability to recognize the “White Paradigm” that keeps systems of privilege and oppression in place and which privileges a white value set signified that members had moved to a deeper level of awareness.

Emotions

“Emotions” surfaced in literally every group session and were representative of a broad array of feelings and experiences. The spectrum of emotions ranged from anger and disgust to shame and fear. Although both positive and difficult emotions came up for participants, the

frequency and intensity with which difficult emotions emerged was notably more prevalent throughout the PAR process. There were also times when PAR members seemed to veer away from emotions and would intellectualize as a defense mechanism against the threat of experiencing difficult emotions. Ultimately, working through these emotional responses seemed to allow participants to be able to move to a deeper level of understanding and awareness.

Anger. Anger was a powerful emotion that either blinded participants from being able to see beyond their emotions, or it brought clarity and a deeper level of understanding that they hadn't otherwise experienced. For example, this exchange between myself and Theresa in Week 5 pointed to the differences in our abilities to see the system of privilege and oppression at a young age. Theresa had just shared her experience of being pulled over by a white police officer when she was 17 years old. The officer had questioned her ethnicity and refused to categorize her as both Mexican and White on the citation she was issued, and he assigned her the label "Hispanic."

Heather: What did that bring up at the time? Was it anger, confusion, embarrassment?

Theresa: Um, definitely not embarrassment. More anger at the system... That I was being forced to check a box. That I had to check a box anyway. Um, but then I was upset that he wouldn't let me check my own box. That HE identified ME as something, and uh, I don't know.

Heather: In my 16 or 17 year old experience I wouldn't have had experiences enough to know to be angry at the system. I would have been angry at him for making me feel the way that I felt.

Theresa: But you didn't grow up in a background that was so...[where] it was so more important to state.

It was clear that Theresa's Multi-Racial heritage and upbringing provided her a different life experience and a deeper understanding of racialized differences than I had at the same age, having grown up in a white family in a rural, white community. Whereas Theresa's anger at the officer stemmed from clarity about the system, I theorized that had it been me in that situation, my teenage angst would have stemmed from more trivial reasons. Moreover, I could not have understood the complexity of her struggle at that age.

In Week 10, June expressed anger in a way that seemed to have her teetering between clarity and confusion. She had been doing a lot of outside reading in addition to reflecting on the work of the PAR group and felt anger building as the system of privilege gradually became clearer to her:

[I was] reading some things and just really feeling like some epiphanies and some serious aha moments. And some you know, I guess challenges. And like, feeling like I can accept and understand, but feel so lost about, and so angry about so many things. And do I have the right to feel angry? And what does it mean that I feel angry?

In this case, June's anger both complicated and clarified her awareness of white privilege. She simultaneously understood more the ubiquity of whiteness, which angered her, and she felt conflicted about whether anger was an emotion she had claim to as a white person benefitting from the system.

In Week 11, Minnie talked about anger bubbling under the surface when she had tried to move from dialogue about racism and white privilege to action, and how this anger was also paralyzing at times:

It's made me realize that every time I've tried to take it to a bigger place, um, there is such a fine line between like, the action induced by rage, and kind of implosion. To actually not be able to kind of move forward and do anything.

For Minnie, the anger she felt originated from having developed deeper awareness of privilege and oppression. But even with this clarity, the power of the emotion was too great at times to channel into action.

Frustration. Related to anger was a sense of frustration expressed by PAR group members. Often members expressed frustration at being able to see injustices but not being able to change them. Lake passionately shared his feelings of frustration in Week 5 regarding people who claim that racism does not exist:

Anytime somebody suggests that we should be post-racial or just "oh let's be colorblind" and not talk about it or acknowledge it, I mean it feels like a coded accusation of People of Color for being the ones that are perpetuating racism. Which, I mean, which is ridiculous. But you know, people may be well-intended when they say so, um, when they express that colorblind goal. But it's such bullshit, that I don't know, I find it hard to, I wouldn't know how to respond in a conversation where somebody were earnest about that argument.

For Lake, his frustration overrode his ability to see another way through a situation such as this.

Conversely, Lisa explained a scenario in which her frustration confronting a colleague who made

a sexist comment allowed for greater understanding of what People of Color may experience when trying to confront racial microaggressions:

In the conversation I was like, this is what it is to be like a Black person trying to explain... I mean I felt like I was begging him, you know? I felt like I was begging him [to acknowledge his sexist tendencies], and it made me feel so, at one point in the conversation I felt really like I can't believe I am doing this. This is so beneath me to be begging him to understand this.

In addition to individual accounts of frustration such as referenced by Lake and Lisa's examples above, some PAR group members expressed a sense of frustration with the pace at which the group moved from understanding to action, which is explored further in the section below, "Moving Toward Action."

Disgust. Following the verdict in the Trayvon Martin murder case, the discussion in the PAR group centered on reactions and feelings about the outcome:

Theresa: So I was disgusted...Because it's more than what the verdict was. It's all the other ramifications because of that verdict.

Lake: I still can't fathom how, how people could let somebody walk away. Even, I mean hell, I think manslaughter was a stupid charge but at least it would have been a charge. It would have been something. It would have been like, no, you shouldn't follow teenagers and shoot them!

Muzzie: I'm just in a hard place. This is not, none of this is new...There is nothing shocking about the decision that was made to me. I understand how it happened. And it makes me sick.

June: On the radio today they were interviewing one of the jurors and she was talking about Trayvon's friend who was on the witness stand...And she kept making comments like "Well, I got the feeling that she was uncomfortable being there, that she felt less than, because...nobody could understand what she was saying." And that made me so sick to my stomach.

The comments of each participant reflected feelings of disgust, or being sick. When the circumstances were too difficult to accept, such as with the decision not to convict George Zimmerman for the murder of Trayvon Martin, and when the racial injustice seemed too great to comprehend, the emotional reaction of disgust seemed to actually invoke a physical sensation of sickness.

Sadness. Sadness was another expression of emotion related to the Trayvon Martin verdict as well as other circumstances. In Week 10 I began with a check-in, including how I felt about the verdict. "I come to the group with a lot of sadness and not really sure where to go." As members continued to discuss the recent developments, Lisa talked about how she went downtown to join in the protests the night before. Lisa said that as she stood among the crowd she "started thinking yeah, what do we do, out here, we are all so sad. What do we do, we are all so sad. What do we do?" In both of these examples, neither I nor Lisa could see a way forward while we were overcome with sadness.

June also felt at a loss in Week 7 when she reflected on a conversation she had earlier with her African-American neighbor. As their friendship developed, June looked forward to going on outings together with their children. However, her neighbor had to rule out certain day

trips when she suspected the area was not accepting of or safe for People of Color. “It makes me sad. It especially makes me sad for the kids, you know? ... It really made me sad to think there is somewhere they really can’t go.” June’s sadness over the different racial realities of her own family and her neighbor’s family weighed heavily on her and she wasn’t sure how to navigate this dynamic with her neighbor.

Conversely, in Week 10, Holly’s sadness stemmed from the timing of her leaving RAC to take another job elsewhere as well as her leaving the PAR group just as meaningful action was beginning to transpire.

I think this is my last week. Oh my God, I don’t want to look at you guys. Can I have this conversation? Cuz I’m like leaving everybody. It is so hard to leave you guys, um, and especially even to the level and involvement that I have gotten in the College, and being able to participate in projects like this. It’s really hard to step away at this particular moment... It’s just there are so many exciting things happening here at RAC and I am really sad to be leaving.

Holly’s sadness over leaving at this time compelled her to find ways to stay connected to the work of the PAR group, and she asked if I would provide her periodic updates as well as invite her to any PAR-related presentations.

Shame. Week 3 was our first group meeting following the initial interviews and PAR participants discussed their reactions to the experience of being interviewed by another group member on the topic of whiteness and privilege. About my initial interview, I shared:

It did in a way feel like it could almost unburden some of those buried, deeply secretive feelings and experiences that you know, to just tell [about] people that have been in my

family or my background or my experience. So there was something that was really relieving about that in a way.

Later in the conversation, after other members had shared similar sentiments, Minnie offered a piece of advice. “I think it’s really important to acknowledge though, about how to think critically about your own experience or perspective, not to be shaming of it for yourself. Because the shame sort of prevents the learning process.” Minnie acknowledged how shame, if it overpowered us, could actually prevent us from deepening our understanding of white privilege, as the discomfort of shame could tempt us to instead turn away from these feelings, therefore losing the opportunity to move toward awareness.

Overwhelmed. Members expressed feeling overwhelmed in a number of ways during the primary research phase. For some, the pressures of life and work were overwhelming, perhaps even contributing to members not completing journals or other PAR-related assignments. For other participants, their deepened awareness of how privilege played out at the institutional and societal levels was overwhelming. In every instance, feeling overwhelmed seemed to inhibit learning and action. In Week 8, June expressed how “it just feels like society is so fucked up. You know, where do you go with that? I’m just feeling like I want to dig a hole somewhere and just lay there quietly for the next 20 years.” The state of the world was so disheartening and overwhelming that June wanted to avoid interacting with anyone.

Kate felt overwhelmed in Week 11 as she discussed the state of affairs at RAC and her doubts that a problem as challenging as institutional racism could ever truly be addressed:

That’s part of what I’m struggling with. Cuz I see really, really obvious things that need to be fixed at this institution that nobody seems to want to fix. So what is going to, what?

It's hard to understand how to feel optimistic that something that's really scary to fix, and really challenging for people, and requires some real push, is going to [change].

Feeling overwhelmed made it difficult for Kate to imagine how the work of the PAR group might impact change at RAC. The layering of feelings of accountability to leverage one's own privilege, upon the responsibilities of life and work commitments, felt entirely too overwhelming at times for some of the PAR participants. When this happened, the extent to which participants were "Moving Toward Understanding" was often limited.

Fear and Risk. PAR participants exhibited fear and concerns about risk in numerous ways across the span of the primary research phase. First, participants felt a sense of risk to one's sense of self as a result of participating in the project. Second, members identified how expanding their awareness may pose risks to their personal and professional relationships as their lenses were likely to change. Third, the topic of putting one's job security on the line by challenging white privilege in the workplace came up for a few participants. Fourth, group members recognized how the risks of naming white privilege are different for white people than for People of Color. And finally, fear of change and the risks of not knowing what change will bring were discussed.

Risk to self. Early in the process the group had a discussion about the potential risks of examining white privilege. Kate began by acknowledging that "it's always risky to say, maybe, to just be honest about that. To be honest about ways you might not be aware or knowledgeable as you'd like to think you are." Especially in academia, in a place of higher learning, it may be a risk to one's self-confidence and image for those seen as educators to appear as though they do not know.

Similar to Kate, Holly felt it was risky to expose how much she may not know about white privilege. “It’s a very eye-opening thing to try to categorize yourself and where you’re at with some of these topics and things so, I feel a little vulnerable I guess.” At the same time, Holly felt it was very powerful to be talking about white privilege. Although she was aware of the inherent risks to self when examining privilege, she was also open to the experience and wanted to learn.

Later in the process, during Week 10, June reflected on how taking risk to self by examining privilege had impacted her more than she initially realized it would.

There are so many things that are affected by what I have been reading. It’s not something that I was unaware of by any means, but just delving deeper into it and really starting to see, all the places in your life where privilege touches you. And how easy it is not even to see it or recognize it, because you are so privileged. And that has been really kind of crazy.

As June’s comment demonstrated, being open to self-examination and reflection even in the face of fear and presumed risk allowed members to grow in awareness and ultimately deepen their commitment to impacting change. Another area where participants faced risk was how relationships may change as a result of examining white privilege.

Risks to professional and personal relationships. Lisa was the first to acknowledge in Week 3 how the topic of white privilege “can get really personal. And when things are personal they can make people have feelings that conflict with their personal relationships.” I agreed and shared that I shared similar concerns, “that some friendships or collegial relationships might feel damaged, or worse-case scenario, they might feel unrepairable.” There was a real fear that

relationships may change as a result of us examining white privilege, and a fear of the loss we might feel if relationships did change. The hope was that we would support one another in facing our fears of examining privilege and the potential risks it may pose to our personal and professional relationships.

In Week 11, Kate shared about struggling to address racial biases within her own family. She recounted a conversation she had with a family member where he used ethnic identifiers only to describe People of Color but not to describe white people. Kate feared how their personal relationship may be affected if she were to confront him.

I have to say to him, why did you just do that? Like you didn't mention ethnicity or any characteristic of any of the people that you just told the story about, but, and I had this thought I need to challenge him. I need to say, why did this matter? What was this? And then I backed off, which I told myself was because he just had this medical procedure and I thought maybe that was not the moment, but that wasn't it. It was really that I was nervous to do that because I didn't know how he will respond... So that is my, my sad experience of having the opportunity and feeling afraid because it is not something that we have ever, we just don't talk about.

Kate acknowledged how a risk to challenging racial biases is not knowing whether confronting someone will change the quality of the relationship. While Kate's relationship with her family member may have sustained such a confrontation, the fear of altering relationship was a great risk for Kate and others.

In Week 13, I shared a personal story illustrating how risk to relationships was a very real scenario that white allies face. During a visit to New England following the Trayvon Martin verdict I found myself confronting one of my own family member's racist assumptions.

We had a charged conversation the day before I left, um, where someone raised the point about, you know isn't that awful about that Black boy that got shot, and how that guy got away? And then [another family member] shared similar sentiments, like yeah isn't that awful? So I used that as a point of interjection to suggest that, yeah, you know, can you imagine that had the races been reversed, how that would have gone? Whereas the first person continued to, I guess, understand the track I was on and kind of nod in agreement, the second person said, "well they [Black people] just act so full of themselves sometimes." And that is when the conversation took a different turn.

It was very difficult to have conversations with my family about racism and white privilege. Not only was there fear of altering or losing the relationship, but there was also pain in hearing someone close to me espouse racist beliefs and in wanting them to share my values. Of the potential risks participants feared they may face as a result of joining the PAR project, risk to personal and professional relationships was more of a likelihood for some members than others. Another risk, the fear of losing job security, surfaced as a prominent concern for one participant in particular.

Risk to job security. Muzzie voiced several concerns about the safety of examining white privilege in the workplace and her fear that she may put her job at risk by participating in this project. In the beginning of the primary research phase she worried extensively about whether she might even lose my job as a result of participating in this project. Sarah tried to quell

Muzzie's fears by explaining how it's less risky for white people to speak out about racism and white privilege than for People of Color.

Its way more unlikely if white people start talking about racism that there would be that kind of repercussions to us than there would be to other people... Because a lot more white people in the United States need to get used to the idea that we can speak up and probably won't land in jail or the unemployment line, or whatever.

Sarah wanted to convey that even though it felt risky, in reality it was less likely that white people would face those type of consequences by addressing racism and white privilege.

However, Muzzie's fear of consequences and sense of risk around possibly losing her job was difficult for her to overcome, and this sentiment was shared by some others to varying degrees as well.

In Week 8, Muzzie spoke at length about feeling a lack of safety to speak out about white privilege at RAC and was very concerned about the potential consequences. In the group discussion participants had reflected on why they had been reluctant to complete the journal assignments thus far. Then Muzzie shared:

Like what if my, you know, my boss gets ahold of it... it's also the idea that somehow that might get out somehow, with my name. I'm just very acutely aware of the lack of confidence or safety around naming those experiences. And you know, having this fear that like somebody might, not that I think anybody really would in like the real world, but in my worst case scenario world, they might retaliate and plaster my entire journals all over... So if it comes down that I'm the person who did that, and I know there are people on the faculty who would take serious offense to that, and I'm not tenured...and I know

everybody says don't worry about tenure at RAC that's not an issue, but I just don't think that's true. That's not what I have heard. I just don't know the response, reaction, engagement of the people above me. Um, and so I'm a chicken shit and don't want to write it down.

Risk of job security was such a prominent concern for Muzzie that it influenced what actions she was willing to take during the primary research phase. Although she was the most outspoken participant regarding this particular fear, other members could relate to how fear in general could be overpowering and also detrimental to deepening understanding and taking action.

Risks different for white people versus People of Color. PAR participants came to realize how white people speaking out about racism and privilege face different risks than do People of Color. Early in the process, during Week 3, Sarah had addressed the need for white allies to protect People of Color from being targeted when they share experiences of racism and privilege at RAC.

If we describe the awful thing that happened to somebody, which with all the white privilege in the room didn't stop or whatever, that person could be put in danger unless we, unless you know they want support about something. Then they oughta be able to have it from us.

Sarah's advice resonated more strongly with other participants the more they understood about the different racialized experiences of white people and People of Color.

In Week 10, June recognized there was risk in naming racism and privilege but she saw it as a greater risk to not saying anything at all.

I think when you use your voice you are often labeled as a trouble maker or people will tend to discount you if you raise too much commotion... And I think even though it is really hard to say the things and to stand your ground when you say them, it is really important, it is really important... If you never say anything, if you are afraid, or you are complacent, or you are like it will never change, or it is what it is, then nothing will ever change.

As June's comments suggest, saying anything to address injustice is better than saying nothing, and saying something is a form of action.

Finally, in Week 13, when reflecting back on the primary research phase, Kate shared her perceptions about how risks are different for white people versus for People of Color when speaking out about racism and privilege.

I think of all the hesitations the people around this table had, about being scared about bringing these ideas forward. If we feel fear...about really pushing these issues, I can imagine, and we are in a place of privilege, how do folks who aren't [privileged] feel about even raising these issues?

Kate's comment was indicative of how participants came to realize that white people face different risks than do People of Color. While speaking out still generally evoked fearfulness in PAR group members, they understood that white people would likely experience fewer repercussions in doing so than would People of Color. Speaking out, or taking some sort of action to impact change, was the final risk identified.

Risk of change. During the Week 3 session, Holly, Muzzie and Sarah shared possible fears and risks associated with impacting change at RAC.

Holly: It's almost you know, just fear of the unknown... I have a fear of where this is going to lead us...

Muzzie: Well I think that maybe a risk too, is that we could really identify some things, or significant things could happen, we could change the face of the institution. And that's very risky...

Sarah: I mean if we effectively disrupt white privilege there's likely to be some ramifications because we're likely to do some things differently.

Simply put, change is scary. Whether it is fear of not knowing what the end result may be, or the fear of what changing the institutional culture may mean, there is inherent risk in working toward change as it likely involves a degree of uncertainty and discomfort. Having said that, members of the PAR group joined the project understanding that taking some sort of action to change one's personal awareness about white privilege and one's professional practice was a desired outcome. Therefore, the risk of change was perhaps the easiest risk of all those identified to overcome. One of the strongest influences that helped individuals move past their fears was a shift in focus from individual awareness of privilege to examination of white privilege at RAC.

Most individuals in the PAR group experienced a wide range of challenging emotions at some point throughout the primary research phase. During Week 3, when reflecting on how one comes to new levels of awareness about white privilege, I shared some of the emotional challenges of my own journey toward understanding:

When I first started trying to grapple with it [white privilege] and wrap my mind around it, I was, I mean I went through a ton of different emotions I should say. Angry, embarrassed, shame, regret, you know I felt incompetent, all kinds of things. Um, but I

just uh, I definitely thought similarly [to what other PAR group members had expressed].

Like, I have such good intentions, why can't people see that?

At times, members were so overcome with challenging emotions such as those mentioned that they were prevented from "Moving Toward Understanding." At other times, the emotion itself served as a propellant for participants to develop greater awareness. Emotions could be considered one gateway to deepening levels of awareness of white privilege. To this end, members' ability to process and work through powerful emotions determined the extent to which they moved toward greater understanding and commitment to action. Yet another factor contributing to deepened understanding of systems of privilege was how and when members developed a racial identity.

Identity

Salience of one's own and others' "Identity" was another indicator of "Moving Toward Understanding." Members demonstrating ownership of their whiteness and Multi-Racial heritage; understanding white privilege; awareness of the societal pressures placed on People of Color; identifying the intersections of race, gender and sexual orientation; and grappling with the complexities of raising, being, and confronting white males were among the concepts that emerged in this category.

Owning whiteness. In general, whiteness was not something that most white participants came to understand until later in life. For some of the white participants, it was difficult to even recall their earliest memories of recognizing racial difference. Sarah pointed out that white people "do have the privilege of not thinking about being white" whereas People of Color often

“are very conscious [of race] from a very young age.” I shared one of my earliest memories and how confused I felt at the time, as I had never before needed to think of my whiteness.

The first time I remember noticing my whiteness was on a trip that my family took when I was 10 years old...And we had like a caravan of cars that drove down the coast...the further south we got the more color there was. And I was, I felt I think intrigued by it...so we went into this restaurant and literally everyone, all of the people working there and all of the other patrons were African-American. And I didn't notice it initially but the step-mother, my siblings' step-mother ran out of the restaurant, crying, screaming, saying things like “they'll spit in your coffee and they'll spit in your tea”...And I just remember thinking like, what is going on? And I just felt so confused at that moment.

The sense of feeling disconnected from or confused about having a white racial identity was something that was not uncommon among the participants.

A few participants in particular, Muzzie and June, seemed to grapple with the meaning of their white racial identities during the primary research phase, and initially neither took full ownership of their whiteness. Early in the PAR process, Muzzie shared her aversion to using “white” as a racial identifier. She rejected being labeled as white, which was indicative of her disconnect to her white racial identity. Then in Week 4, Muzzie and Lake were discussing a magazine article that featured Michelle Obama in a peach-colored dress.

Muzzie: Another magazine had called it flesh-colored... And I thought that was really weird, I mean I understood what they were trying to get at with it but... then it made me think about how I would describe my own skin. I

mean, I know the term white, but I just, I'm not that on a, some genetic level. It's how I'm represented in the world.

Lake: Peach and pink and freckled?

Muzzie: And bruised and filthy dirty, and stinky and foul-mouthed.

This response to racial identifiers again exemplified Muzzie's discomfort with race labels.

However, later during the same session she began to take more ownership of her whiteness. "It's all around me whether I want the definition or not, whether I claim it or not it's a part of who I am. So much of who I am gets hidden by the label." Although Muzzie was then able to acknowledge her whiteness, she did so with some lingering resistance.

In Weeks 6 and 9, June also demonstrated resistance to owning her whiteness. First, when reflecting on her ethnic heritage, June explained how her family's goal when she was growing up was to be "just like" everybody else:

Being Italian, immigrating here from Italy and stuff, it is interesting...So we have moved away from being the Italian immigrants. We speak English, we have assimilated, we have acculturated, we are just like you, whatever that means...And we don't want to be associated with the "other," right?

The subtext was that for June and her family to be seen as "just like everybody else" meant they were seen as white. However, there seemed an underlying fear that if June and her family had called attention to their whiteness it may somehow have risked their privileged status being revoked. Moreover, if they had been viewed as the "other" they would have faced certain marginalization and lesser treatment.

In Week 9, June spoke about her reaction to the white identifier. Similar to Muzzie, June was then more able to acknowledge her whiteness, however, she did so with some lingering resistance.

It can feel very personal to have somebody identify you as a white person. Of course, I get it. I'm a white person. But just when you're growing up and you don't really think about yourself as anything other than who you are. I mean, I grew up, I was Italian. June found a sense of pride and comfort in her Italian identity. However, initially she experienced discomfort owning her whiteness and a disconnectedness to her being labeled as white.

Multi-Racial empowerment. Two participants, Lisa and Theresa, identified as Multi-Racial and had understandably different experiences with the PAR process than did the white participants. Each of them came to the group at different places in their own identity development. In Week 3, when discussing what brought participants to join the PAR group, both Lisa and Theresa discussed their feelings of it being difficult and different to come from a Multi-Racial background.

Lisa: I come to the group with kind of some raw gaping wounds around the issue because it's new to me. Because I grew up in a Latino town and looked white. But then I also grew up, when my parents divorced, in a white town. And so in certain settings I have a lot of privilege. A lot. And in other settings I feel very disadvantaged, um, by how people view me.

Theresa: Well for those of you who don't know my Dad is Hispanic and my Mom is white. And I grew up in a town that is very divided, and being white

meant all of these things and being Hispanic meant all these other things...Um, and so I've always had this [sense of] "I'm different."

Having both white and Latino cultural influences shaped their life experiences as well as their racial identities. Theresa and Lisa shared the unique experience of embodying a blend of both white and Latina heritages. However, ambiguity can sometimes make people uncomfortable, which meant that their Multi-Racial identities at times posed challenges for these two women.

In Week 4 when Theresa was recalling the story of being issued her "first ever speeding ticket" she explained the impact it had on her when the white police officer discounted her Multi-Racial identity. In this example, Theresa not only experienced the immediate feelings of being "put in a box" by the police officer when she was a teenager, but she also experienced the longer-term effects of this encounter, so much so that "now on anything with a box I put decline to state." In other words, the impact of that experience affected her willingness to self-identify her race even into adulthood.

Also in Week 4, Lisa noted to Theresa how intrigued she was "when you were talking the other day about your upbringing it was so fascinating because your experience was so similar to my experience being like a Mixed-Race person in a predominantly Latino place." The commonalities of their Multi-Racial backgrounds was surprising but meaningful to Lisa. Later when the participants were describing their clay creations made earlier in the session, Lisa explained how she "was trying to make two distinct items, um, to represent two halves of myself."

Theresa shared a story from her childhood in Week 6 that further illustrated the challenges only a Multi-Racial person would experience. Until her older sister began kindergarten, their household had been completely Spanish-speaking, but that abruptly changed.

Then my Dad said, no more Spanish in the house. We speak English...And by making that decision it made a huge change in how we identify ourselves...There are a lot of things that came along with that but that was a decision made by mainly my Dad. And my Mom's white and my Mom learned Spanish as a second language, and thought it would be great for my kids to learn Spanish. But to my Dad it meant so much more...it meant saying that you are lesser.

Theresa recognized that the decision to become an English-only household was one that her father made in efforts to protect them from racial discrimination. However, it had other implications including severing a certain aspect of her heritage, and perhaps further complicating her Multi-Racial identity.

In Week 11, Lisa talked about a complicated aspect of her own identity that had recently come to her awareness. "I realized in talking to my [Latino] husband that I still, you know, bring a lot of privileged perspective to my interactions with people, especially who are Latino...Um, I just have a set of expectations that I apply to everybody." Lisa's identity, although Multi-Racial, was also strongly influenced by whiteness, which lent to her "expectations" being based on white standards.

Owning privilege. Early on in the primary research phase participants varied in their ability to recognize white privilege in action. By midway through the process it seemed that most participants were able to easily notice others demonstrating their privilege, and by the end of the

primary research phase, participants seemed to have both personal awareness of and were consciously “owning privilege.”

In Week 4, Muzzie shared her perspective that “there have been times in my life when my whiteness has been a significant disadvantage to both myself and the people around me, by association. Not very often, but enough where it’s a struggle for me.” Muzzie was perceiving whiteness to be a disadvantage in at least some instances. Although this was based on her individual life experiences, she was not recognizing at the time how it is impossible to reject the inherent privileges that whiteness systemically creates.

Later in the session, although I began to sense my own impatience as a researcher, hearing Muzzie’s resistance to owning her whiteness, I offered a sentiment as a participant which I hoped would convey that I understood where she was coming from.

[Growing up] I would have never had the experience to make me think of saying anything about my whiteness. Not until my own questioning about what felt uncomfortable about certain situations did I start to realize that like, my race had any value.

My earlier life experiences did not challenge me to recognize and take ownership of my white privilege. Indeed there was a privilege in not even having to be aware of my own race. It was only after having several poignant experiences recognizing racialized differences that I began to see the privileges I was afforded due to the system of oppression.

By midway through the primary research phase participants were more easily able to recognize privilege in action and many shared stories of friends and colleagues that demonstrated

their awareness of the system of oppression. In Week 6, June shared a story about one of her close friends in which she recognized privilege in action.

Do you know, my girlfriend flew out of the country with her Costco card?... No, not out of the country, she flew back east... Her license went in between like, the weight thing, and the counter [at the airport check-in], and the woman saw that happen. And she had no other form of ID but her Costco card, and they let her on that plane.

June saw the privilege that her friend was afforded in being trusted to check in for her flight without proper identification. Her story also implied that had her friend been a Person of Color she would never have been allowed the same opportunity.

Sarah shared a story in Week 7 about students in her class that clearly demonstrated awareness of the system of oppression as well as her ability to challenge others to see their own privilege. “The whites in the class have become much more conscious of their role... we’ve kind of explored the issue of ‘well that happened a long time ago’... but you’re still getting the benefits, so what are you going to do about it?” Sarah created opportunities in the classroom for her students to examine racialized differences and white privilege as well as to help them think critically about ways to take action.

Toward the end of the primary research phase participant awareness of privilege shifted more toward recognizing it in themselves and they demonstrated a different ownership of their white privilege. In Week 11, Lake offered an example in which he had tried to raise conversation about racial privilege with a relative. Although his cousin engaged with him briefly in the dialogue, Lake was essentially shut down when his cousin made a pithy remark and quickly changed the topic. “I think it was so typical of like the white progressives’ response to white

privilege, ‘Oh yeah, that is a terrible problem’ [systemic oppression].” Lake was able to clearly recognize the privilege that his cousin exhibited in expressing liberal values while at the same time being in the position of choosing whether to even address the problem, furthermore, he recognized the tendency for his own actions to be reflective of his privileged status.

Also in Week 11, Kate reflected on her upbringing and ways that this influenced her ability to take ownership of her privilege.

That is a virtue of our privileged background I think, that we never have conversations.

Never have had conversations about race in my family. And we’ve always had this idea that we are these liberal, artistic people and so we are just living this accepting life.

Similar to the manner in which Lake described his cousin’s surface-level engagement with the discussion about privilege, Kate understood that being raised with her family’s liberal values created an aura of acceptance of difference but it seemed to stop there. Her recognition of this pattern was demonstrative of her ability to now internalize and take ownership of her own white privilege.

Holly also chimed in the conversation with Lake and Kate in Week 11 and demonstrated ownership of her privilege.

I am always the first one to say ‘oh here is what we need to do,’ and why do I think I know? And a lot of that is because of white privilege. I think I know because someone told me that I have good ideas growing up.

Holly was able to recognize that the affirmations she received from adult mentors in school growing up were perhaps different than those experienced by Children of Color. She understood

that one aspect of her white privilege was that others easily affirmed her as “knowing,” which she then internalized.

In general, “owning privilege” materialized in different ways for different participants and at different points in the primary research phase. Furthermore, it seemed that early in the process there was more of a tendency to deny one’s privilege, whereas by mid-to-late process participants were more able to recognize it in action and take ownership of their own privilege. However, while all participants demonstrated more ability to recognize privilege in action, both denying and taking ownership of privilege only applied to those PAR participants who identified as white.

Understanding the burden. Over the course of the primary research phase, participants developed a deeper understanding of the weight of responsibilities that many People of Color bear in our society, which in turn were pivotal in the development of their own racial consciousness. Whether it is the mere fact that most people notice skin color first before any other characteristic; or that many People of Color regularly find themselves in situations where they are the “only one” in the room; or that People of Color may hold an awareness that they are seen as representing their entire race; or that standards of beauty in our country are based on white standards; or that developing an understanding of different racial realities often comes much earlier to Children of Color than to white people, there are numerous, significant responsibilities and burdens that People of Color face which white people do not.

The first example of bearing the burden that the group discussed was the salience of race for People of Color. In Week 4, members reflected on the salience of race for themselves and others. Muzzie had just been explaining how the white identifier does not always capture what it

means to her to be white. The following excerpts highlight how skin color carries significance for People of Color differently than for white people. In response to Muzzie, I said:

It's interesting to ask what aspect of your identity is most salient. Like if white is not the most salient thing – like you said [Muzzie] you identify as female first – if white is not the most salient thing to me, well that's why we're doing this, right?... Because to me, I mean any of those other categories that you mentioned, Mexican, Asian, Black, you know Native American whatever. I can't imagine that they don't wake up every day with that at the forefront of what's salient about their identity because if they walk out the door everyone knows it.

Later in the conversation, Theresa added, “I feel like whiteness, or lack thereof, is something people see before they hear you speak or know anything else about you. So, they just look at someone's face and all these assumptions are being made.” In this dialogue, PAR group members reflected on how the significance of skin color is something that white people will never experience in the same way as People of Color.

The second example the participants reflected on was how People of Color are burdened to both educate and justify to white people the significance and reality of racism. In Week 5, I recollected a powerful statement made by an African-American, female classmate of mine. Her words, and the intensity with which she spoke them, stood out in my mind. This, I reflected, was a responsibility that only People of Color hold.

A classmate who is a Woman of Color was saying how exhausted she is having one more equity conversation... “We are a conquered people, and this conversation, every conversation, has this like begging for an inch of understanding. And we're so tired of it.”

And it really resonated with me. And she, at that moment, had sort of said this blanket apology to the class, almost so that it would make it palatable for them to hear what she was going to say.

The responsibility of a Person of Color to have to first explain incidents of racial injustice to a white person, and then to have to beg for them to understand or simply believe her experience as true, must surely be exhausting, disheartening, and tiresome.

The third example, being the only one in the room, is another burden that People of Color often bear and that which white people rarely experience, for it is easy to find both social and professional spaces that are predominantly white. I returned to the PAR group in Week 7, after having been away the previous week, and this example was fresh on my mind. I had taken vacation to the North East and attended a large family gathering while I was there, which I was telling group members about in the session.

I was at this big party with tons of people that I haven't seen in 20 plus years and literally the only people in the room that were not white was the husband and children of one of my nieces...I was really conscious how that probably felt for them to be in a room full of white people out in the middle of the country.

Whether it is so blatant that people are staring at them, or that they just have an awareness that they are among a group of people whom are quite different from them, being the only Person of Color in a group of white people is an experience that may feel uncomfortable or burdensome. Contrarily, for some People of Color, depending on their life experience and where they grew up, it may feel commonplace to be the only one in a group of white folks. Regardless, this is still not something that most white people would ever understand or experience in the same way.

The fourth example we discussed was the pressure to represent one's entire racial group. In Week 7, Holly reflected on her interview with an African-American, female student who worked in her office.

The student that I interviewed I've also had a chance to like work with her also. Like her and I both went to the local high school and were working with our one contact at that school that happens to be African-American... There's been an issue with our coordination to come to campus... And she [the student] said, "She's making my people look bad" [all African-Americans].

The responsibility of knowing that an individual's actions may be generalized to the entire community is unimaginable for white people, who generally think of other white people as unique, independent individuals. Yet for this student, she was clear that the disorganization of the African-American high school employee was reflecting poorly on all African-American women, including herself. Minnie acknowledged that "with the weight and all that comes with that, 'I am the representation of this group,' it's just disaster."

The fifth example the PAR group reflected on was being defined by white standards of beauty and behavior and the complicated implications that has for People of Color. Lisa, a Multi-Racial member of the PAR group shared an emotional experience with being recognized in this way and what it meant to her.

This interaction I had with an indigenous looking person from El Salvador and her husband... We were all just talking and the woman was staring at me and smiling and told me that she loved my skin. And um, and then her husband, like chiming in and saying [*now becoming emotional*] I can never talk about this. Like her husband saying to me that

I was like the prettiest kind of person because I look very Latina but I have a nicer skin tone... I think for some reason over time it's really upset me... I think I always strived to be more white... assume those behaviors so that people would respect me and um, and then as I got older I wanted more to feel like I understood where I came from. And thought of myself Latina. And something about that interaction felt very like, almost like I was being called out and at the same time like, a little rejected.

Lisa's story reflects the struggle for some People of Color who might at once feel pressures to meet white standards, whether it be standards of beauty or standards of behavior, and simultaneously experience a sense of cultural alienation in the process. The pressure and the responsibility to be both/and is something that only People of Color experience, and that which white people never have to think about.

The sixth example is the reality that for most People of Color, they develop awareness of racialized differences much earlier in life than do white people. Furthermore, a few stories shared during Week 9 illustrated how Children of Color raised in white families may experience particular challenges coming to terms with these racialized differences. June first updated the group on an on-going situation involving her younger African-American cousin, who was being raised by two white, gay fathers. After her cousin, now in her early twenties, became fed up with racial microaggressions expressed by many of her white relatives, she wrote a lengthy Facebook post to express her sentiments towards them. "[She] told everybody to fuck off... it started off 'to all my white relatives' and it ended 'seriously, fuck off.' And I was like, Oh My God. It was very well, other than the profanity, it was incredibly well put." In this case, June's African-American cousin became so upset with the inability of her white relatives to recognize what she

clearly experienced as racialized differences that she felt the need to draw some very strong boundaries between them.

Also in Week 9, Theresa shared a story about a white friend from church who had adopted two children from Tanzania. Her friend was struggling with knowing how and when to talk about racism with her young children.

She is like, “I don’t know when I need to have a conversation, but I need to have a conversation that makes sense at five.” But not everybody is going to look at him as the strong, beautiful, smart Maasai warrior that she sees him as. And they are just going to look at his face and think other things.

In this case, although the family is making efforts to keep the children connected with the Maasai community in the United States, they know that regardless of what they do, their children will live different racialized experiences than that of their adopted family. The white mother understands that this is a responsibility her children will bear which she cannot shield them from.

The seventh example that was discussed by participants was the responsibility of People of Color in university settings to both be the beacon of diversity for the institution and to serve as a mentor and advocate for all Students of Color. Theresa had recently attended a conference and was talking about a panelist’s remarks that she found meaningful.

At the conference I was at... they were sharing their experience as a Woman of Color...As the highest ranking African-American woman. People were like, if she [student] is a Black girl, send her over there where she [administrator] can deal with it, she knows the situation...But then the flipside is, I have all these students who are looking at me for mentorship and leadership and I’m only one person. My job is not to be

a mentor and a leader to all of these students who are coming to me because there is nobody else who looks like them around campus.

For People of Color in university settings, where they are statistically underrepresented, as few as one or two key people may be seen as the primary resource for many Students of Color. This is a responsibility that some people may willingly and yet unofficially take on without question, in support of Students of Color pursuing higher education. However, it is problematic when institutions come to expect and rely disproportionately on particular Staff or Faculty of Color to not only fulfill their job responsibilities, but to also serve as unofficial mentors to multiple Students of Color, and all the while being showcased by these Universities as example of their commitment to diversity.

Each of the above seven examples which portrayed ways in which People of Color were bearing the burden differently than white people became poignant moments for the PAR group. During the weekly meetings these examples provided depth to the dialogue, often evoking raw emotion or an air of solemnity, and allowed members to move toward greater understanding of the impacts of white privilege and of participants' own identities. Next, the intersections of race, gender, and sexual orientation are examined as these were three particular aspects of identity most discussed by members during the primary research phase.

Intersections of race, gender, and sexual orientation. Muzzie and I were the two participants most likely to bring up intersections of identity during PAR group meetings, albeit for different reasons. We often reflected on which aspects of our identities were most salient for us, where we held and exercised privilege, and where we did not. Whereas gender and race stood

out to Muzzie as the most salient aspects of identity, race and sexual orientation were for me the most salient.

Gender and race. In Week 4, Muzzie first discussed these multiple aspects of her identity and how she is very explicit about how her gender and race inform her work as a faculty member in the classroom.

I still come in to the classroom and I say I am teaching from this perspective: I am teaching as a woman, as a white person, as a person of middle to upper economic status, if you don't count my student loans, and that gives me a particular perception, so I am going to teach from that perception, or perspective.

Being able to distinguish between what was white versus male privilege became increasingly important for Muzzie in weeks to come. In Week 10, she continued to reflect on the intersection of race and gender. "The process of picking privilege out from sort of the different ways, and picking white privilege out specifically, um, has been, it's been challenging." Later in the discussion, Muzzie continued pondering this distinction. "For me it is that piece around what is white privilege, what's male privilege? And I have realized this needs to be teased out." Muzzie was hyperconscious of her gender which she knew and had experienced as an aspect of identity that was oppressed in our society. Meanwhile, her race consciousness continued to expand, and as it did Muzzie felt it all the more important to identity when white privilege, not just male privilege, was at play.

Sexual orientation and race. In Week 4, I shared my reflections on how sexual orientation and race had come to be two of my most salient identities.

When I first came out, I didn't identify with the younger LGBT generation reclaiming the word queer. And it took me a long time to settle into that. Um, so I was trying to find words that fit me. And there was nothing ever that felt like it fit. And I still feel similarly a little bit with the term white, but I think with my other labels, I guess if you will, I finally started using them even though it made me feel uncomfortable. Because I, well first of all I knew other people were labeling me regardless. Um, and, it felt like there was something I needed to get past. You know, why was that bothering me so much? So I us[ed] that as a like a parallel experience about why calling myself white was uncomfortable. I'm not saying it's the same thing. But I started consciously identifying as white, and would articulate that in settings where it was appropriate, you know 'As a white person...' because even though it doesn't feel it represents everything about me, it represents things that everyone else knows about me anyway.

For me, claiming and taking ownership of these labels felt important and powerful. First, by identifying explicitly as white and lesbian it helped me to be conscious of my multiple identities. Second, in the case of my white racial identity, intentionally using the white identifier helped me to be more aware of my privilege. And finally, in the case of my lesbian identity, using this label helped me to not feel silenced as a member of the LGBT community.

During the course of the primary research phase, landmark legislative decisions had been made that impacted certain identity groups and that were cause for both celebration and frustration. First, the decision to end the Defense Against Marriage Act (DOMA), was a ruling that paved the way for many states to allow same-sex marriage. The second legislative decision was a ruling invalidating part of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. And the third ruling scrutinized

race as a consideration in college admissions practices. In Week 7, I shared:

I was really excited about the DOMA and Supreme Court decisions about Prop 8, what that would mean, mixed with a lot of anger and frustration around using that same argument of everyone should be seen as equal to take away rights in terms of the voting rights act and also in terms of how we look at college admissions practices.

I later shared with the PAR group that as a result of the end of DOMA, my long-time partner and I decided to get married. Then in Week 11, I shared reflections on my race and sexual orientation in light of current politics.

Um, so it's been something I'm aware of that like my two most salient aspects of identity for me for a long time, but really right now, are my whiteness and being a member of the LGBT community. So there's gay talk happening at home all the time right now, and I was very excited to hear the Pope's comments yesterday [which reflected a shift in the Catholic Church's stance towards the LGBT community].

At times it was complicated for me to identify with both oppressed and privileged groups, as on the one hand I felt excited and hopeful and on the other hand I felt anger and frustration. It was also sobering to see advancements being made on behalf of the LGBT community while opportunities were essentially being taken away from Communities of Color.

For both Muzzie and I, we shared the experience of holding two identities most salient, where one was a privileged identity (white) and the other was not (gender or sexual orientation). Although it seemed that all members could point to aspects of their own identities that were marginalized or which benefitted from privilege when asked, the contrast of race and gender or sexual orientation was of particular significance in mine and Muzzie's life experiences and in our

daily consciousness. Contrarily, the quintessential privileged status, being white and male, was a topic unto itself.

White males. The topic of white males came up for PAR members in three ways: being a white male, dealing with white men, and raising white males. Most obviously, Lake was white and the only male in the group. Interestingly though, prior to Week 8, participants had discussed examples of raising white males and dealing with white men but had not explicitly mentioned this in the context of PAR group demographics. However, Lake was obviously aware of being the sole white male in the group. In Week 8 he referred to himself as “a privileged white male” when discussing his challenge writing a paper for his professional association that addressed diversity. Then in Week 9 I said, “I was thinking more about our work and I was consciously aware for example, Lake, that you are the only male in the group.” It is possible that this was previously omitted from conversation because it was so obviously the case that it seemed not to need stating, however, there may have been some other possible reasons behind this omission including Lake’s own self-consciousness, female group members’ conscious or unconscious silencing of privileged, white, male voices, or our protectiveness of Lake being the “only one.”

A particular set of challenges in dealing with white men were discussed concerning the silencing of People of Color. In Week 4, Lisa and Lake shared their reactions to white men who claim that we are now in a post-racial society. Lisa responded:

I don’t [do well with it] either, especially when it’s a white man saying it to me... You know it’s hard for me to talk to white men, white people, people I perceive as educated anyway, unless I’m code switching to try to get something. And like, you know, it makes me feel, I always feel like I’m asking permission to think anything... when someone says

something like that to me about something I feel has given me so much understanding about the world and a little bit of you know, peace, and clarity about what I should be doing in my life or like, I don't know it really shakes me up a little bit.

Her comment illustrates how as a Woman of Color, Lisa is sometimes made to feel less-than when interacting with white men. Particularly, when white men staunchly defended their privilege and denied racism, this was very unsettling. In Week 5, Lisa expanded further on frustrations experienced when white men dominated spaces where People of Color should be on equal ground.

Um, during [the Occupy movement] I shared with you the document that came out...it was just this litany, this huge long document, like from People of Color and women and queer folk, like from the movement, who had these complaints of how just the total domination by the white men in the group...they just can't [stop from] walking into a room full of People of Color and taking over and inserting and you know, just dominating...and there's like these levels of people with consciousness about it who still um, just can't let go.

Lisa's comment illustrates how People of Color are forced into the background and their voices and expertise are often considered less important in relation to white men. All of these factors called for thoughtful consideration and informed the final topic, raising white males.

Three members discussed their feelings about raising their white, male children. Muzzie and I shared a sense of responsibility toward raising white sons that was overshadowed by imagining the difficulties they might face relinquishing their privilege. In contrast, Theresa

expressed shock over the realization that she was raising a white male. In Week 4, Theresa shared her reaction to the first time she saw her son as a white male.

We were looking for a preschool for him and we wanted, we wanted a school that was diverse and had kids that looked like everything... And I got his preschool picture, you know his class picture, at the beginning of the school year... And then it came to me that my son is white. And I don't, I don't know how to handle that. Because my son is white and it's a very different, I don't know how to raise a white male.

Theresa identifies as Multi-Racial, and up until that point she had thought of her son as having the same racialized experience. However, when she saw his face in the picture compared to the diverse faces of the other children in his preschool she realized for the first time that he was white. This realization seemed to startle Theresa as she then understood that his experience of the world was going to be very different than her own.

In response to Theresa's comment in Week 4, I shared, "about raising a white son, wow. I feel a huge amount of responsibility, honestly." The responsibility of ensuring that my teenage son understood and took responsibility for his white privilege weighed heavily on me. However, I was also challenged to think about the consequence of my son relinquishing his privilege. In Week 5, when discussing the ways that standardized testing privileges white students, June had mentioned how she and her husband made the decision to opt their two girls out of taking the standardized tests in school for a number of years because they saw how the tests unfairly disadvantaged Children of Color.

It's hard to, once you realize you have privilege in an area, it's hard to imagine giving that up. It's hard to imagine, even though you see the benefit of it... On a sort of

theoretical level I completely agree with you [June] about my son's experience and the fact that he just bombed English, and that's his own fault and he didn't do what he needed to do... And he'd have to repeat that class if he didn't do really well on that standardized test score. But lucky for him he did.

Although I opposed the way that standardized tests unfairly disadvantaged Students of Color, I saw tangible benefits that my son experienced when he did well on the tests and acknowledged how difficult it would be to see him fail by relinquishing that advantage. It seemed to be difficult and even painful at times to give up or reject privilege.

Following the Trayvon Martin verdict Muzzie and I both reflected on how our sons needed to understand the privilege their white skin afforded which Trayvon and other African-American males would not experience. Muzzie shared:

I think the hardest for me really is trying to explain to him, um, what it means for him to be a white boy. And the things that he generally doesn't have to worry about, he doesn't have to be conscious of unless pushed and forced, and you know... And it is hard, it's hard to know like, he is only five but it's not like a little child of five who is of Color has the opportunity to ignore that... In fairly blunt words I explained to him what had happened and why we were upset about the treatment. Because I'm not willing to shelter him from that, any more than other people can't shelter their children.

Although her son was only five years old Muzzie felt it important to ensure that he understood his privileged racialized experience. Similarly, I mentioned the importance of my son understanding his privilege in relation to Trayvon Martin.

So we were talking about how him as an almost 15 year old white boy, will never be looked at and judged the same way that Trayvon was. I mean, they might look at him and think he is a little punk or a spoiled brat or whatever, but his life isn't in danger just by being him.

If my son was to be walking through an unfamiliar neighborhood wearing a hooded sweatshirt as Trayvon Martin did, people may make assumptions about him but it is unlikely that they would ever take actions toward him which threatened his physical safety. Therefore, it was important to me that I helped my son understand the enormity of his white skin privilege in this context. In these situations, both Muzzie and I found it important to help our sons “Move Toward Understanding.”

Members reflected in a variety of ways on the power and privilege afforded to white male status. Concerning Lake, his awareness grew in terms of the pervasiveness of privilege he experienced as a white male. As for Lisa, her awareness grew in terms of recognizing challenges and triggers in dealing with white men. Finally, Muzzie, Theresa and myself grew in awareness of the racial realities which our white sons face. As members continued to examine white privilege in its many forms, our understanding of white supremacist consciousness, or the pervasiveness of the white paradigm, also expanded.

White Paradigm

PAR members moved toward greater awareness of the white paradigm over the course of the primary research phase in multiple ways. First, participants' understanding of the ubiquity of whiteness expanded over time. Second, participants grew in their knowledge of how the system

of racial privilege and oppression is maintained. Third, participants came to see that the culture of Higher Education is a reflection of the greater society.

Ubiquity of whiteness. Participants came to understand the ubiquity of whiteness, in terms of the omnipresence of white norms, beliefs, and standards in society. For example, attitudes defining white as “normal” are pervasive; beliefs and attitudes of entitlement are overwhelmingly associated with being white; and standards of communication and behavior are based on a white value set. Lake first discussed this concept in Week 4 when doing an art project involving white clay.

I made an imprint of my hand. So it makes a white hand. And I feel like it's, to me it represented um, kind of the ubiquity of, kind of the white control in culture and in history. Like if you look even at history that studies, um, cultures that we would not consider white, often what people study are when those people encounter white people. Um, so there's this ubiquity to the white experience... And then also in contemporary, current culture, it's just that ubiquity of whiteness that we were talking about. You started by talking about hip-hop which is you know, a Black art form, controlled by white labels. And so the biggest selling rappers are white. And so again, this ubiquity, um, that there always gets to be a white story in every scenario, and that is a privilege. So, that's what I was trying to represent with the hand.

As Lake demonstrated with his description of why his clay sculpture was significant to him, the imprint of whiteness is literally everywhere. Thus, the ubiquity of whiteness, or the pervasiveness of the white paradigm became a significant thread throughout many group

dialogues. One of the ways that the group came to see the ubiquity of whiteness was by examining how white standards and value sets are applied to everybody.

White standards and value sets. In Week 7, Kate shared her experience being on a search committee at RAC that revealed how staff and faculty are held to a white sort of standard. Kate had initially felt excitement about the prospect of hiring one particular candidate, a Person of Color. However, she realized how the white standards of the search committee influenced attitudes about the potential of this candidate.

One of the candidates um, had a very untraditional path to being a faculty member. And it was very disheartening the way that that was talked about in the search. Unfortunately, this candidate came and did a terrible teaching talk. And it was so painful because I wanted so much for this to be the right candidate... But then, then I felt that it was like really yucky because it kind of reinforced peoples' ideas about seeing someone come from an untraditional path... It was just very painful to be with this other faculty member [Faculty of Color] and seeing kind of their hopes about this being a diverse search.

In this case, the candidate's "untraditional path" meant that they had found their way to professorship in an unconventional way, unlike many white faculty at RAC whose career paths generally followed them first obtaining their doctorate degree, then pursuing assistant faculty appointments while simultaneously continuing to conduct and publish research. Anything other than this traditional path to tenure was seen as less prestigious, less credible, and was clearly less valued by the predominantly white members of the search committee.

Later in the session, Kate, Minnie, and I were trying to further articulate ways in which the white paradigm was prevalent at RAC. Expectations around white standards of communication and work styles came up as examples.

Kate: The situations I know of People of Color who have left or you know, left on not good terms, there's been a lot of things around communication or around their style of working... This kind of assumption that "well, they don't work the way that I think they should work, so they are not effective." And I guess I just feel like I've seen this pattern over a couple of people, you know four or five people are no longer here. And there was this real sense of just like, "well, that person's just not doing their job." And that was uncomfortable... there was this assumption like if you're not communicating or doing things the way I expect you to that means you're not doing your job...

Heather: If you're not communicating or doing your job the way things are expected in terms of the "right way" or the "white way," you're not doing your job...

Minnie: We have an incredibly white sort of standard.

Throughout the course of our dialogue, we experienced the realization that white cultural standards were being applied to everyone in the workplace, regardless of the racial identity of employees. Furthermore, conformity to these standards did not necessarily reflect one's actual potential, but simply reflected one's adherence to white standards.

In Week 8, Lisa and Minnie returned to this dialogue about white standards. Lisa first discussed how white standards are applied to students, and Minnie added examples of white standards that are applied to faculty and staff.

Lisa: I think that we make a lot of assumptions at Rosewood Ascension about the right way, or the one way, or what a student knows or what they don't know, based on their [staff/faculty's] own understanding.

Minnie: Yah, I'm totally obsessed with this, the like, what are these like standards of communication and professionalism that are all, it's based in white standards of those things... There are 8,000 other ways of doing things. Of teaching. Of you know, communication styles. Of you know, sense of time, and work environment. And like all of these pieces... I think especially here, everything we put out there is based on a white set of what those things mean.

Then in Week 10, Muzzie and Lisa discussed cautions of applying these white standards to Students of Color in the classroom.

Lisa: People with a level of privilege don't know how to treat people who are less privileged... There is a huge difference between, okay, I am bringing in all these scrappy kids who can't do anything. So I am just going to love them and be nice to them and give them a degree, and you know, whatever. [Versus] then being like, okay. So they don't speak exactly the same way, they don't write exactly the same way that I was taught was

correct, but they can still learn, and they can still be challenged, and they can still be held to a standard, and I need to do that for them...

Muzzie: And at the same time, you have to be very careful about who is setting that standard, and what that standard is, because that's, that's a real danger.

In this case, Lisa warned of the harm caused by white educators holding low expectations of Students of Color. When white educators' implicit biases incorrectly inform them that Students of Color are incapable of succeeding in school, at best students are patronized and passed through the education system without being challenged to learn. Muzzie in turn warned of the harm caused when white educators hold Students of Color to white standards. Therefore, the challenge is for white educators to hold appropriate standards for student learning, which may not at all be the same thing as white standards.

The theme of white standards in the workplace surfaced again in Week 13 when Kate offered further reflections on recruitment and hiring practices at RAC.

I can think of ways in which this core culture of whiteness, of the culture of privilege, has even contributed not just to what kind of a pool you get, but to how people are thinking about candidates and talking about candidates and all of that.

With this in mind, one can imagine how the predominantly white staff and faculty composition at RAC resulted from consistently applying white standards at all stages of search processes, and especially when discerning which candidates would best fit within the existing white paradigm. Another factor contributing to the pervasiveness of the white paradigm is the prevalence of entitlement among many white people, which validates and justifies beliefs and attitudes that the "white way" is the "right way."

White entitlement. In Week 4, the group began by listening to the song *White Privilege* by Macklemore:

White rappers albums really get the most spins/ The face of hip hop has changed a lot since Eminem/ And if he's taking away black artists' profits I look just like him/ Claimed a culture that wasn't mine, the way of the American...

Group members discussed some of the ramifications of white peoples' sense of entitlement to certain aspects of Black culture to which they do not have ownership or membership, such as hip hop music and fashion. Additionally, participants reflected on Macklemore and other white artists' ability to talk about race without the ramifications that People of Color would likely experience.

Heather: White youth look to hip hop culture as a way of defining themselves. And they, I'm going to take a guess, don't really understand that they are like, that what they are involved in is really a type of cultural appropriation that they may not understand, [and] don't have ownership over...

Lake: If a Black rapper had similar content [to Macklemore's lyrics] that person would probably get a lot of criticism or risk losing fans or have a label chose not to release it. Whereas, he can get away with that. So in fact, [it] becomes an example of white privilege that he can even record and release this song in the first place.

In the examples discussed above, white people exhibited a sense of entitlement in appropriating aspects of another culture. Whether this was done out of naïve curiosity, for one's amusement, or worse, if it is done mockingly, only white people experience this sense of entitlement and right to

the ownership of other cultures as they deem appropriate. Whereas People of Color are more or less expected to understand and abide by white cultural standards in the presence of white people at all times, with reverence, lest they make white people uncomfortable by their overt expression of non-white culture.

In Weeks 8 and 10, white entitlement to knowledge and education surfaced as a theme in group discussion. First, Lake shared his reflections on an article we had read in preparation for our Week 8 discussion. The article recounted interviews with a group of white college students and Students of Color on their experience taking a course that focused on the topic of multiculturalism. Lake was put off by the sense of entitlement exhibited by the white students interviewed.

You know, uh, these traits and, um, the way they kind of admit to their behavior... “I’ll say whatever in class and we’ll just go, it’s no big deal.” But this, and I think that’s kind of that white privilege of being able to say whatever you want and nobody else is allowed to get offended.

As Lake inferred, the white students believed that since they were there to learn they were entitled to say whatever they wanted in class. It was as if they had immunity from any potential consequences and therefore took no responsibility for offending their Classmates of Color.

Then in Week 10, June acknowledged her own sense of entitlement pertaining to education and knowledge, and how she had begun to recognize the consequences of that entitlement.

Just look at my own dynamic of communication and interaction, and well kind of especially when it comes to education what I always felt was like my due. It is my due to

ask questions. It's my due that I feel so entitled to knowledge... I don't remember where I read it, but this one woman was saying "it is not okay to walk up and meet me for the first time and say hi, how are you? Oh your name is Sarah, whatever. Where are you from?" You know, like take a minute. There is a context, there is a time and place for everything. And asking me immediately where I am from is not it. Or, "what's your ethnicity? What's your background?" I cannot tell you how many times I have done that. You know, just from curiosity, or from a desire to make a connection or whatever. Totally good intentioned, but just horrible, horrible... So that, that's been really, it has actually been kind of upsetting for me now that I am talking about it. I am really seeing how much it has been upsetting for me. So that has been a growth thing.

In the past, June had felt justified in asking others invasive and potentially offensive questions about their background as she saw it as fulfilling her quest for knowledge, to which she was entitled. Because she had not intended to hurt anyone's feelings she felt excused from any personal responsibility. However, as June continued to examine her own patterns of behavior she became emotional. June had just begun to realize the impact of the privileged behavior she had exhibited, which until then she believed to be acceptable or even "normal."

White is normal. Group members discussed many aspects of whiteness being the normative experience. At times, this was made obvious to group members through discussion about shared readings and through personal experience. At other times, the theme of "white is normal" was illuminated when contrasted to what was considered to be abnormal. In Week 4, Lisa reflected on an article we had read in preparation for the group meeting that highlighted how "white is normal."

I had noted from the article that um, that “whites are taught to think of their lives as morally neutral, normative and average and also ideal. So that what we [do] to benefit others is seen as work that will allow *them* to be more like *us*.” And I, that resonates a lot with me in my, in education, in my personal feelings of never being as smart as other people because I didn’t read the classics, which everyone knows is the greatest shit ever [laughter]. And also kind of, you know, it resonated a little bit with me and my experience working in Student Affairs and seeing some very well intended people, um, you know, in fits of desperation and wanting to help someone, and just really not getting it and not knowing how. Just you know, straight up imposing “this is how you do it.”

Lisa’s reflection on her own experience in education demonstrated the prevalence of the “white is normal” mentality. For example, Lisa explained that because she did not read the classics as part of her formal education, her opinion on literature may not have been as valued by her white peers. Additionally, as a professional staff member in Student Affairs, Lisa observed that white educators would often try to help Students of Color succeed by insisting that they act in accordance with white standards. In both cases, the white way was considered normal and was the experience against which others were judged.

In Week 8, Sarah shared her earliest memory of recognizing race, which also reflected how “white is normal.” “I can’t remember, I was really young, but I remember somebody saying, um, so what are you? And they meant, you know, what country are you from? And someone said, we’re all just Americans. Meaning, we’re all white.” For Sarah and her young friends, being American meant that you were white. And being white was not only normal, it was the default. One needed not proclaim one’s whiteness, as it was synonymous with being American.

In Week 9, June demonstrated how she is moving toward understanding as she sees more how the white paradigm is normalized.

[There are] things that we've been taught to think are normal even though, I think for me I often think things don't feel right, and so I know it's not right, but I have been taught that it's right. And so there's that really kind of hard experience where you are just feeling funky and not okay about something but society has normalized it. So you are the squeaky wheel, you are the one marching, you're the crazy kook, the conspiracy theorist or whatever... And feeling you know, kind of sad that it is, I'm 40, taking this long to have this click in that way. Lisa and I were just talking about just feeling like it can feel very personal to have somebody identify you as a white person. Of course I get it, I'm a white person. But just when you're growing up you don't really think about yourself as anything other than who you are.

June's example revealed how white people are taught to think of whiteness as the norm growing up, and thus protect this status. If one were to suggest that it was "not right" for whiteness to be held as the standard against which all others are compared, one would likely be seen as a "squeaky wheel" or a "crazy kook." Being white, as June explained, is such the norm that white people rarely question being "anything other than who you are."

In each of the above examples, the ubiquity of whiteness was exposed as a key element of the white paradigm. Through examination of white standards and value sets in the workplace, demonstrations of white entitlement, and the pervasiveness of whiteness being held as normative, participants grew in their awareness of how whiteness is everywhere. Next, PAR group members deconstructed ways in which maintaining the system of privilege and oppression occurs.

Maintaining the System. Throughout the primary research phase, PAR group members grew in their awareness about various mechanisms which maintain systems of racism and white privilege. A pivotal conversation in Week 5 about the harmful effects of standardized testing created a pathway for deeper dialogue about the systemic marginalization of People of Color.

June: Standardized tests are throughout your entire life. But when it comes to you know, education at the elementary level, they test all the time. They don't need to have that horrible standardized test where my child's fabulous results are gonna go against some other kid's results who doesn't have the same privilege as my child. Who doesn't have the same school, you know, resources or anything even close to the same stuff as my kid. And that's unfair. That's just, that's unfair...

Lake: And well they're getting fewer resources as a result of the tests...

June: Right, they're getting penalized...

Lake: It's all just this horrible cycle...

Sarah: But the cycle is constructed... the cycle is constructed so that everybody has to be a part of it. Because otherwise they tell you that your school's not going to get money... And there has to be a movement of opposition that says, we're not going to let you distribute money that way anymore.

By looking closely at standardized testing as a microcosmic example, the participants were able to understand more fully the deeply rooted system of marginalization that is maintained by white privilege. Sarah often spoke from this perspective and urged others to see how the system was being maintained all around them all of the time.

Over time, many participants developed increased awareness of how the system of privilege and marginalization was maintained. In Week 9, June spoke with conviction about how “everything is set up to perpetuate, what we already have in place. You know, democracy, capitalism, the way our government is set up, the way our justice system is set up, all of them perpetuates the same thing.” In this instance, being able to name the problem seemed powerful for June. In Week 10, I reflected that it seemed to be a “mechanism of white privilege to do that shushing and dismissing and patronizing. It is a mechanism, probably not consciously intentional to people...but I think it is absolutely a way of maintaining the system.” Overall, PAR group members came to understand various aspects that perpetuate the system, including remaining silent about whiteness, remaining protective of whiteness, and the existence of institutional racism. Examining each of these factors led to group members’ increased awareness and also their strengthened convictions to impact change within the system.

Silence about whiteness. “Silence about whiteness” was found to be prevalent in several ways. First, Lisa commented in Week 4 about our weekly discussions on white privilege, “I’m troubled that people think that conversations like this are the reason that racism is still being perpetuated.” This logic implies that simply by speaking about racism or by naming its existence, racism stays alive. Therefore, under that same logic, those who name racism, most often People of Color, are thereby responsible for its continuation and are to be blamed. This notion is one covert way that the power of whiteness is kept silent or denied.

Second, in Week 5, Sarah theorized why the theme of race was absent from public remarks made by President Barack Obama.

I think Obama not addressing issues of race is actually another manifestation of racism. Because he can't, as a Black leader, get elected and address the issues of racism. So he's on this marginal line doing a number of things I don't agree with, but you know, he's probably doing what he can do. Which is a whole issue around racism.

Sarah suggested with her comment that if President Obama were to name racism then white people would need to consider their privilege, which would in effect ostracize white America. Therefore, the silence of whiteness is preserved even by the President of the United States.

Third, in Week 6, Theresa conducted her own research and discussed a website she found by a white supremacist group claiming white privilege does not exist.

I read through this whole hate-filled back and forth list serve of like pictures of a homeless white guy sleeping on a bench, white people being beat up by Black people, or white people being shot just because they were white. And so they were like, this white privilege thing doesn't exist.

In Theresa's example, the white supremacist group denied the power of whiteness and thereby silenced any counterarguments about racism and privilege. By using individual examples to reject the systemic reality of racism they silenced conversations about white privilege.

Fourth, in Week 7, Holly reflected on how faculty, staff and administration maintain a silence about whiteness at RAC.

We don't talk about white privilege. And we don't acknowledge it as white people on this campus...we don't acknowledge our white privilege and what that means for them [our students]. Cuz we don't acknowledge and say, yes, I know that this is an issue.

Even on a campus that is known for its student diversity, and where the faculty and staff demographics are noticeably white, very few people acknowledge this or discuss why this is the case. In Holly's example, maintaining a silence about white privilege and the overwhelmingly white staff and faculty composition was a form of passive acceptance.

Fifth, in our Week 11 discussion I shared a story about a workshop that I led with high school students in a college readiness summer program that aimed to reveal the silence about whiteness and privilege.

We did an activity where I had them in groups, come up with what did they think were some of the unwritten or unspoken rules about what it takes to be successful in our culture, in the United States. And they just know. It is so apparent. The lists were like, you gotta be white, you gotta be skinny, you gotta have blue eyes, you gotta be rich, you have to have a college education, you have to go to a fancy private school, and on and on. The examples that the high school students brainstormed revealed how these unspoken rules for success not only reflect white values and standards, but that they simultaneously maintain a silence about whiteness. By not making the rules for success explicit it is possible to continue to deny the power of white privilege.

In each of the above examples PAR participants portrayed different ways that silence about whiteness is maintained. The result in all cases was a denial of the power of privilege in order to maintain the system of marginalization. Another way that group members explored the theme of "Maintaining the System," which was similar to upholding the silence around whiteness, was the concept of protecting or defending whiteness.

Protecting whiteness. PAR group members observed that “protecting whiteness” was as prevalent as instances of maintaining silence about white privilege. In Week 6, participants discussed a video clip in which Tim Wise spoke about white peoples’ tendency to dominate historical narratives in order to protect whiteness.

Lisa: The thing he was talking about was why don’t we have white history month? And he was like, we do have white history month...

Kate: It’s every month except February...

Lake: Really it’s also including February.

As the dialogue above suggests, when white people proclaim the need for white history month it reveals their defensiveness of privilege and protectiveness of whiteness. Later in the group dialogue, Kate added further reflection on why this may happen.

I was really struck by the part when he was talking about making the “Other”... this idea that there is this “Other” that is trying to take what you might have someday. And I just feel that so much of that rhetoric is about making people scared. Making people scared of this, this unknown, or this other than you... His conversation about the roots of that just being, oh well, we need to figure out how to protect ourselves.

Protecting whiteness or being defensive about whiteness leads to “Othering” in order to draw clear distinctions between those with and without power.

In Week 8, Minnie discussed the challenges in relinquishing power, which is difficult for many white people to do as they are conditioned to protect whiteness. “I was thinking oh it’s this instinct to protect privilege. And then I was like no, no, no, no, it’s not instinct it’s conditioning to protect the privilege. Like, there’s no instinct about it. There’s nothing sort of fundamental.”

Therefore, as suggested by Minnie, protecting whiteness is a learned behavior. Later in the dialogue she went on to question what it would take to un-learn this behavior.

In the context of all of this other stuff I feel like it is like this, ‘I have to protect the power that I have, I have to hold on as tight as I can.’ Like, what are we really going to lose if we give up, or stop trying to hold onto this, this power?

Protecting the power afforded by privilege and defending whiteness was a relevant theme in group discussions as members continued to increase awareness of ways in which we all participate in the system by protecting whiteness. Participants also moved toward deeper understanding of systemic oppression and its relationship to “Maintaining the System.”

Systemic oppression. June first discussed systemic oppression in Week 5 when she voiced frustration over how racism is ignored as a serious issue in our society.

I’ve always felt like everything rooted with problems in public schools had to do with racism. And that we never really actually address it for what it is. The segregated neighborhoods, just it’s so systemic and it’s so institutionalized, and we never call it what it is. We always come up with all these other plans and ways to address it that will never, ever solve it because we can’t actually even say what it is.

Racism is so embedded into our society that it impacts every aspect of life. As June indicated, racism affects virtually every system, starting with racially segregated neighborhoods, inequity in schools, and so on.

In Week 6, following discussion of a poem written by a white supremacist, Minnie responded to this and recent Supreme Court rulings on the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and race-

based consideration in college admission practices. All three examples represented a denial of institutionalized racism and systemic oppression.

It is interesting watching this today with the Supreme Court having this idea of white denial. White denial of any privilege, of any institutionalized oppression, racism, or that it still exists. And then I think about the poem... And I feel what bothers me so much about that mindset is that it is a completely invalid argument. Because no institutionalized or systemic oppression exists towards white people, or restricting the rights of. Like, there is none of that.

As Minnie discussed, systemic oppression in each of these cases had been ignored, which is often the outcome in a culture that denies privilege and defends whiteness as a way of maintaining the system. As PAR group members continued to dissect the ubiquity of whiteness and ways in which the system of privilege and oppression is maintained, one other element of the white paradigm became clear. Participants became increasingly more aware of how higher education is a reflection of the greater society, their own participation in the system, how perceptions about students by faculty and staff may be skewed, and that pedagogy and practice are all reflective of the white paradigm.

Higher education as a reflection of society. Participants moved toward deeper awareness of the white paradigm when they reflected on ways in which higher education operated as a microcosm of the larger society. Holly first reflected on this in Week 8 when she talked about higher education as part of the system that privileges some and disadvantages others.

We pull race out of the retention conversation... We just think some students succeed and some fail, because they're college material or they're not. And that really bothers me that it doesn't become a conversation of how the system makes sure that certain students succeed and certain students don't.

Higher education is just one of countless settings and circumstances where white privilege operates. As Holly inferred, looking at post-secondary retention rates of white students as compared to those of Students of Color would surely reveal disparate outcomes. However, whether universities choose to address that is indicative of their institutional privilege.

Like Holly, Kate was also bothered by a demonstration of institutional privilege that she witnessed when she attended a Strategic Planning Group (SPG) meeting at RAC.

People had come back with this idea that, we were like somehow the experts who were going to be up on the hill and spread our knowledge. And tell everybody how it should be... It was really disappointing...just frustrating and disappointing, that there was even an assumption that it was okay to walk into a room and say, what we are going to put out there is that we are the experts.

This story illustrated how the white administrators at the meeting embodied white standards, white entitlement, and a sense that the white way is the right way by assuming that RAC would be positioned as the experts, there to impart knowledge on others. This model of education does not recognize how a community is enriched when each person is seen as a valued member with knowledge to contribute. In fact, RAC faculty and staff perceptions of students, and what faculty and staff believed students could contribute, was a significant factor in understanding higher education as a reflection of society.

Perceptions of students. Multiple PAR group members recalled conversations they had with various staff and faculty at RAC where unfavorable assumptions had been made about students, and Students of Color in particular. Many faculty and staff were reported to hold negative attitudes about students' preparedness, their commitment to their education, and their ability to meet expectations. In Week 7, many stories with similar themes surfaced about faculty and staff perceptions of students.

Sarah paraphrased a conversation she had with a colleague in which they both spoke frankly about other faculty's perceptions of students.

The way the whole faculty talks about students... So this whole thing about the students, you know they don't work hard, they don't want an education, they're all here because of sports. They don't want an education? Nobody's getting a free ride here. And they obviously do want an education or they wouldn't be here.

The notion that students are underprepared and that they do not care about their education was a theme that surfaced in conversations that other PAR group members had been a part of as well. Theresa shared, "I've had conversations with faculty, um, one in particular, about um, how our students aren't prepared. Our students aren't ready for college, our students aren't engaged when they're here. Um, and I pushed back at that person." In both of these examples, faculty had made assumptions about students' commitment and capabilities based on white standards.

Faculty and staff also held perceptions about Students of Color that were patronizing and dismissive. Kate shared a story of an exchange she had with a faculty member whose assumptions about students led them to have very low expectations of what students were capable of achieving.

I think [there is a] difference between meeting students where they are, and being patronizing or just expecting nothing of students because you have this idea that they're under-prepared. I had an incredibly painful conversation with a faculty, long-time white, faculty member here, who was literally saying, "well you know, these students come from such disadvantaged, such troubled backgrounds, and you know I don't know if they can do it. So I'll just give them a C instead."

Similarly, in Week 10, Muzzie recounted administrator reactions to RAC students who had organized and gathered signatures to request changes at the College during the previous term. "When our students were doing their uh, protest, I was so appalled at the ways that, they were joked about, at the administrative level. Um, that it was, oh here they go, these are students who don't know anything." In both Kate and Muzzie's examples, staff and faculty demonstrated white entitlement as they patronized students and belittled their concerns.

PAR group members were angered by these negative perceptions of students and voiced strong feelings of opposition. During the heated dialogue in Week 7, June shared her reactions to faculty and staff who held incorrect assumptions about student preparedness.

I would push back on them, like what kind of teacher are you? Are you meeting the students' needs? A lot of the complaints I hear back from the students are the teachers are, what's that word, intractable? Like they're, you know, it's my way or the highway. Grow up! I don't know where you went to school or what little privileged enclave you came from, but maybe you should have thought about that before you decided that you were going to teach at RAC.

June's incensed remarks suggested that faculty's pedagogy need be challenged when they voice such negative perceptions of students. She wondered what faculty were doing to meet student needs rather than why students were not meeting expectations.

Holly also wondered whether RAC faculty expectations were appropriate and thought faculty exhibited white privilege in their assumptions and attitudes toward students.

We should be doing better hiring faculty that are a good fit for Rosewood Ascension now. But I mean for some of the faculty that have been here at Rosewood Ascension for a long time, you don't understand who we are [anymore] and the students that we serve and our mission. And it's not just a surface-level mission. Like, its work, you know? I think it's the white privilege coming out in the faculty saying, "NO, these are my requirements, this is what it should be." Because you grew up in an environment that helped you be successful.

Holly's comments suggest that RAC, and its long-time faculty, have a responsibility to better serve our particular students. To do so, the College must examine its hiring practices and the faculty must examine their white privilege.

Some faculty and staff, however, do see RAC students' potential and have respect for the experiences and knowledge they bring. In Week 10, Kate shared the perspective that some people are appropriately reframing student expectations. "[Regarding] some of the really engaged and newer faculty, some of the tenor of those conversations around engagement really have to do with learning. Not about preparedness, or about these students not being the way we want them to be." Indeed, there is a sense that among the senior faculty their perceptions of students are generally less favorable and assumptions are made about students' abilities and

motivation to be in college. Contrarily, among the newer faculty their perceptions of students are generally more favorable, that students can learn and are engaged regardless of whether that may look different for different students. This difference in perspective between the long-time and newer faculty and staff is likely also related to a difference in approach to pedagogy and practice.

Pedagogy and practice. Pedagogy, or the methods and approaches to teaching in the classroom, and professional practice, or the principles and skills used by staff in delivering student services, are informed by one's background, experience and theoretical leanings. The challenge is to appropriately match the approach with student needs. Kate explained this in Week 7 and alluded to how this should happen.

I mean, there are effective and ineffective ways to teach people. And there are differences between what kinds of teaching works well for different people... People who have a more engaging social and community life, expect that in the classroom, and uh, don't learn well without it.

In other words, it is the faculty's responsibility to meet the different needs in the classroom by using a dynamic and engaging pedagogical approach. However, as alluded to earlier when discussing perceptions of students, it is apparent that many faculty and staff do not tailor their approach to meet the needs of the students.

When discussing the RAC student petition with Muzzie during the Week 10 session, June chastised staff and administration's dismissive approach to working with students. "That was an opportunity for education about what they [the students] didn't know [about RAC policies]. But to disparage or degrade people for their lack of knowledge or for where they are in their life's

journey is really reprehensible.” June felt that the principles guiding professional practice were lacking and that staff and administrators did not appropriately meet students where they were.

Later in the same session, Muzzie discussed challenges with persuading faculty to reconsider their pedagogy to be reflective of student needs.

One of the reasons that faculty get to the point that they are, is so that they get to decide how they are going to work, and how they are going to engage. And whether you or I like that or not, we can challenge them on it, but you cannot change the way somebody teaches, they have to do it for themselves...but [what] if we don’t get people in there to work with recognizing how their pedagogy and their privilege impacts their pedagogy, and what that means in the classroom?

As Muzzie indicated, problems may arise when faculty and staff fail to examine their privilege in relation to pedagogy and practice. The hope is that with support and intention, white staff and faculty may develop better approaches to serving Students of Color. However, some faculty and staff may not reconsider their pedagogy and practice even when their privilege is made visible.

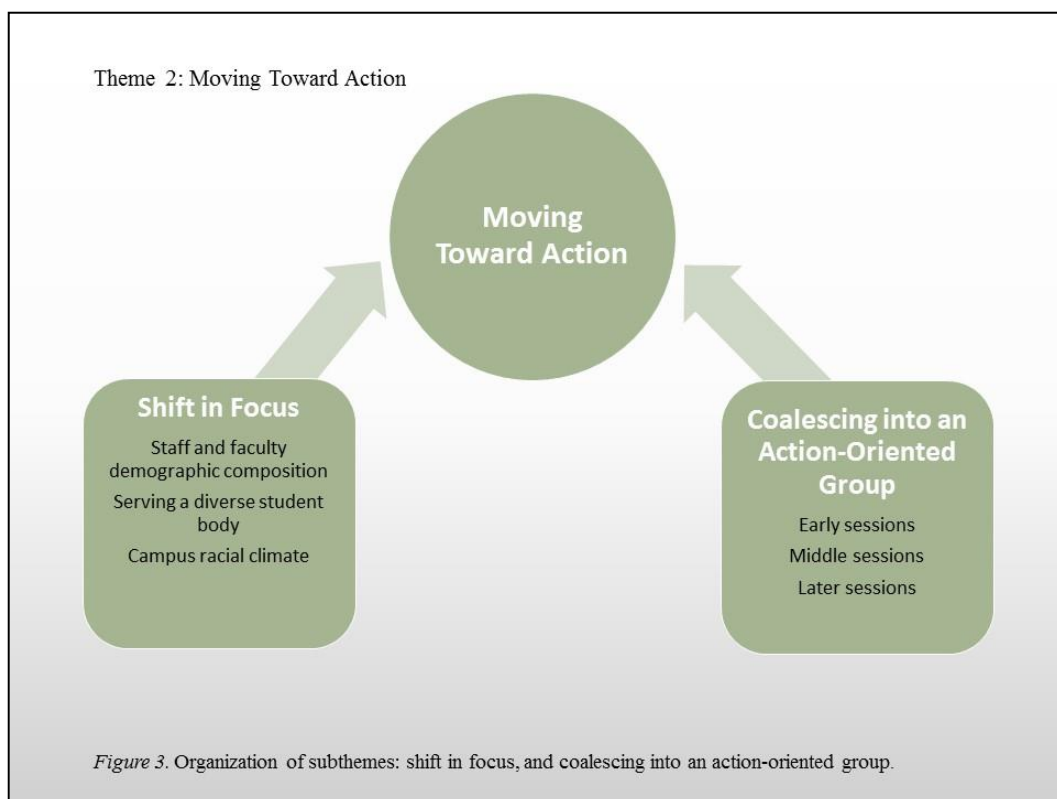
The pervasiveness of white standards, norms and entitlement make it difficult for faculty and staff to see other ways of being. Furthermore, conditioned responses to deny privilege and defend whiteness make it difficult for staff and faculty to see how their misperceptions of students and misguided pedagogy and practice helps to maintain systems of privilege and marginalization within higher education. It is therefore as a result that higher education, with its same acquiescence to the white paradigm, is a reflection of society at large.

Participants came to the PAR project with varying backgrounds and experiences placing them along a continuum of awareness about white privilege. Throughout the primary research

phase members demonstrated “Moving Toward Understanding” through their abilities to reflect on intense emotions, their developing sense of their own racialized identities, and identification of systems of privilege and oppression inherent in the white paradigm. Next, the shift from awareness to action is deconstructed and demonstrated.

Moving Toward Action

The second overarching theme that emerged from the data, “Moving Toward Action,” represents the pathway members took over time to engage in various levels of action and to foster change within their own lives and at RAC. To help conceptualize the presentation of this theme, an organizational chart allows us to see how each subtheme relates to “Moving Toward Action” (see Figure 3). For individual PAR participants, the movement toward action occurred at



different times and at different paces depending on a combination of their background, experiences, and levels of awareness of the pervasiveness of white privilege. It seemed that for many, the movement toward action was initially a slow process stymied by intense emotions, participants' understanding of their own racialized identities, and the white paradigm.

However, at a certain point approximately midway through the primary research phase the group gained momentum and a sense of urgency to take action began to emerge. This coincided with a shift in focus from awareness of white privilege on an individual level to awareness of white privilege at the institution, and unfolded with increasing levels of urgency across the early, middle, and later group sessions. The final list of action outcomes pursued as a result of this PAR project demonstrates both individuals and the group as a whole "Moving Toward Action" to affect change at Rosewood Ascension College (RAC).

Shift in Focus

Individual participants moved from awareness to action at different paces based on their background, experiences, and their initial understanding of the construct of white privilege upon entering the PAR group. Some participants began the project in a place of early exploration of white privilege. Other members had done some level of self-exploration prior to the project. And one member in particular joined the group after having already led anti-racist action.

A significant shift in focus helped move participants along the continuum from awareness to action. When the group began to examine ways in which white privilege was exhibited at RAC the focus shifted from white privilege at the individual level to white privilege at the institutional level. In effect, as participants moved toward greater understanding, they also developed greater urgency to take action. Three main focus areas of potential action then

emerged from the PAR group. First, the overwhelmingly white staff and faculty demographic composition was an issue of concern. Second, the institution's ability to effectively serve its diverse student population emerged as a theme. And third, the need to survey and respond to RAC's campus racial climate was discussed.

Staff and faculty demographic composition. I originally explained to participants in Week 1 that one of the influencing factors driving this study was my observation that RAC's staff and faculty demographic composition was predominantly white and was not reflective of our student body. Therefore, it seemed important for there to be intentional examination of white privilege as it related to professional practice at the institution. The predominantly white staff and faculty began to surface as a frequent topic of conversation in the group around Week 6.

Participants had been asked to speak with a Staff or Faculty Member of Color outside of our meeting time to hear about their experiences working at RAC. When this assignment was described to the group there was some initial awkwardness as participants realized there were so few people to choose from that it was possible some People of Color may be asked by more than one member of our group. Kate suggested that we talk ahead of time about which staff or faculty we intended to speak with, "so we don't end up with the same person being asked...it would be hard for someone to maybe have five different people to ask them. Oh, like I'm the token." PAR group members gave thoughtful consideration for how to approach People of Color with authenticity and without being tokenizing.

Members returned for Week 7 ready to share their experiences hearing the stories of Faculty and Staff of Color, and this led to an impassioned discussion about the need for the College to hire and retain more People of Color.

June: The students know. I mean they talk about it all the time. That there's nobody like them, the staff is not diverse...

Sarah: Something other people have mentioned, which is the lack of African-American faculty, in this city, uh is just outrageous. It's not unfortunate, it's a crime. And you know we're taking money from these students...It's just the students have financial aid and loans and there's a huge racial wealth gap – 20 to one for African-Americans. So the African-American community is paying for white people to be employed, and I know we don't make that much but there is a real inequity there that increases the racial wealth gap...

Kate: I'm struck all the time by the fact that when I came to work at Rosewood Ascension the Vice President of Academic Affairs was an African-American woman, the Dean of Students was an African-American woman, the head of Admissions was an African-American man...that seems like it was a moment in time... All you have to think about is the people who left and realize that this is not a hospitable place...

Theresa: What is our institutional plan to retain faculty, staff, and then Students of Color? And maybe there are some individual one on one things but there is no system-wide sense of what we need to do.

This conversation revealed several concerning factors. First, RAC students were acutely aware that staff and faculty were not reflective of the diverse student body. Second, Staff and Faculty of Color felt underrepresented and undervalued. Third, because RAC was comprised primarily of

white staff and faculty members, the institution was contributing to the racial wealth gap by paying white employees with tuition dollars received from Students of Color. Fourth, recruitment and retention of Staff and Faculty of Color at RAC had not been intentional or successful for some time.

Serving a diverse student body. Conversations about serving a diverse student body centered around two main themes. First, students were hungry for curriculum and instruction that spoke to their diverse experiences. Second, concerns were raised about the institution's efficacy to meet the educational, financial, and cultural needs of such a diverse student body.

In Week 7, Holly reflected on a conversation she had with an African-American student who had expressed interest in certain course offerings that were not available at RAC.

What kept coming up was the curriculum, how the curriculum was shaped, the classes that were offered. You know [if] a student wanted to take like, have a minor in like African-American studies she couldn't do that. Like our curriculum needs to actually do what our students are asking for.

As Holly's remarks inferred, when students' interests are valued and when they have their experiences reflected back to them in the classroom it is incredibly powerful.

Lake and Kate shared stories in Week 11 about witnessing two different Faculty of Color deliver lectures in which the students were extremely responsive.

Lake: They were so connected to the lecture portion. They were so active and conversational during the active lesson portion...it was a very clear example of, you know you have somebody who the students can relate to,

who looks like them, giving a very, very strong presentation on a topic that was of interest to students...

Kate: I was really struck by how it just created for some of the students in the classroom, it seemed it just clearly created a totally different environment for them to have somebody that they felt that [they] could recognize themselves in. So it circles back to other conversations we have had about the faculty demographics...

Each of these examples made compelling cases for why RAC needed to aggressively pursue hiring of Staff and Faculty that were more representative of student demographics, and to examine and alter curriculum and instruction in accordance with student needs.

The second issue pertaining to meeting the needs of a diverse student body was a question about institutional efficacy. Theresa spoke at length about this concern in Week 10.

We have made an institutional decision, to bring students here from this city, from public schools, from places where they may have not had the best, most well-rounded, consistent education. And then we are going to bring them here and we are going to say, you are obviously not really prepared for college, you are not prepared to do college work. Okay, but we said we are going to accept you...then we are saying by the way, why don't you take some classes to just explore what you are really interested in, and be more engaged in the classroom. And they don't have that luxury. We cost a ton. And we are telling students, just take out another loan.

Given the educational, financial, and cultural needs of the diverse student body, there were concerns voiced as to whether RAC was doing everything it could be to best serve its particular students.

Campus racial climate. The group discussed the campus racial climate with regard to structures needed to support the creation of an inclusive environment, and the College's need to acknowledge what racial equity work still needs to be done at RAC. In Week 9, I talked about there being an absence of an office, department, or set of services at RAC which focused on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.

I've been at other institutions where there is like a Multicultural Center or an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Officer or something like that. And then that office or director or person or set of peoples becomes like the beacon for diversity for the university. And there is a lot of criticism about that, right? Because it is not ever just one person or one office's job. But contrarily...we don't have any offices or departments or people that are the beacon for equity on our campus, and it makes it a hell of a lot easier not to talk about it.

Although RAC was known for its student diversity, there was no institutional support in place to address ongoing needs, education, and concerns pertaining to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.

In Week 12, Kate spoke to the need for RAC to acknowledge what racial equity work still needed to be done at the College.

How do we name as an institution that we have work to do? I don't know, because there is so much invested in the "we're you know, a diverse institution and we have 50% first generation students" and you know, all this stuff that's about our image. And I think it

would be very, people would find it very risky to say, yes, we have a really diverse community and we have work to do.

What Kate and I talked about was the need for RAC to acknowledge that racial equity work is an ongoing need for the campus, to identify what structures and supports are needed to work on this issue, and to demonstrate commitment to addressing these needs.

Finally, the idea of conducting a Campus Climate Survey had come up earlier in the primary research phase as part of the brainstorming process for possible action outcomes. In Week 13, Theresa revisited this idea and shared some information which indicated RAC might be moving in the direction of administering such a survey to staff, faculty and students. It was hoped that a Campus Climate Survey would provide critical data showing RAC the need to focus on hiring and retention of Staff and Faculty of Color, the need to better address the educational, financial and cultural needs of RAC students, and the need for more work around racial equity on campus. Each of the above topics served to shift the focus of the weekly discussions toward institutional concerns and led the participants toward “Coalescing into an Action-Oriented Group.”

Coalescing into an Action-Oriented Group

One of the major factors that propelled the group to move toward action was the shift in focus from white privilege at the individual level to white privilege at the institution. Whereas the early sessions were geared more towards individual exploration, around the middle sessions the group began to develop a sense of urgency to create change at RAC and by the later sessions the PAR group was “Coalescing into an Action-Oriented Group.”

Early sessions. In the early sessions, between Weeks 1 through 5, it was apparent that members were at different points of readiness to move from awareness to action. For example, the following excerpts from dialogue in Week 3 revealed that while Minnie, Muzzie and Kate were still exploring what it meant to hold privilege, Sarah was already positioned to move toward action.

Sarah: We need to make a little bit of a long-term, medium-term commitment to following up on any institutional ramifications [of our work]...

Minnie: It's important to me to have to be intentional and consciously think about and then articulate the privilege that I have as a white person...

Muzzie: It makes me really angry at the systemic poison of it because I find myself examining my meta-communication and my interactions with people...

Sarah: A lot of times the progress on racial issues takes place because something bad happens, and that's true on this campus too. Some really horrible things that have happened have actually led to people making a different policy or something. So I think we should lean into whatever bad stuff does come up...

Kate: I'm just really at this place of not at the same level as you are in the consciousness of it.

Because Sarah joined the group having already been involved in white anti-racist activism for some time, she was prepared to dig in from the start. Meanwhile, others came to the process ready to learn and with a willingness to take action, but it was evident that additional

groundwork needed to be done before the group as a whole could match Sarah's urgency to take action.

During Week 4, Muzzie and I talked about recognizing our accountability and striving to be racial justice allies, indicators of our movement along the continuum from understanding to action.

Heather: I didn't come to that understanding for a long time. That you know, you have to take responsibility and be accountable for things, you know...

Muzzie: I think it's for me the piece around knowing it, but then just really working with how to just be in the world, or be an ally...

As our comments suggested, both Muzzie and I were becoming more aware of our privilege yet still expanding our consciousness and examining what it meant or what it looked like to be accountable and to be allies. Then in Week 5, Sarah discussed the importance of white people doing self-exploration and taking action.

I do believe we need to do the internal exploration of understanding who we are, why we're in denial, what the true facts are. We need to be armed with those facts so when we go out and say something, people don't say you don't know what you're talking about... But we do need to do something as allies, you know? That part of creating what it means for white people who have this understanding to actually act as allies is another missing conversation.

The comments by Sarah, Muzzie and I exhibited how during the early sessions tension between the need for self-exploration and the need to take action was present in the group. However, the

majority of the participants were still moving toward greater understanding of whiteness and privilege until the middle sessions, at which point an urgency to create change emerged.

Middle sessions. The middle sessions included Weeks 6 through 9. During this time participants demonstrated a desire to make change happen. In Week 6, Holly expressed the need to start somewhere, but she was not sure how. “Like, how do you bring people to the table who don’t want to have this conversation? How? How? How, how, how are we going to bring these people into the fold and just change generations of thinking?” Holly saw a need and wanted to help facilitate broader dialogues at RAC regarding race and white privilege, although she still felt unsure how to proceed. Similarly in Week 7, Minnie wanted to move toward action but felt something was still holding her back. “I definitely know right now that like, I’m pushing against some barrier, like ripping open something from myself that is preventing me from actually moving into the action part.” Both Holly and Minnie were representative of the tension that still existed between understanding and action.

For most members, the commitment to taking some sort of action became clear by Week 7. Kate shared an example of how she had recently taken action to intentionally recruit a more diverse pool of candidates for an opening she was filling in her department.

I’m embarrassed to say this is the most diverse pool I’ve had for any position and it’s simply because I actually opened the document that HR has on the shared network drive that says, here are the other places you can advertise your position that targets you know, a diverse population of candidates.

Although Kate lamented not having taken action sooner to recruit more diverse candidates, the point was simply that she took some sort of action to impact change. Also in Week 7, June spoke

with fervor about the need to move toward action. “I can say I’m angry and I can say it’s unfair but what am I actually going to do about it? It’s not enough just to be angry or be upset about it, you actually have to do something.” June’s remarks mirrored the group’s feelings about moving toward action.

In Week 8, Sarah suggested, “it would be good to have a dialogue with an invited group of Latino and African-American faculty and students...and say this is what we’ve been doing. We want to know which things seem important to you to do.” Other PAR participants concurred that soliciting feedback from Colleagues of Color on campus about our suggested action outcomes was a good idea. The group drafted a list of other possible ideas for action and this was included as a high priority item.

Later in Week 8, Kate talked about her experience as a member of the Strategic Planning Group and expressed frustration that the SPG was not moving forward at the same pace as the PAR group.

Muzzie and I are on the SPG and we’re looking at the mission and vision for the college for the next five years. And part of realizing why I’ve been so frustrated over the course of the year when we’ve gotten not much done in that group is because I feel like it’s just words. And it feels like really jargony...how do we really name...that there are some important things we have to do to make us be who we say we are? And I don’t know how to get at those. And there’s this disconnect for me because I feel like we’re [the PAR group] starting to think about how we might move some things forward, and then there’s this really key moment in the institution about how do we [SPG] name what we are going to do?

Although Kate was heartened that the PAR group was now moving forward with concrete action steps, she worried that the SPG would settle for flowery language and surface-level commitments. This also marked a point at which the PAR group began to think about ways of addressing privilege at RAC that could impact institutional change.

In Week 9, members continued to scrutinize RAC's espoused versus lived values. June spoke up about how Rosewood Ascension seemed to be all talk and no action.

It's so interesting being at a place of higher education where it feels like you are supposed to be reading, learning, questioning, educating, on and on, and we're not even addressing something as simple as that. That we talk about we are here for first generation students and we support first generation students and Students of Color and we are so diverse. But in what way, other than just saying it?

These type of examples, such as recognizing incongruence between what RAC purported to be and what it really seemed like from an insider's perspective, seemed to motivate participants to envision large-scale institutional change.

Also in Week 9, participants offered examples of choosing to take action in their own lives. In response to the Trayvon Martin verdict, Lake shared his personal commitment to action. "I can't do anything to change law in Florida but I can be part of the community here, and be part of the dialogue here, and try to let what I learn reflect my practices here." Lake's promise to bring awareness of racism and privilege into his professional practice was a reminder to the group that regardless of what happens at the institutional level, we are still individually responsible for enacting change in our own lives. Although there were still some barriers to

action that members faced, the middle sessions seemed to be the tipping point for the PAR group which ushered them into a stage of intentional action planning.

Later sessions. In the later sessions, which consisted of Weeks 10 through 14, the PAR group revised the list of action outcomes and moved into action planning. In Week 10, although the group was moving forward and developing action plans, individuals were continuing to deepen their personal awareness. First, Minnie and I shared concerns about what we still don't know.

Minnie: I just feel that, you know, small changes can be made. But there is this whole big, bigger thing that just can't, I don't even know how you even...

Heather: [For me] imagery comes to mind. It is like really hesitant steps I think. Because I keep thinking about things that I don't know, and not knowing how to identify them. And I know that is why I am doing this work, but I also feel like, almost like, when am I going to step in it? When am I going to step in it? Because I just know it is going to happen...

Whereas Minnie seemed to be struggling to imagine how to affect change at a systemic level, I struggled with accepting that even though I was steeped in this work I would still likely make unforeseeable mistakes.

Meanwhile, Theresa, Muzzie and Kate expressed an urgency for the group to move toward action.

Theresa: I am feeling like I am not sure where this is going, and what we are doing with what we are talking about here. And it's all fine and dandy that we talk about it with ourselves and maybe we can make individual changes in

our lives, and that is great. But I do feel like there are things that we need to do at an institutional level...

Muzzie: I echo the piece around what's next, what are we going to do with this? How do we get the room full of, mostly white folks at the top level, to um, to realize that they need to, they need to step it up...

Kate: We were kind of a little late to the party in terms of trying to figure out how we could bring what came out of this group [PAR] to the vision and mission and goal setting for the institution [SPG]. But it still can inform certainly.

Theresa and Muzzie clearly wanted to move beyond talking about white privilege and into action steps, and Kate suggested that we may even be too late to impact change in the strategic planning process. By Week 10, the PAR group was focused on what comes next and how to get there.

In Week 11, members seemed empowered to confront racism and white privilege and had a heightened awareness that more People of Color needed to weigh in on the potential action plans before we went much further. Holly expressed the need to be deliberate and to not hesitate in addressing racism and privilege.

I don't think that I am supposed to wait for the right time. I don't think that I am supposed to wait for like an organic moment. Like where the stars align and somebody asks me, what do you think about white privilege... Like, we have to bring it up in a very, um, very deliberate way.

Holly's remarks were representative of not only of a change in her own movement toward action over the course of the primary research phase, but also that of the entire PAR group's movement toward action. She, like the group, aimed to be intentional about addressing privilege at RAC.

Later in that same session, Muzzie, Lisa and Minnie expressed an urgency to bring People of Color to the table to hear their perspectives and to discuss action items.

Muzzie: I am interested in thinking about who our allies might be...

Lisa: Yah, and also revisiting the question that Sarah brought up a while ago, about bringing Communities of Color to the table at some point...

Minnie: I am starting to feel a little bit more intensely this sense of, there are a bunch of white people in the room talking about white privilege, um, without sort of a moving forward perspective with People of Color on campus. I think that needs to happen, pretty soon.

By this time, many people in the PAR group had expressed interest in working together with People of Color on campus. However, no decisions had been made as to how and when this would happen. Although it was a stated intention, no one had yet proposed a plan or volunteered to take the lead on organizing this joint meeting.

Finally, in Week 11, Kate shared that she had been following a blog post about the Trayvon Martin verdict. Initially, People of Color had been challenging white people on their privilege, but it evolved into white people "feeling self-satisfied because they are writing about their awareness of their privilege... to me was this little microcosm of thinking about where that line is for us. Like, where is the awareness and then where is the commitment to action?" Kate's

reflection was a good reminder that without follow-through, the PAR group would be just another group comprised mostly of white folks doing nothing but talking.

In Week 12, members lost a bit of forward momentum in that they spoke about competing commitments which may detract them from future PAR work, and began framing our success in terms of minimal rather than optimal measures. Lake and Minnie first acknowledged the time constraints the group faced as the start of the new semester was approaching.

Lake: For two and a half months I don't know I'll be able to do other things or think about other things or try to affect the campus.

Minnie: I feel like we can only deal with what's right in front of us now. Because there's always so much, always so much to do.

In some respects, Lake and Minnie voiced realistic perspectives in that there were only so many action outcomes that were truly within the group's purview. At the same time, being busy seemed to be rationale for lessening one's commitment toward action.

June suggested that committing to individual action was itself a concrete commitment that members could take away from the PAR experience.

I think there's some really concrete things on an individual basis we can do. Like a) talking to people about it, so more people do become aware. I mean, I bring it up in almost every conversation I have here and off campus. I've learned just so much from that, like a) what people don't know, and b) what people do know and what their experience is.

To this point, Lake responded “I’m not in a position to make systemic change on campus.”

Lake’s feelings of powerlessness were apparent and his comments begged the question, what specific actions could individuals and the group really take to impact change at RAC?

In response to June and Lake’s comments, Kate affirmed that “at the very minimum, one of the things that can come out of this if nothing else is each one of us making a personal commitment to have dialogue and have conversations and think critically about how we’re approaching all these things.” While that is at the very minimum one outcome that could come from the PAR experience, a commitment to critical thinking and dialogue seemed to be representative of “Moving Toward Understanding” but would not necessarily achieve the *action* inherent in Participatory Action Research.

Lisa was not stepping away from commitment however, and she wrapped up the session by returning again to the idea that the PAR group needed to work with People of Color. “To my thinking, like the first item of business once we’ve kind of concluded our little pre-work, is trying to get some input from you know, the Communities of Color on campus.” Lisa’s comment helped nudge the group back toward a path of action, it once again underscored the group’s desire for solidarity with Communities of Color, and demonstrated how having allies in doing this work can be tremendously helpful in order to hold one another accountable.

Participants came to Week 13 ready to work and spent the session discerning which action outcomes would be PAR initiatives and which action outcomes were more appropriate as recommendations for the College. The group spent a significant amount of time in that session discussing conflicting ideas of how to reach out to and invite People of Color to join us in dialogue.

Kate: Are we saying that we are identifying actions that need to happen? Or are we saying that we are identifying an issue and we want to hear from [People of Color]...

Heather: I would be curious to hear if other folks had different ideas about what this inclusion of People of Color would look like, or kind of the results we are hoping for... I see it as like a way of fact checking and ally building...

Lisa: I think as a group reaching out to colleagues of color will have the potential and will completely change our trajectory...

Kate: It could be very frustrating or challenging for People of Color to sit through the process of hearing about somebody else's revelations about how, you know, about white privilege...

Heather: I can tell you what I was imagining I would feel comfortable doing. Um, just literally having a one on one conversation with someone, and saying this is a little bit about the work we have been doing... as a group we think it makes a lot of sense for us to, um, kind of fact check...

Theresa: I would not feel comfortable having that conversation. And maybe it's because I don't consider myself white... I can't envision having that conversation with anybody... but I would feel comfortable with bringing forward some sort of [recommendation]... that we need to look at diversity of our staff and faculty and having it reflect more of what our students are... I wouldn't feel comfortable... saying hey you are Black, come to this table, we will talk about it.

Lisa: It could end up being like, two focus type groups, and then a group of other people meet like one on one.

In the end, multiple, competing ideas about how to involve People of Color made it difficult for the group to decide on a course of action, so once again the item was tabled. Notably, however, the inclusion of an action item to provide feedback to the SPG on the College's vision and goals was added with little discussion.

Week 14 was the final session of the primary research phase and the group again revisited our list of action outcomes. Kate reiterated the consensus from the previous week's discussion that "some of these things are not things that we necessarily have the agency to change." With that in mind we focused on what items the PAR group did have control over and would have the authority to affect at RAC.

We discussed what might be considered "low hanging fruit" or would be most feasible to complete in the short-term, what might be a reasonable timeframe for addressing more long-term items and other ways that members could take action through continued involvement with the PAR group. I asked the members to gauge which of the following ways they might personally want to commit to continued PAR work in the coming weeks and months.

Action items would be one area, so maybe we are going to take a look at this list and we are going to choose as a group one of these things that we want to work on, and maybe when we take the poll you say yeah, I would like to work on that action item. Whatever that is. Or another thing would be data analysis, so like really doing a closer look at the transcripts, of our meetings and the content of some of the journals and the interviews and whatever piece of that you are interested in. So doing some of the data analysis,

looking for themes and what we make sense of the data. Um, and then writing, so writing this up in any form, this could be like a campus report, this could be a paper that we want to present at a conference, um, you know, sharing it back with our other stakeholders on campus et cetera, and also presenting.

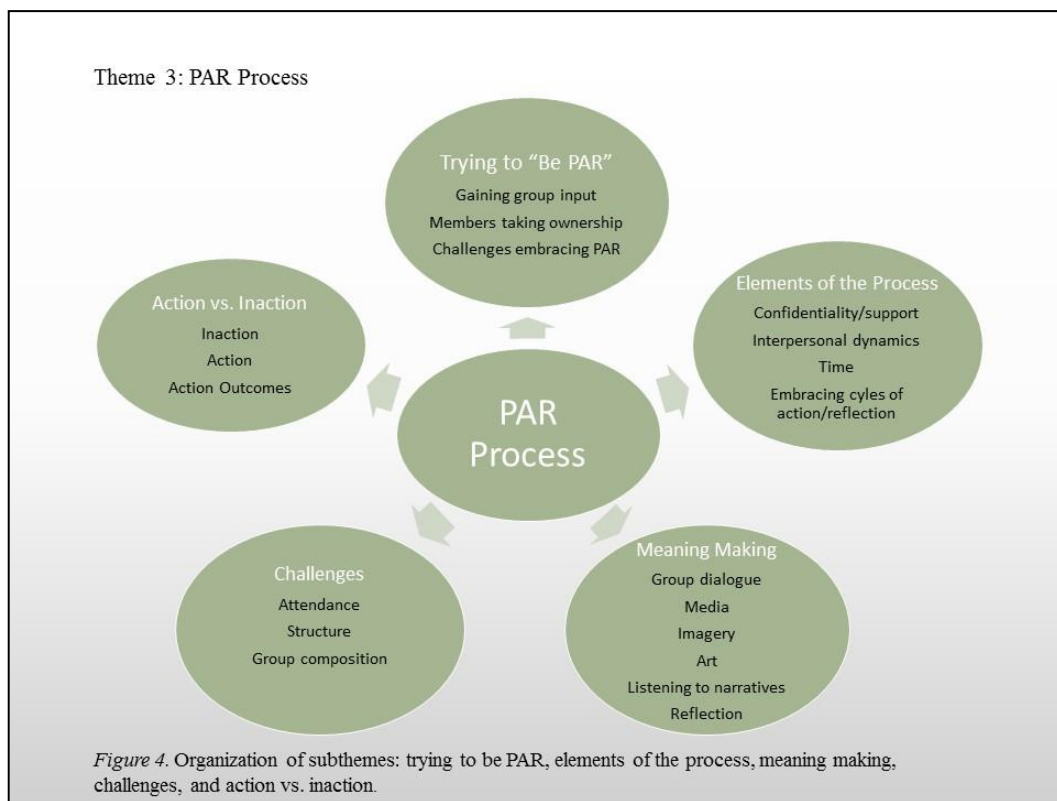
In the end, all members committed to involvement in at least one action outcome following the conclusion of the primary research phase, and some members committed to involvement in multiple action outcomes.

In summary, “Coalescing into an Action-Oriented Group” occurred in three phases: early sessions, middle sessions, and later sessions. During the early sessions, participants were more likely to focus on self-exploration but began to see the importance of taking action. During the middle sessions, participants continued to deepen awareness of white privilege and began to shift their focus toward white privilege at the institution and ways to take action. Finally, during the later sessions, participants gained momentum as a group and demonstrated a commitment to take action in their own lives and at RAC. Next, the group’s challenges and successes embracing the PAR process are analyzed.

PAR Process

The third overarching theme that emerged from the data, PAR Process, unveiled several factors impacting the groups’ experience of the PAR project. First, members wrestled throughout the initial research phase with “Trying to Be PAR.” Personally, I often struggled with trying to be an effective researcher/participant (much in the same way that I struggled to combat my own white privilege from within the existing white paradigm). Additionally, group members experimented with what it meant to be PAR researchers and wrestled with their own comfort

level of being equal participants in the process. Second, “Elements of the Process,” which included the timeline under which we operated, embracing cycles of action and reflection, and group dynamics were relevant to many discussions. Third, “Meaning Making” was an important part of the PAR process. Through sharing of narratives, the use of imagery, art and reflection, members learned more about themselves and one another. Fourth, the PAR group experienced a number of hurdles that surfaced throughout our time together. “Challenges” included: time allocated to the process, consistent attendance, structure of meetings, and group composition.



Finally, “Action vs. Inaction” was the fifth factor underlying the group’s experience of the PAR project. Both actions that were taken and actions that were not taken were significant for the group. To help conceptualize the presentation of this theme, an organizational chart allows us to see how each subtheme relates to “PAR Process” (see Figure 4).

Trying to Be PAR

My struggle with trying to be an effective researcher/participant continued throughout the initial research phase as me and the other members wrestled with “Trying to Be PAR,” or rather, as we attempted to embody the principles of PAR. This theme emerged as a construct through attempts to gain the group’s input, asking clarifying questions, encouraging shared ownership over the process and through challenges with embracing PAR.

Gaining group input. At the beginning of the primary research phase, in order to encourage everyone in the group to have equal voice, I specifically used the tactic of asking the group’s input on both small and larger decisions. For example, when deciding how to proceed with a group discussion during Week 3, I asked: “So what would you feel most comfortable with? Do you want to break into smaller groups and do some things on paper, or do we want to have a group conversation?” Gaining group input was an important tactic for ensuring a shared process early on.

Members taking ownership. At times, in efforts to empower the PAR members to take ownership of the project, I would ask questions of participants to draw them further into the dialogue and I made attempts to turn over decision-making power to the group. Despite these tactics it still appeared that the group viewed me in a leadership role and deferred to me for the first several weeks. During this time, I tried experimenting with being silent, changing the location of where I sat in the room and asking for help with co-facilitation. None of these experiments seemed to effectively shift the perception of my role and members continued to view me as the leader rather than as both researcher and participant.

Although it was unintentional, the biggest shift in member empowerment occurred when I was absent during Week 6 and members began taking ownership as equal participants. In illustration of group members taking shared ownership, Theresa raised a concern about the group's limited availability for meeting times during Week 6. "Can we, I know we briefly talked about expanding either before or after this meeting. Can we find a whole other time then?" To which Kate replies, "Well there's nothing to say that people couldn't continue this conversation outside of this group."

As the weeks progressed, more members offered suggestions and demonstrated initiative and leadership. One member, Minnie, asserted her perspective in Week 11, which helped to bring clear direction to the group. "I feel like we need to dedicate next week or the week after to just like, pouring into this [draft list of action items], and connecting that to this [timeline], and like come up with a set of things."

Challenges embracing PAR. Although I tried to do so, I was not always egalitarian in my approach and found myself sometimes giving directives. This was apparent during a discussion in Week 9 about the group's next steps when I responded to the members that they should "commit to actually writing the journal too. That would be the other, I don't know, I feel like a request." However, the group members slowly began making suggestions and asking clarifying questions of each other over the course of the first several weeks.

At the end of the primary research phase group members asked me whether I thought we had adhered to PAR principles. In sharing my perspective, I also alluded to my on-going struggle of "Trying to Be PAR":

The hope and intention of PAR is that the group takes shared ownership of the process, and I think I have seen us do that a lot as the summer has gone on. And some of the suggestions [made to me about what to do differently] I would have been really excited if the group had initiated those. Um, but part of my process in my head was don't take it all over, don't do it, don't do it.

In sum, throughout our time together, the group members continued to play with what it meant to be participatory action researchers, and I continued to carefully weigh my role as both a researcher and participant. However, similar to the group's processes of "Moving Toward Understanding" and "Moving Toward Action," there were also various stages of development in our confidence and proficiency as researchers as our group continued "Trying to Be PAR."

Elements of the Process

"Elements of the Process" included aspects of participants' experience such as the need for confidentiality and support and underlying interpersonal dynamics that were relevant to our process. Additionally, this theme emerged as concerns for the timeline under which we carried out the project and the extent to which participants embraced cycles of action and reflection.

Confidentiality and support. A discussion about confidentiality in Week 3 helped to set the tone for how freely members engaged in the group process. Minnie opened the dialogue by suggesting that "confidentiality and the safety of the space is kind of the most important thing." Muzzie asked for clarification around whether the group meant to keep the content of our dialogues confidential or if we intended to keep our entire process a secret. "When we say confidentiality, are we talking about we're not even going to say we're doing this? Talk about what we're learning or not at all?" To which Sarah then responded, "There has to be I guess

confidentiality around the specifics...because we can put other people at risk too.” The group members seemed to take confidentiality seriously and attempted to preserve the safety of the space throughout the process.

Demonstrating support for one another was also expressed as important from the very beginning of the process. In Week 3, Holly first explained about needing support after having an intense experience with her initial interview. “I’ve kind of already made Lisa my buddy, because after my interview I needed to talk to somebody... So it’s not a bad idea to have somebody that you can just go talk about it.” This sense of support for one another was important to the group’s dynamics throughout the research project and provided scaffolding when the members experienced conflicts later on.

Interpersonal dynamics. At times there were underlying interpersonal dynamics that became relevant to the group’s process. In the beginning of our Week 9 session, Kate and Theresa had a misunderstanding that resulted in a tense back and forth dialogue during the check-in process. Kate made a statement in response to Theresa’s previous interjection during another member’s turn:

I would like to ask that check-in be check-in, in the true sense that people say how they are doing and there isn’t back and forth or continued discussion about what has come up in people’s check in...I came in late but I feel like today there was a lot of like back and forth. And people want to respond to what people said. It’s that, just to me, it doesn’t feel like a true check-in.

Theresa felt misunderstood and began to emotionally shut down. As a result she shared only a brief check-in, “What I’m feeling here, I don’t know exactly what I feel.” Although the

misunderstanding was not related to the topic of our PAR inquiry, this rift created a shift in group dynamics that was felt throughout the remainder of the session.

In our Week 10 session, Kate talked about the impact that inconsistent attendance had on the group's process. "I have found the kind of different dynamic of the group every meeting...just a little bit, it changes the sense of my own place in the dynamic when there are different people in different meetings." Indeed, there was a core group of six to seven participants who attended our weekly meetings regularly throughout the primary research phase. However, the sporadic attendance of the others made it difficult to maintain a consistent group dynamic, which is something that came up again toward the end of the primary research phase and was addressed further in the discussion of "Challenges."

Time. Concerns around not having enough time and the condensed timeline under which we carried out the project surfaced throughout the project. It often seemed like we did not have enough time in our weekly meetings to accomplish all we intended or that allowed for us to move into a deeper, more meaningful dialogue. Kate suggested in Week 3 that the group consider lengthening the weekly meeting times in order to allow for more depth of dialogue. "I'd like to suggest that we maybe move to a one and a half or two hour meeting because it does feel rushed." In Week 7, I brought in special "white" snacks such as cream puffs, coconut cake, and bananas to celebrate the group reaching the halfway mark, and suggested that participants reflect on their experience thus far by creating a "timeline, like where have we come, where are we now, and where do you think we want to go?" The "Timeline" document (see Appendix D), which captured "where we started, where we are now, and where we're going" was made into a

large poster-sized visual representation of the group's process and would be referenced often in the weeks to come.

In Week 10, during a discussion about what to do regarding some of the journal entries that were past due, I explained that “the [journal] prompts were written to be time sensitive. It was, you know, reflecting on this week's discussion...It is very difficult, if not impossible to go back and recreate that actual feeling at the time.” Group members saw both the importance of timeliness in this regard and simultaneously recognized the challenges with adhering to a strict schedule. Then in Week 11, time began catching up to the group quickly as one of the participants announced she was leaving the College to take a job elsewhere, and this seemed to signal the beginning of the end of the primary research phase. I began my check-in with this in mind:

I just want to acknowledge Holly that we are really going to miss you, not only at the College but specifically as part of this group. And it actually occurred to me that we will only be together for a few more weeks, and how much I will miss being a part of this group.

And once again in Week 11, Kate called attention to the fleeting amount of time remaining for the group to develop our action plan. “I kind of can't believe that in two weeks is the last... and we can't just keep thinking that, we've gotta come up with some ideas about the work that we have done. But the timing is just...yah.” While our timeline was one significant element of the PAR process, the members' ability to embrace cycles of action and reflection was another core component.

Embracing cycles of action and reflection. Participants varied in their willingness and consciousness of embracing the cycles of action and reflection that are inherent in the PAR process. For example, the journal exercises were often met with resistance and several conversations arose over the course of the project related to participants' inconsistent completion of outside assignments. During Week 7, Kate talked about her thoughts on why participants had not submitted journals or checklists:

I was realizing after I said to Heather, I think you need to hold us accountable. And then I thought, well, we need to hold ourselves accountable. This is a participatory group. So I apologize in a way for putting you in that spot and saying you should be the one to. We should hold ourselves accountable. But maybe we can come to some kind of agreement about how to do that with each other.

During a conversation about this phenomenon in Week 8, I attempted to explain further how journaling contributed to the PAR cycles of action and reflection. "The like, sitting down and making ourselves do the journals or the checklist or whatever, this is one level of reflection. And then participating in that self-reflection is a deeper more introspective way of doing the work."

Toward the end of the project the group began to express restlessness and frustration about having seemingly been doing a lot of talking but not yet taking much concrete action. In Week 13, I again attempted to highlight ways in which the group had been engaging in cycles of action and reflection all along:

I just wanted to revisit for a minute my sense of participatory action research and where we might be in a process like that. Um, because I think it could kind of normalize our experience a little bit. So basically, if you think about it as a group that is coming

together to address a problem, and the problem that we are looking at is deconstructing whiteness and its impact on, kind of ourselves but essentially on our professional practice. If that is the problem we are addressing, it happens through a cycle of action and reflection. And, I feel like the action [so far] was us coming together and the reflection has happened over a period of weeks. And usually in participatory action research, that cycle continues. The next action happens when the group comes to a place where we decide that there are action outcomes that we want to have as a result of it. And I think that is where we are leading.

And to this, Lisa responded, “We got to the part where we all kind of agreed kind of quick...and some of us had like some emotional stuff to unpack. I had that. It probably contributes to our feeling like, okay we agree, let’s do something.” While they may not have always consciously identified the cycles of action and reflection, participants engaged in some real “Meaning Making” as a result of the PAR process.

Meaning Making

Many mediums were used throughout the primary research phase to make meaning of individuals’ understanding of white privilege on a personal and institutional level. Through group dialogue, the use of media, imagery and creative art, sharing their own stories and thoughtfully listening to others, and engaging in self-reflection, members learned more about themselves and one another over the course of the fourteen weeks we spent together.

Group dialogue. One of the first dialogues that uncovered meaning for the participants occurred early on in our process during Week 3, when we discussed the purpose of the PAR project and what members may expect in terms of how we were going to work together and what

we may hope to take away from this experience. The following four questions, which were suggested to me by a Colleague of Color as a way to help the PAR group establish ground rules, served as the prompts for our joint-reflection:

1. What are the risks of having this conversation about white privilege in the workplace?
2. When we start engaging in conversation about white privilege, what are the worst possible things that could happen?
3. If those worst possible things happen, what will we do about it? Or, how can we prevent those worst possible things from happening?
4. What structures might we be able to put into place as a group in order to address unexpected things that come up?

This resulted in a fruitful dialogue for the group as we realized how easily we identified the long list of risks and fears related to engaging in this project. In response, Sarah urged the group not to allow fear to prevent us from taking action, “we don’t want to be so cautious that nothing happens, right?” To this point Holly suggested that we release “progress updates, or just a note, maybe half-way through or, I don’t know, something to say we are on this endeavor and would hope to bring forward information or something kind of along those lines” as a way of holding ourselves accountable. I then offered that at our midway point “we take stock of where we are and where we’re going, and we can decide what we want to do [to take action].” This dialogue helped to define the purpose and meaning of the group. Although we recognized that members would experience the feelings of risk and fear inherent in examining white privilege, we committed to doing so with the intention of taking action as individuals and at the institution.

Media. In our session during Week 5, we began by watching part of Tim Wise's video, *The Pathology of White Privilege*, in which he discussed the absence of the theme of race in political debates over fair housing, health care, law enforcement, and income disparity. This denial of the inequalities experienced by People of Color in this country then fueled our group dialogue about a failing educational system and how standardized testing further disadvantaged Students of Color. An overwhelming sense of disenchantment and frustration was building in the group.

As the session grew towards a close, as a way of capturing how various members were thinking or feeling in response to our discussion, I asked that each person share a one-word statement to describe how they were leaving the meeting. These words captured the meaning of where participants were on a continuum from understanding to action. June shared "subsidiary." Theresa reflected "complacency." Lisa offered "patience." Muzzie contributed "stillness." My own word was "unsettled." Although each group member held a slightly different perspective, those words represented the group's position on the continuum from understanding to action, in that the group seemed to no longer be content with just focusing on increased awareness.

Imagery. Imagery became another powerful tool for meaning-making among the PAR members. During Week 7, I suggested that "we look at our time together on a continuum... what do we see as some of the important benchmarks of where we've come [from], and where we are now and where we want to go?" We also began to map out our process on a large sheet of paper that captures both key phrases and images representing our process. June began the conversation, laughing, "we started out in the clouds. Where we are at right now is on the earth." Holly added, "where I think we are right now is we're starting to dig a little bit deeper." Minnie drew a shovel

next to this phrase to illustrate the point as she summarized their comments, “So we are, where we are now we’re digging deeper. We’re at a different level of personal reflection and intergroup dialogue.” Sarah agreed with this assessment, “what I appreciate is that people are wanting themselves to be more open to other people with truer insight.” June was feeling an urgency to move beyond this stage of reflection and wanted to take some sort of concrete action:

You know, I feel like I wanna be way more proactive about everything that makes me angry. Um, because at least then I will feel like I am not just taking it. You know? It’s not enough just to be angry about it or be upset about it. You actually have to do something with that.

To this I concurred and suggested, “I think action is also where we’re going. Like June was saying, what am I going to do about it? I feel like that’s where we’re going. That’s us deciding what are we going to do about it.” The poster created by the group during the session, otherwise known as the “Timeline” document, became an important artifact, which captured our process at that moment in time. It helped us to make meaning of our experience and to chart a course for what was to come.

During the conclusion of our session in Week 8, the group again used imagery to elicit the meaning that members were making of our process. I prompted the group to “think of an image that depicts where you’re at right now, like as if you were going to take a picture or draw something. And tell us what it is.” Holly shared an image that captured her revelation about how our upbringing informs our knowledge of different racialized experiences, “the first time I realized that my friends were different than me, was when I walked into their home and it smelled differently than mine... the picture I’m leaving you with is a tiny let condo where I grew

up.” Minnie offered this image next, which spoke to her feelings of arriving at a new learning edge, “I feel like I’m wrapped in this stretchy material. And I’m pushing against it, and I can see through it sometimes, and it sort of stretches...but I can’t rip it apart yet. I haven’t gotten to that yet.” Lake then shared an image that stood out in his memory of when he presented a workshop to a class of adult students:

The subject that I had chosen was the role that minority women had played in the American Civil Rights Movement. That was my example of a paper. And I remember saying something... that this would be a good paper to write because that’s an often underreported story... like when you look at the great charismatic leaders, the Martin Luther Kings and others, people who do deserve credit but there are other people who played roles... There was one particular table sitting to the side, it was three African American women. And they were just sitting and nodding as I said that. And I was like, Oh! Ok.

For Lake, the nods from these women reinforced the sense of the importance one should place on selecting educational material that is culturally relevant and engaging for students. Furthermore, this image was representative of the confidence that Lake found in being able to effectively serve students whose backgrounds differed from his own.

Art. In Week 4 members engaged in an art project using white clay. I explained to the group that “there’s no guidelines to this activity other than you can use this to create something that represents to you what white privilege is.” As participants experimented with different ways of representing whiteness through art, the conversation turned toward the notions of cultural appropriation, food, socioeconomic status, and having different racialized experiences, at which

point I expressed how increasing the salience of our racial identity was one of the reasons for engaging in this project.

Midway through the dialogue we were discussing the common foods each of us ate growing up. Theresa said “every breakfast I had homemade flour tortillas” and “every dinner I had corn tortillas” along with whatever else was on the menu. I explained that “when I was younger, the socioeconomic level of my family was very much like working class...we would definitely get like the government-issued food that was in like the white boxes with black letters on it... like corn flakes.” Later, Lisa and Lake had an exchange about the inauthenticity of large burritos that have “way too many things in [them],” which weren’t “actual Mexican food.” Each of these examples illuminated the differences in our cultural experiences and perspectives from the time that we were young.

At the end of the session we took turns describing our clay creations and what they represented (see Appendix E). Lisa shared two small objects, “I was trying to make two distinct items um, to represent two halves of myself.” Lake shared his white clay creation which was an imprint of his own hand. “I feel like it’s, to me it represented um, kind of the ubiquity of, kind of white control in culture and in history.” As it related to our earlier discussion about the cultural significance of food, I made a replica of a burrito:

I like a burrito that has like a ton of stuff in it. I love vegetables in it. And it didn’t occur to me that that wasn’t “authentic” and it just makes me laugh at my own blindness to things. Um, but this is going to serve as a very visible representation of all the things that I still need to see and learn and have pointed out to me about my whiteness and the areas that I hold privilege in and where I can impact any sort of change.

Participants were encouraged to keep their clay creations in a visible location so when they see it they would remember our dialogue and the meaning they attribute to whiteness.

Listening to narratives. During our discussion in Week 7, some participants were eager to share their accounts of completing an assignment, adapted from *The great white elephant: A workbook on racial privilege for white anti-racists* by Parker and Chambers (2007), that had been previously posed to them. The assignment was to “ask a person of color about their experiences on our campus. Be willing to accept their experiences as true, real and accurate.” Theresa began by reflecting on her conversation with a senior administrator at RAC who identifies as Latino. They had first exchanged pleasantries in passing and then commented on the diversity of the neighboring cities where they resided. This provided segue to the following dialogue, as recounted by Theresa:

[We went] down this path about the administration being white, about leadership being fairly white... I said well let's pretend like you're an African-American male student on our campus, who do you look up to... And then it was like this quiet pause. And then he said something to the effect and he said it multiple times...do you think they hired me because I'm Latino and what I am supposed to bring to the table because I'm Latino... And I was like... And these [are] conversations that we need to be having on our campus. And he's like, is there any way we can ask the students about the diversity on the campus? And I was like, yah, there are plenty of surveys and standardized surveys that are out there to judge the racial tension on our campus but we don't participate in them. Um, and there's never been any interest, we just keep saying we're diverse. We're number, whatever, in diversity... but we don't talk about it.

Theresa was genuinely excited when sharing about her exchange with this administrator. It seemed very meaningful for her to have connected with another Latino staff member at RAC about their experiences concerning race dynamics on campus.

Holly also had a very meaningful experience when she took the opportunity to resume a previous dialogue with a female African-American student assistant who worked in her office. On an earlier occasion, the student had been assisting Holly with planning for an off-campus event where their contact person at the venue was also an African-American woman. At the time, the student had commented to Holly that the African-American woman's lack of follow through on their event details "made her people look bad." For the purposes of this assignment, Holly referenced their previous conversation and asked the student assistant if they could discuss it further. Holly shares:

As an African-American female you think that you have all of this pressure on you. And I didn't realize that or know that or acknowledge that. And you think you are representing the entire African-American female community... And she just like looked at me and was just like... Exactly. That's how I feel, that's how I've felt, that's why I'm getting my Master's. She has had that weight like on her shoulders and how painful... And it was just like such an "aha" moment for her and for me... And we don't acknowledge it as white people on this campus, and what that means for African American males or Latino males... I mean it's just, I couldn't imagine you know just because I fail a class it isn't because oh you know she's *white*. Whereas the student was expressing to me how that feels to her and why she wanted to excel, why she wanted to do so well, why she wanted

to go on to get her Master's because she didn't want to be a statistic. And I don't worry about being a statistic. I've never worried about that in my life.

For Holly, this experience of thoughtfully listening to the story of another was extremely meaningful. Not only did it open her eyes to a new perspective, but it also allowed her to experience a more authentic connection with this student.

Reflection. Participants were encouraged to engage in self-reflection through individual interviews, completion of the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Checklist, and journal writing at various points in the process. The extent to which each participant completed the assignments varied. For example, many members completed at least some of the assignments. However, none of the members completed all of the assignments. During Week 8, I stressed the importance of the journal reflections as a data source. "This is one set of data [group sessions] and that's a whole other set of data [journals] that's going to help us in making a case for why this is so important. So, it's important data."

At the end of the primary research phase the group engaged in a meta-reflection on the process as another level of meaning making. I asked the group, "thinking about the process that we have you know, undergone, that we embarked on at the beginning of the summer and reflecting backwards, what did we make of it?" Participants shared several pieces of feedback that seemed to have an impact on the overall experience, and they posited that the dynamics and outcome of our time together may have been different had those elements also been different. In sum, the meaning that the group made of the overall experience was only possible by participating in its entirety. As Minnie stated, "I don't know that all of these suggestions, like we could have come to all of them without having gone through the process."

Challenges

The group experienced “Challenges” in several ways during the PAR process. As alluded to above, challenges included: dealing with inconsistent attendance, figuring out the structure of our meetings, and the group composition itself.

Attendance. Inconsistent attendance was one area of concern that participants theorized was a factor in our ability to foster trust among members and to preserve the integrity of the group. Muzzie commented, “it’s really key that people commit, and that it is almost mandatory...because part of what happened for me... I would never know who was there, so that would mean I would have to give backstory to something.” Lake also acknowledged this as a challenge, “I think I have been equally a part of the problem, I think I missed three. So I don’t know what the best recommendation is, but I do think it would have been better with a consistent attendance.” It was also acknowledged how those that were present lost an opportunity to gain new perspectives when others were missing from the group.

Structure. Members reflected that if there had been more structure to the sessions and more accountability in completing the outside assignments that participants would have felt more productive and their experiences would have been further enriched. In speaking to me, Kate mentioned:

At one point you said, should we just have time to write journals in the group? And I said no, no, I don’t want to do that. But maybe that would have been good, because it would have forced us all to push past whatever was causing hesitation around writing the journals.

Lisa commented that when some of the sessions became more focused on “getting things off our chest” that although unintentionally, “some of the more scholarly type commitments, things we read, things we listened to, might have been sacrificed a little bit.” And Theresa added that she “would have liked to have more structured activities in our meetings instead of just talking.” Each of these points related to members’ comfort levels with the PAR model of engaging in a shared process and taking joint responsibility for its direction. Additionally, members demonstrated varying degrees of ownership and consciousness that they could in fact influence the structure of our meetings.

Group composition. Concerns around the demographic composition of the group surfaced on multiple occasions and were connected back to the ambiguity of the original call for participants, in that there was no demographic criterion specified, nor was it made explicitly clear that the project was open to anyone regardless of racial or ethnic identity. This dialogue between members during our session in Week 3 indicated its importance early on in our process:

Sarah: There are many groups of people on this campus who face negative things because of white privilege. But one of the major groups is African-Americans, so if it’s not going to be only a white group of people, I’m thinking about why there aren’t African Americans in it.

Muzzie: I’m curious to [know], just... It was an open call, right?

Heather: I did have, I would say I could count – I had four Staff or Faculty of Color who contacted me and asked is this just for white people or is it open to anyone? In which case I responded it’s open to anyone. Um, we’ll be

looking at the construct of white privilege and the impact of privilege on professional practice but it's open to anyone.

Later in that same meeting Theresa raised a point about the individual interview questions that illustrated how that experience did not feel inclusive to People of Color. "The one question, *what does it mean for you to be white...* I wanted to rephrase that to *what does it mean TO you to be white?* because I did not consider myself to be white."

Again similar concerns came up during the group's meta-reflection on the PAR project. Group composition was noted as being important to both our process and our identified action outcomes. This dialogue in Week 14 captures the challenge this posed:

Theresa: I am wondering about the wording of the initial invite email. And if everyone felt welcomed by the wording of the email or only people who considered themselves to be white felt like it was for them.

Heather: Um, initially I was thinking that this would be an experience for white practitioners, um, because I was coming from the perspective that um, that piece about it is not up to People of Color to educate other white people, it is up to white people to educate other white people. Um, and what went out [in the invite email], I guess my thinking eventually was that, I think there needs to be authenticity of voices in the room and there is something missing by being exclusively for white people... So that's kind of where I was coming from, but I hear that maybe it wasn't explicit in the invitation, that it was open and inclusive to everyone.

Theresa: It definitely wasn't.

The consensus among group members was that having diverse perspectives was a valid and crucial part of examining white privilege, and their desire to find ways of connecting our PAR work with Communities of Color on campus was indicative of this value.

One other relevant aspect of our group composition was the fact that several of the members knew each other outside of the PAR group. Some group members had been long-time friends, others had prior disagreements or differences of opinion before ever coming to the PAR group, and two participants were committed life-partners. Each of these factors contributed to our nuanced and sometimes challenging interpersonal and group dynamics. Finally, there was a lingering sense that the very nature of us all being insiders to the organization created more risk than had we been a collective of people with no formal association, who did not previously know one another and that were trying to examine the impact of privilege.

Action vs. Inaction

Over the course of the primary research phase the group vacillated between justifying their own inaction and feeling paralyzed as change agents to being compelled with urgency toward action. While the latter resulted in a list of concrete action items and recommendations, the former was more elusive in how it played out.

Inaction. Members were cognizant that action is inherent in participatory action research yet still found many barriers to taking action including the need to be cautious, having demanding and busy schedules and other factors. For example, during our discussion in Week 3 about the risks of examining white privilege in the workplace, Muzzie acknowledged that “part of the privilege for me is being able to cautiously select my battles, or perhaps consciously.” In

this sense, unconsciousness of privilege and being cautious of engaging in “battles” were both excusing of the need to take action.

Having busy and demanding work schedules were another factor used as justification of members falling short of action. For example, in Week 12 Lake explained that he was starting to think about “what’s coming up, just in terms of what will be my day to day job duties...I think it does kind of circle back to that question of what we can do and what kind of change we can affect.” Finally, feeling overwhelmed with the enormity of race disparity in our country led to participants experiencing a sense of disillusionment or paralysis to take action. June alluded to this phenomenon in Week 9 when she reflected on television programs and journal articles she had been reading:

[They focus on] a lot of the same stuff that we are exploring in here, and it just feels like society is so fucked up. You know, where do you go with that? Where do you go with that? I don't know. So I'm just feeling like I want to go dig a hole somewhere and just lay there quietly for the next 20 years.

Kate spoke more directly to this concern in Week 13 when she recalled her feelings after the previous week's discussion:

We had some back and forth about, you know, how much change do we actually feel like we can actually make at the institution? And there is kind of like the immediate change versus longer term change... I was having a pessimistic moment about what's the likelihood of people really stepping up, or especially leadership stepping up to address some things that are more challenging and more scary to address.

In each of these instances members were not necessarily explicitly, intentionally or even cognizant of choosing inaction. It is only when juxtaposed to the concrete actions the group later laid forth does their barriers to action become transparent.

Action. Conversations about concrete action items began during Week 7 when the group engaged in reflection on where we started, where we were at that time, and where we were going in the future. Much of the earlier conversation that week revolved around larger systemic changes that were not necessarily within the purview of our group. Toward the end of the session we began establishing a list of action items that our PAR group could work on together and created the “Timeline” document referenced earlier in “Meaning Making.” To summarize some of those points I said “just to put them out there... student voices, capturing student voices, and [advocating for] an MCC or Multicultural Center.” And Kate chimed in, “I think too, something around communication styles or communication.” I suggested that we return to the document in the following weeks to narrow down and prioritize our action items.

In Week 8 Minnie offered a more in-depth summary of our earlier discussion for members who had missed the previous session. “Taking action to make change on campus could include, capturing student voices, having a real campus wide conversation about race, establishing a Multicultural Center, evaluating faculty hiring... inclusive HR practices, um, to have a campus climate survey.” In Week 13, I suggested that we spend some time putting all of these ideas into a manageable format by “chart[ing] a course for how we can take action in some way that is meaningful to us individually certainly, you know but also as a group... [and] think about what we need to do to make that plan happen.” The action of charting a course became another key activity, which resulted in the creation of a second large poster that would become a

guiding document for the group. The “Charting a Course” document (see Appendix F) helped to categorize our ideas into three main themes: Institutional Policies and Practices, Teaching and Learning, and Campus Culture and Climate.

Institutional policies and practices. The conversation about institutional policies and practices included the desire to conduct an evaluation process of faculty and staff hiring procedures. Specifically, the group wanted to ensure inclusive hiring practices in order to increase structural diversity at RAC so that employees become more reflective of the student body. Additionally, the idea of establishing a Multicultural Center was discussed as a way to intentionally support Students of Color. Finally, there was energy around providing feedback from the PAR participants to the Strategic Planning Group (SPG) about the necessity to include the themes of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in the College’s new strategic plan. This last point evolved into one of the group’s most long-standing initiatives, which is discussed further in the section on Action Outcomes.

Teaching and learning. The group reflected on two main ideas pertaining to teaching and learning. The first idea centered on the importance of developing curriculum that is reflective of students’ needs and experiences. The second idea was related to the first, in that the group saw it of critical importance that RAC offer curriculum inclusive of multicultural perspectives. It was thought that both of these points would be addressed through the deliberate creation of course offerings and through intentional faculty pedagogical approaches that were sensitive to the cultural backgrounds of our students.

Campus culture and climate. This theme encompassed multiple recommendations and potential action items and was the main area of focus held by the group. There was extensive

conversation around deconstructing the culture of communication on campus and determining if it privileged a white value set. One of the ways that the group thought this could happen would be through the administration of a campus climate survey. Another main theme within this area was the need to solicit voices of Students, Staff and Faculty of Color in the conversation about race on campus, which could include facilitated intergroup dialogue, as well as ensuring there is equal space for People of Color to have conversations about race among themselves and independent of white people. All of these items circled around the need to have a real campus conversation about race and that this might best be organized by a trained facilitator. Minnie referenced the importance of the campus culture and climate category on the “Charting a Course” document and explained:

I feel like of all of these things we actually have the most like control over, the staff, that falls in here. And yeah, eventually they are going to influence [the other categories]. And like, there is actually a lot of stuff. And so this where we are going to end up having to focus the timeline [of our actions] potentially, right?

We concluded our final session of the primary research phase with participants prioritizing and committing to action items and volunteering for particular research-oriented tasks that most interested them. Although it was not possible to gain complete consensus on the action items selected and the order in which they would be pursued, most of the group members indicated feeling satisfied at the end of the primary research phase with the direction we were moving. Finally, in contrast to the lack of awareness by the group about their justification of inaction earlier in the process, the concrete action items established by the PAR members at the end of the process were set with conviction and intentionality.

Action Outcomes

The following is a list of action outcomes devised by the PAR group that were intended to be completed after the conclusion of the primary research phase. The column entitled “Notations” indicates details such as whether items were to be included as a set of recommendations for Rosewood Ascension College. The column entitled “Timeframe” provides an estimated deadline for completion of each action item. And the column entitled “Participants Involved” notates which participants volunteered to work on those action items.

Action Outcome	Notations	Timeframe	Participants Involved
Conduct a Campus Climate Survey	---	TBD	All
Data Analysis	---	TBD	Heather, June, Kate, Lisa, Muzzie
Deconstruct culture of communication on campus and determine if it privileges a white value set	Include in Report of Recommendations to RAC	---	---
Develop a Multicultural Center	Include in Report of Recommendations to RAC	---	---
Ensure curriculum is inclusive of multicultural perspectives	Include in Report of Recommendations to RAC	---	---
Establish curriculum	Include in Report of	---	---

reflective of student needs and experiences	Recommendations to RAC		
Evaluate faculty and staff hiring practices	Include in Report of Recommendations to RAC	---	---
Have a real campus conversation about race with a trained facilitator	---	TBD	All
Include voices of Students, Staff, and Faculty of Color in this conversation	---	TBD	All
Participate in follow up interviews	---	1 year following conclusion of primary research phase	All
Present a workshop at a conference or at RAC	---	TBD	All, except June
Promote inclusive HR hiring practices	Include in Report of Recommendations to RAC	---	---
Provide educational resources about white privilege and racism	Created library guide and video collection for instructional purposes	Immediately	Lake, Muzzie
Provide intentional spaces for People of Color and people in marginalized groups to meet, dialogue and	Include in Report of Recommendations to RAC	---	---

provide support			
Submit PAR group feedback regarding RAC's mission, vision, values to the SPG	See Appendix I	Immediately	All
Support faculty to develop multicultural pedagogy (inclusive teaching styles and methods)	Include in Report of Recommendations to RAC	---	---
Write a report, summary or article	---	TBD	Heather, June, Minnie, Muzzie

The entire PAR group met on two occasions after the conclusion of the primary research phase to continue work on action outcomes. First, the group met one and a half weeks later to review RAC's draft mission and vision statements (see Appendix H) and to provide feedback. The feedback, provided in a letter to the SPG (see Appendix I), urged the strategic planning group to consider how the final mission and vision statements would reflect a commitment to inclusive hiring and teaching practices, as well as to individual and institutional exploration of privilege.

Second, the group met one and a half months later and shared progress updates including the educational resources that Lake and Muzzie had compiled for the campus community, and Kate and Muzzie shared their perspectives on how the PAR group feedback had been received by the SPG. After intense discussion among the SPG, a second iteration of RAC's draft mission, vision and goals was to be shared with the campus that reflected changes informed by the PAR

group's feedback. Additionally, Kate and Muzzie informed the group that the next stage of work to be done on the College's strategic plan would include staff and faculty members beyond those on the SPG. Myself, Minnie and Theresa all expressed interest in assisting with those efforts.

This meeting signaled the PAR group's shift into a new phase of action. After the SPG unveiled a second draft of the mission and vision statements and a draft set of goals, additional members of the PAR group became involved in the strategic planning process. Although there was no formal conversation revisiting the group's proposed action outcomes, members seemed to table other items and instead dedicated energy to the strategic plan. From that point forward, participants were no longer moving ahead as a unified research group, but rather as individuals committed to racial justice, working to create change on campus in the spirit of our PAR project.

A New Phase of Action

Individual PAR group members embarked on several initiatives related to our project over the course of the proceeding months. First, four members joined a working group designated by the SPG to flesh out strategies to realize "Goal 2" of the draft strategic plan (see Appendix J). Second, myself and one other member presented campus and conference workshops on the topic of racism and white privilege. Third, two members assisted me in the initial stages of data analysis by participating in coding of group session transcripts and helping to determine overarching themes. And finally, all members participated in follow-up interviews one year following the conclusion of the primary research phase.

SPG working group. Kate, Minnie and myself joined a working group led by Theresa that was designated by the SPG to flesh out strategies to meet Goal 2 of the strategic plan. This working group consisting of approximately 10 people convened for one hour meetings over the

course of six weeks and also included other campus representatives not from our PAR group.

Together we devised a list of potential strategies to “explore, appreciate, and critically engage the meaning and dimensions of diversity within our multicultural community” (see Appendix K).

The initial draft document went through several revisions until a final draft was submitted to the SPG (see Appendix L). The SPG received the final draft document and accepted it with few changes. The results of this working group’s efforts were demonstrated in Goal 2 of RAC’s new strategic plan (see Appendix M). Of particular significance to those PAR group members who were a part of the working group was the opportunity to see how our PAR group’s letter to the SPG grew and evolved into a critical aspect of RAC’s new strategic plan.

Campus and conference presentations. Although all PAR group members except June had originally expressed interest in presenting on our PAR project, Kate was the only member who ultimately co-presented two workshops with me. First, Kate and I presented a “White Privilege Workshop” at a social justice conference where attendees were from a wide variety of sectors in the local community. Of the 15 workshop attendees, three had not before heard of white privilege, one felt herself to be an expert on the topic, and the rest had some level of awareness of the construct of white privilege. Given the wide span of individual experiences and awareness, it proved to be somewhat challenging for Kate and I to facilitate effective exploration of the impact of white privilege in this one-hour workshop.

Second, Kate and I presented a workshop at RAC as part of a staff professional development day. The workshop focused on using PAR at RAC to explore white privilege and its impact on professional practice. The 10 workshop attendees ranged from entry-level to senior-level administrators, most having a working knowledge of the construct of white privilege. In

addition to providing an overview of the PAR project, we engaged attendees in mini-reflections on their own experience of white privilege and encouraged them to consider how systems of power and privilege played out at RAC. Attendees seemed genuinely interested in the PAR process and whether it might be a viable approach to addressing other problems on campus.

Data analysis. In the true spirit of Participatory Action Research, I invited any interested PAR group members to partake in reviewing the group session transcripts and to assist with initial coding and identification of themes. This demonstration of dialogic validity, or the extent to which the data analysis process was collaborative and “open to agreement by consensus” (James, Milenkiewicz, & Bucknam, 2008, p. 164), was essential to the process. At the conclusion of the primary research phase, June, Kate, Lisa and Muzzie had expressed intentions of assisting with data analysis. However, at the time that I was ready to begin data analysis, Kate and Minnie were the two participants who volunteered. The three of us met on two occasions for approximately five hours each time. In our first meeting I provided copies of all group session data to Kate and Minnie and conducted a brief training with them on how to code transcripts. We each read the same transcript and compared our individual coding to get a feel for the process. Kate and Minnie committed to reading and coding transcripts for all group sessions on their own time. Following the first meeting I started a shared electronic document where we could all add our codes and corresponding quotes from each transcript.

Approximately one month later we met again and debriefed the process. We found a lot of synergy in how we coded the transcripts, in that we tended to focus on similar sections of transcripts and attributed similar codes to participant quotes. In instances where there were discrepancies in how we coded particular sections, we discussed how each of us came to our

decision and then came to an agreement on how those sections should be re-coded. Finally, Kate, Minnie and I had an initial discussion of themes that emerged from our coding process. The initial list of themes included: emotions, including voices of People of Color, PAR in-group and out-group action, risk, saying versus doing, similarities and differences, the white way, and white identity. This list of themes evolved into the overarching categories of “Moving Toward Awareness” and “Moving Toward Action,” presented earlier.

One measure that was not included but which may have added greater democratic validity, or the “increased participation of the under-served in decision-making” (James, Milenkiewicz, & Bucknam, 2008, p. 163), was the involvement of Colleagues of Color as a critical reference group. Cullen (2008) utilized a critical reference group of People of Color to provide feedback to his PAR group on their proposed action items, as a means of combatting white privilege inherent in their decisions (p. 81). Had our PAR group utilized such a validity measure, it is likely that at least some of the action outcomes we decided on would have been different, based on their feedback.

Follow-up interviews. It is important to note that by the time follow-up interviews were conducted one year after the conclusion of the primary research phase, three of the original 10 participants were no longer working at RAC. Even still, all 10 members participated in the interviews, which revealed several common themes and demonstrated process validity, or the extent to which participants experienced an increase in “knowledge and systems that improve[d] the overall educational environment” (James, Milenkiewicz, & Bucknam, 2008, p. 163). Participants reflected on how their participation in the PAR group led them to develop a heightened lens to white privilege; recognize their personal responsibility to enact change; and

understand implications of how white culture permeates student affairs. Additionally, most participants felt a sense of hope for RAC at the conclusion of the project and valued becoming a member of this secret team.

Heightened lens. All but one participant discussed having experienced a heightened sense of awareness of white privilege as a result of participating in the PAR project. Participants shared that they developed increased awareness of race and white privilege while being in the PAR group, they became more confident and comfortable talking about it with others, and some even developed a hypersensitivity and looked at everything through the lens of race and privilege. Additionally, some members shared that participating in the PAR project heightened their awareness, which in turn changed their lives in some way. June explained that she is more able to “own and recognize” white privilege. “I think, going through this project has really helped me understand it [white privilege] much more in depth. And I think it’s, yah, I think it’s impacted pretty much every area of my life.” Kate also underscored the significance this project held for her and the changing impact it’s had on her thinking.

I would say that it has totally, this sounds dramatic but I think it’s true, that it has totally changed my life...I would say that when I went into this project I had some sense of the concept of white privilege...not really kind of understanding my approach to it, or what that might mean to really face those issues or work towards equity... But I really kind of feel like it’s the kind of work that once you do it there is no way to undo it. There is no way to undo how it changes your perspective or how it opens your eyes to things.

Both June and Kate represented one end of the continuum in terms of how great of an impact participation in the project had on PAR group members.

While almost all members indicated that the PAR project held some level of significance on their understanding of race and privilege, Sarah was the one member who was not necessarily as personally affected by our work. In Sarah's follow-up interview we delved deeper into her past experiences with anti-racist activism. She explained that she was involved in the Civil Rights movement as a student and from there was involved in various initiatives where "all the people around me were People of Color and there were only a few white people there and we had a lot to learn," which pushed her to gain more consciousness around race and privilege. Indeed, Sarah came to the group with deeper knowledge and experience than others and therefore didn't experience a shift in her perspective on white privilege as a result of participating in the project.

Personal responsibility. Participants discussed a greater sense of responsibility to take action for racial justice in their personal lives as well as in their work at RAC. Minnie shared that participating in the PAR project "changed my need to be absolutely active in anti-racism work and um, I am just doing as much as I can to, I don't know, not be a part of white supremacy culture." Similarly, Muzzie discussed how she had gained courage through participation in the PAR group to become more active in addressing race and privilege on campus, in her son's school, and in the community, whereas had she not been as "steeped in the information" she does not know whether she would have taken action in the same ways. I also expressed that although I do not necessarily think I am better now at confronting racism than I was before, I am becoming braver in doing so as a result of my participation in this project.

Holly was the first to express that she felt as though she had not done enough to effect change since she left RAC four weeks before the conclusion of the primary research phase. Holly also shared that her new employer does not value diversity and that she does not "know how to

get involved in the right thing, kind of make a difference on this issue, and that's on me."

Unfortunately, however, Holly's new work environment was a difficult place for her to be and it seemed that her momentum to create change was stymied when she no longer had the support of the PAR group.

White ideals and professional practice. Members reflected on the pervasiveness of whiteness in higher education, and in particular, how white culture permeates Student Affairs. Kate, Lisa and Theresa all spoke to different but compelling aspects of this theme. Kate spoke to the implications this has on students when she addressed the way that Student Affairs promotes a white framework for student engagement that is "super gung ho, super like, *let's go!*" which requires students "to be a leader and you've got to be out there...in order to be considered a good student, or a good, active, involved student." Student Affairs, like higher education in general, presents a rigid, white framework that students must fit into in order to succeed.

Lisa discussed the implications that the pervasiveness of whiteness has on staff when she expressed concern that Student Affairs is a "very white space" in which to work.

I would say in my professional life more than anywhere else I do a lot of code switching...but I feel like an outsider in that particular field, as a Woman of Color. And feeling like I don't really have a place and I need to ask permission before I can think or say or act in any way in that setting.

Lisa's perspective that the work culture in Student Affairs upholds white ideals is similar to Kate's concerns about the impact on students. Both participants reflected that Student Affairs presents a white framework to which students and staff must adhere in order to succeed.

Finally, Theresa discussed the implications that the pervasiveness of whiteness has on professional practice when she expressed concern that “Student Affairs on our campus is very white, and I think that we don’t do enough as a department to stop and think and reevaluate the way that we do things.” Theresa also conveyed the importance of making concerted efforts to hire Student Affairs staff who are more diverse and reflective of our student body. Lastly, she felt it necessary to examine policies and practices that may be coming from a white perspective. Each of these participants expressed areas of concern about the whiteness of Student Affairs culture and how as practitioners we need to be attuned to the experiences of students and staff as well as hold an awareness of how our professional practice may reflect white ideals.

Sense of hope. Although most members experienced feelings of hope that our PAR work would influence lasting change at RAC, two members remained cynical. Over the course of the PAR project, June and Lisa grew increasingly disillusioned with RAC. While their experience in the PAR group had been positive, the perspective they gained about the insidiousness of institutional racism left them angered and aloof. Ultimately, they both left the College on less than positive terms.

Muzzie, however, spoke to how this experience gave her a sense of hope about the possibility of creating change at RAC. “Did we do enough? No. Is there a whole lot more to be done? Yes. But, did we do quite a bit? I think that we accomplished...more than I thought we would be able to do.” Because our PAR group effectively “named a problem on campus,” Muzzie felt that RAC was now situated to address some important concerns regarding Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. Similarly, Theresa expressed excitement about seeing how the “strategic planning group moves forward...interesting to see where this will go as an institution, we have to

commit to doing it right.” She is invested in seeing this work through and is hopeful about the impact it will have on students if RAC addresses issues of race and privilege on campus.

Personally, I felt very heartened and hopeful to see the ripple effects of the PAR group’s work appearing in different ways across campus. I explained how I talked about white privilege “with my staff, I have tried to actually, I want to say like, normalize the conversations about privilege...so I talk about that as much as I can with my staff and with the GA’s and just within my area.” I had also engaged a senior colleague in conversations about race and privilege on campus throughout the entirety of this project, and I saw a shift in his consciousness as well, “not because of me, but because it is something that I think is growing as an area of importance because of the work that we are pushing forward on our campus.” For these reasons, a core group of participants remained hopeful and continued moving the work of the PAR group forward.

Secret team. As coined by Lake, group members informally formed a “secret team” at RAC, supporting each other’s initiatives and helping to elevate campus conversations on race and white privilege. This was something that happened without a formal conversation or agreement, but that several members reflected on in some way or another during their follow-up interviews one year after the conclusion of the primary research phase. Sarah explained that being a part of the PAR project served to broaden members’ networks of allies concerned with racial justice and wanting to create change at RAC. Additionally, PAR group members had formed a “secret team” by publically supporting each other when members would raise concerns about issues of race and privilege on campus.

The development of a secret team was demonstrated in different ways. For example, on one occasion PAR group members showed up to support another member who was leading a campus dialogue in response to racist acts at a neighboring institution. In another instance, one PAR group member proposed a staff professional development opportunity related to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and another PAR group member added their voice in support of that topic. A third example was when a PAR group member participated in a faculty panel on diversity in higher education and two other members attended to demonstrate its importance to our campus. Each of these examples and many other instances of PAR participants supporting one another occurred organically among group members, resulting in a “secret team” of people on campus committed to addressing racism and white privilege.

It was evident that the original action outcomes decided on by the PAR group evolved into a slightly different set of priorities. After the conclusion of the primary research phase, the group moved into a new phase of action and the majority of participants shifted their focus and attention toward working on elements of the strategic plan. In addition, a few members invested significant time beyond that action outcome to assist me with analyzing and presenting preliminary data. Finally, through follow-up interviews one year later members revealed a deepened sense of awareness and personal responsibility, and a hopefulness and commitment to creating change. As it was the purpose of this PAR project to engage Student Affairs and other higher education professionals as collaborative researchers in examining the impact of white privilege and implementing action outcomes, it seemed those goals were realized. However, it is still necessary to closely examine the research questions in relation to these findings.

Summary of Research Questions and Findings

The following looks at each of the three stated research questions as they pertain to the findings discussed above.

1. Given that the majority of faculty and staff are white, and that the demographics of postsecondary education continues to shift away from the dominant white culture, what must white higher education professionals recognize, understand, and undertake in order to establish authentic relationships with *all* students?

The following four findings revealed what white higher education professionals must be able to recognize, understand, and undertake in service of establishing authentic relationships with *all* students. First, white higher education professionals must have a heightened consciousness of their white racial identity and white privilege. Second, white higher education professionals must be able to understand the influence and implications of white values and ideals in higher education. Third, white higher education professionals must be able to recognize and take action to address institutional racism. Finally, white higher education professionals must build bridges with existing Staff and Faculty of Color and leverage influence to increase structural diversity in order to create a campus culture that is truly inclusive for all students, staff and faculty. The following elaborates on how each of these conclusions were drawn from the findings.

First, white practitioners must have a heightened consciousness of their white racial identity and white privilege. Over the course of the PAR project participants came to this realization in various ways. As indicated earlier, participants experienced an increase in consciousness of their own racialized identities and the ubiquity of whiteness. In the process of examining white privilege, group members dealt with various emotions, which either stifled or

propelled the conversation, thus serving as an important gateway to understanding. Ultimately, identity and the white paradigm were two critical concepts that members grappled with, each deepening their understanding of race and the systems of privilege and oppression.

As I explained in my follow up interview, deepening understanding can lead to “just so much more than a shift in attitude, it is so much more than just a shift in consciousness, it is behaviors.” As white higher education professionals develop a heightened consciousness of their racial identity and white privilege they also increase awareness of the differences in racialized experiences between themselves and Students of Color. Furthermore, as white higher education professionals deepen awareness of whiteness and privilege, they situate themselves as allies to Students of Color and become better prepared to interrupt racism on college campuses.

Second, white practitioners must understand the influences and implications of white values and ideals in higher education. Throughout the PAR process, group members came to clearly understand how white values and standards were applied to Students of Color, both in and out of the classroom. Importantly, participants also realized that conformity to these white standards was not indicative of one’s actual potential. In Theresa’s follow up interview she explained how important it was for white professionals to be cognizant of the white values inherent in higher education so as not penalize Students of Color for having a different way of being in the world:

[White professionals should] not just assume that the way that you did it is the way that somebody else does it, or the way that you learn is the way everybody else learns, or the way that you move around campus is the way everyone moves around campus.

Similarly, Kate offered reflections as a white higher education professional that other white colleagues should keep in mind. “Be conscious that your experience, while it is the experience of most of your colleagues in Higher Ed, is not the experience of most of the people that you are going to serve over the course of your career.” Participants became better informed as to how white standards were upheld and participants deconstructed the white standards of communication and work styles that were being applied to students as well as employees at RAC and elsewhere in higher education. Therefore, participants indicated that white higher education professionals have a responsibility to be aware of Students and Colleagues of Color having different racialized experiences, and to consciously reject applying white standards to everyone.

Third, white higher education professionals must recognize and take action to address institutional racism. Over the course of the PAR project, participants came to understand how racism and white privilege operated not just on an individual or personal level but also at the systemic and institutional levels. Group members began to recognize how certain structures were in place, even at RAC, that privileged white people and disadvantaged People of Color. In Sarah’s follow up interview she elaborated on how systemic racism shows up in higher education.

[It] is so much a factor everywhere in everything, and that is true kind of in all institutions, but definitely within Higher Ed. You know, the hiring practices, the lack of faculty and staff, assumptions about the curriculum, the treatment of students based on not kind of recognizing the variation in family wealth... and also in what people consider important, what they consider to be knowledge, everything. So, I think the most critical thing is that people have to decide they are willing to call it out, on a regular basis.

Therefore, it is necessary that white higher education professionals must first recognize where racism and white privilege show up within an institution, and then “call it out” so as to interrupt privilege.

The PAR group demonstrated the ability to recognize and take action by first observing missing elements in the College’s mission and vision statements and then offering critical feedback to the SPG on ways to include considerations about race, inclusion and equity in RAC’s mission, vision and goals. Similarly, all white professionals in higher education must examine where racism and white privilege are at play in curriculum, services, policies and procedures, and then take action to implement change.

Fourth, white higher education professionals must build bridges with existing Staff and Faculty of Color and leverage their influence and privilege to increase structural diversity however possible. The PAR group had serious concerns about the racial composition of staff and faculty at RAC, given that the employees were not representative of the diversity found in the student body. Additionally, members expressed wanting to work closer with Faculty and Staff of Color on action outcomes that were of common interest. Although both of these factors were very important to the group, they also proved to be the most difficult areas for us to take action. Minnie discussed her thoughts on this during her follow up interview.

[I recall] all of the conversations around how to then take this back and work with People of Color on our campus... Um, I feel like... there is something around that that is really challenging. And I think that kept coming up too. Like, how do we do it? What do we do, if we want to do it, if we want to do it right... And I feel like, that’s like a microcosm of

the bigger picture in terms of white people trying to... to be active and engaged with this process [of examining white privilege].

Our inability to decide on a course of action for partnering with Colleagues of Color was itself a manifestation of our predominantly white PAR group's need to uphold white standards of perfectionism and to always do things the "right way." Ultimately, to combat this mentality, white higher education practitioners must be willing to take action with critical humility, regardless of how they may be received, and to remember that there is no one right way to take action. With this in mind, one possible way to take action is to partner early on with Colleagues of Color to support existing racial justice initiatives and to evaluate where else changes need to be made, including practices around the hiring and retention of Staff and Faculty of Color.

2. What is the impact of white privilege on one's own life and on professional practice?

In "Moving Toward Understanding" there were multiple examples demonstrating the impact that white privilege has on the ways one thinks, feels, and behaves. First, participants discovered how white privilege impacted their personal lives as they made sense of various emotions and experiences related to race, and as they worked to develop a healthy racial identity. Second, participants discovered how white privilege impacted their professional practice as they deepened their understanding of the complexity of the white paradigm and their desire to establish authentic cross-racial relationships. The following expounds on how these conclusions regarding the impact of white privilege on one's personal and professional life were drawn from the findings.

Personal. The two primary ways that white privilege was found to impact one's personal life were participants' experiences with processing emotions related to race, and participants' experiences in developing salient racial identities. As discussed previously, PAR group members experienced a range of emotions that either propelled or deterred their deepening awareness of white privilege. During the primary research phase, participants recounted intensely personal stories where they grappled with the reality that white people and People of Color have distinctly different racialized experiences. Their ability to process complex emotions related to race often influenced the level to which they "owned" their racial identity and privilege.

For example, during the middle sessions, Lake recalled an experience from his childhood, which he admitted to not having told anyone about since the incident. Although it was painful for Lake to share this event, doing so helped him to make sense of a difficult experience that clearly demonstrated his internalization of white privilege.

We lived on a street that was very culturally and ethnically mixed. But um, I was probably five or six, and I was constructing a game. I had two friends over, one was white, one was Black. I don't remember all of the details of the game, but I know I was making myself like a king or a duke or something. Uh, and the Black kid I made a slave. Like I was the one appointing roles. And this was out in our driveway on the sidewalk. And there was a Black family a couple doors down and they overheard all of this. And they were like, upset. And, it was, it had these kind of repercussions on the block. And I think it was as relatively innocent as something like that could be. Although, it was very much also an example of internalized, cultural kind of expectation and assignment of roles that there's no way I could've understood when I was five years old but was

definitely affecting my subconscious...It sticks out in my memory. Because it was embarrassing, and, um, it affected people other than just me.

As Lake reflected on this experience from years ago, he processed the embarrassment that he felt as a child and realized he carried this with him into adulthood. Telling his story helped Lake to move beyond the shame and to recognize how white privilege impacts all aspects of our lives, including our subconscious. For many participants, having a space to reflect on personal experiences allowed them to process emotions and discern the meaning of their own racial identities.

For me personally, the impact of my white privilege was brought to light during the PAR process by a complicated situation involving me and my classmates, of whom almost half were People of Color. I was offered the opportunity to take one of my final required courses as an independent study. Most other students either were not offered or were denied the same opportunity. This situation came not long after we had taken our comprehensive exams, which I and several white peers passed on the first attempt. Of the students who were required to re-write the exam, almost all were People of Color. In my follow up interview I explained how this situation had weighed heavily on me and challenged my understanding of my white privilege.

It just created this huge like divide in the cohort, lots of people were angry...everyone said, it is not about you as a person, it is just about this happening. But for me it was so important...at first I struggled, like how do I respond to this...there is no way to fix it, but what is the best way to move forward? And it was to go back into the cohort and take the last class with them...I needed to for the sake of the relationships and for my own integrity. So I think that was the most impactful thing...I wrote the cohort a letter before I

joined the class again...I let them know that I wanted to come back and why I felt that was important that I did come back, and that I thought that I needed to earn their trust again...I think people did try very hard to make me feel welcomed back... but there were relationships that were changed and that was just the consequence of it, an unintended consequence.

As participants reflected on different racialized experiences and processed emotions related to race, it seemed to influence their development of a healthy racial identity and it also unveiled the impact that white privilege had on their personal lives and relationships.

Professional. The two primary ways that white privilege was revealed to impact one's professional practice were through participants' understanding of the complexity of the white paradigm in higher education, and through their efforts to establish authentic cross-racial relationships and solidarity with Students and Colleagues of Color. PAR group members uncovered several examples of how the white paradigm in higher education is a microcosm of the larger society. As their understanding of the complexity of the white paradigm grew, this in turn informed and impacted the professional practice of the participants. For example, members discussed the need to understand disparate retention outcomes between white students and Students of Color, and thought about ways to bring considerations of race into Admissions conversations as well as in other areas of campus. Additionally, the patronizing misperceptions held by some white staff and faculty about Students of Color was a frequent topic of conversation, and many participants shared stories of how they took a stand and had challenged their colleagues on these assumptions.

Members of the PAR group also expressed throughout the process the desire to establish authentic cross-racial relationships and solidarity with Students and Colleagues of Color. Minnie explained in her follow-up interview that for white staff and faculty to form effective relationships with Students of Color, “it means, really learning about your students, and actually wanting to know about where they are coming from and what their experience is and what they are bringing to the table.” Additionally, participants desired greater solidarity with Colleagues of Color on campus. However, as mentioned previously, this was unfortunately an area where little progress was made. Nevertheless, as participants deepened awareness of the complexity of the white paradigm in higher education, and as they realized how establishing and maintaining authentic relationships with Students and Colleagues of Color required ongoing and intentional commitment, this revealed the impact that white privilege had on their professional practice.

3. When educators understand how white privilege impacts practice, what do they do to address institutional racism and systems of inequity?

As indicated in research question one, there are important considerations that educators must understand in order to establish authentic relationships with *all* students. As indicated in research question two, given the opportunity for intentional reflection, educators can better understand and take responsibility for the specific ways in which white privilege impacts their personal lives and professional practice. With this in mind, the following provides insight into what actions educators may take to confront institutional racism and systems of inequity when they encounter it in higher education settings.

In “Moving Toward Action,” PAR group members pursued actions to address institutional racism and systems of inequity at RAC. First, PAR group members shifted their

focus from examining privilege at the individual level to examining privilege at the institutional level, including how white privilege showed up in staff and faculty demographic composition and campus climate. Second, PAR group members coalesced into an action-oriented group when they agreed on their shared accountability, urgency, and commitment to take action. In doing so, Student Affairs and other higher education professionals at RAC demonstrated several ways in which educators may take action to address institutional racism and systems of inequity.

Although practitioners must examine the impact of white privilege on an individual level, it is not enough to stop there. Self-examination is the first step that allows educators to identify actions they may take in their own lives to address privilege. However, all the more important, it provides a foundation for examining privilege at the institutional level in order to address systems of inequity in higher education. Three issues found to be of critical importance when examining and addressing privilege at the institutional level were: 1) identifying whether staff and faculty demographic composition was representative of the student body and reflective of the geographic area in which the institution was situated, 2) assessing the campus racial climate to determine the level of inclusion or exclusion experienced by marginalized groups of students, staff and faculty, and 3) assessing current practices and pedagogy at the institution and determining whether they were aligned with best practices in serving a diverse student body.

Additionally, educators must seek out networks of people on campus with a shared sense of accountability, urgency, and commitment to addressing institutional racism and white privilege and then come together to develop a plan of action. Specific actions may be informed by the factors outlined above and may include a variety of strategies. As for this PAR group, members took action by submitting feedback on the mission and vision and working on a

subcommittee of the SPG to incorporate Equity, Diversity and Inclusion into the next strategic plan. Additionally, participants presented workshops on white privilege for the campus community, and developed a library reading guide as well as a video collection for use in curriculum and trainings. Finally, PAR group members engaged in further research and compiled a list of recommendations for RAC related to institutional policies and practices, teaching and learning, and campus culture and climate.

In summary, participants in this PAR project joined together to examine the impact of white privilege on their personal lives and on professional practice. In the process they uncovered important considerations for establishing authentic relationships with *all* students, they gained broadened perspectives and deepened their commitments to pursuing equity and inclusion in higher education, and they took meaningful actions to disrupt systemic racism and to create change. Next, the implications of these findings are presented in Chapter V.

Chapter V

Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of white privilege on professional practice. In the previous chapter, findings of this Participatory Action Research (PAR) project were presented and the research questions were addressed. A summary of the research questions and findings are as follows:

1. The first research question asked “Given that the majority of faculty and staff are white, and that the demographics of postsecondary education continues to shift away from the dominant white culture, what must white higher education professionals recognize, understand, and undertake in order to establish authentic relationships with *all* students?” In response to this question, the primary findings were: 1) developing a heightened consciousness of privilege, 2) understanding the white standards of higher education, 3) recognizing and interrupting institutional racism, and 4) building bridges with Colleagues of Color.
2. The second research question asked, “What is the impact of white privilege on one’s own life and on professional practice?” In response to this question, the primary ways that white privilege was found to impact one’s personal life were: 1) participants’ experiences with processing emotions related to race, and 2) participants’ experiences in developing salient racial identities. Additionally, the primary ways that white privilege was revealed to impact one’s professional practice were: 1) through participants’ understanding of the complexity of the white paradigm in higher

education, and 2) through their efforts to establish authentic cross-racial relationships and solidarity with Students and Colleagues of Color.

3. The third research question asked, “When educators understand how white privilege impacts practice, what do they do to address institutional racism and systems of inequity?” In response to this question, the primary findings were: 1) they examine institutional racism, and 2) they seek out networks of people with shared accountability, urgency, and commitment to addressing systems of inequity.

This chapter first discusses conclusions drawn from the findings as they relate to individual practitioners, the field of Student Affairs, and Rosewood Ascension College (RAC). As I draw conclusions I will reflect on their connections to existing literature and theories. Second, I will share recommendations for future research and how I might build on this study. Finally, I will conclude this chapter by reflecting on changes in my perspective and what I learned about myself through conducting this research.

On Self-Examination of Privilege

The PAR group served as a holding environment for participants, allowing them the space to process emotions and experiences related to race and white privilege among a supportive community of people. Paxton (2002) described this concept as “being present to each other’s experience” by creating “an empathic field among us, where our personal emotions and experiences were treated like important feelings to be understood by our larger community” (Paxton, 2002, p. 194). Although all participants joined this PAR project out of their own desire to explore white privilege, and although the structure of the group provided an empathic and supportive space to explore this construct, participants did not all experience the same exact

gains in developing heightened consciousness and understanding of the white paradigm.

Whereas participants such as Sarah came to the PAR group at an advanced level of consciousness and commitment to action, other participants such as Holly came to the group having never before heard of white privilege and at an earlier stage of identity development. Hardiman (1982) and Helms (1984) presented stages of white identity development that may be more or less salient for different people and at different times in their lives, as was evidenced by Holly and Sarah.

Similarly, Todd and Abrams (2011) described a dialectic of white privilege, or a continuum on which people fall, ranging on one end from full acceptance of one's own privilege to the opposite end of the continuum where there is complete denial of one's own privilege (Todd & Abrams, 2011, p. 379). Muzzie's journey throughout the PAR process illustrated how dealing with emotions related to race and discerning her own racial identity helped move her along this continuum of white privilege. Initially, Muzzie experienced fear of addressing white privilege and demonstrated disconnectedness with her white identity. As time went on she felt responsibility to raise her white son with awareness of his privilege and took risks to confront privilege in others. As was demonstrated through this PAR project and in the existing literature, regardless of where someone may be positioned along a particular racial identity development model, their readiness to learn combined with their life experience influences their stage of racial identity development and consciousness of white privilege.

Indeed, the invisible nature of the pervasiveness of white privilege (Wildman, 2005; Wise, 2008) made it initially challenging for participants to engage in self-examination of privilege. As Blackmore (2010) and McIntosh (1998) pointed out, most white people hold little

consciousness of the unearned assets and advantages of whiteness from which they benefit. However, through exposure to these concepts and reflection on one's privilege, white PAR participants revealed that it is possible to process emotions related to race and to develop salient racial identities. Furthermore, by engaging in self-examination of privilege and learning to reject early conditioning associated with whiteness (Thandeka, 1999), participants were able to move through various stages of white identity development and personal growth.

On Examination of White Privilege in Higher Education

Understanding the pervasiveness of white privilege in higher education requires practitioners to first understand the historical context of exclusion and hurdles that People of Color continue to face. Historically, higher education was not inclusive of People of Color (Gelber, 2007). And despite legislation of the 1950's and 1960's that created greater access to colleges and universities, we need only to look at studies on campus racial climates to see how white people and People of Color continue to have distinctly different perceptions of and experiences with race on college campuses (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Addressing the white paradigm calls for Student Affairs and other higher education professionals to re-imagine how higher education institutions create inclusive environments for Students, Staff and Faculty of Color, and how they assess student learning and engagement, so as to move away from white values and standards as the default. In effect, higher education professionals must re-imagine the very culture, system, and approach to higher education. This assertion is supported by Critical Race Theory (CRT) which purports that racism is central to the structure of higher education and calls for the disruption of this white paradigm (Parker & Villalpando, 2007).

The impact of white privilege on one's professional practice was illuminated in this PAR study through participants' understanding of the complexity of the white paradigm in higher education. Demonstrating an understanding of white privilege and its impact on professional practice is an advanced level competency established for Student Affairs professionals (ACPA & NASPA, 2010, p. 11) that is applicable for all higher education professional. To help prepare future Student Affairs professionals to meet this competency, training programs are trending towards including curriculum related to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (Flowers, 2003). However, there is still the need for most current higher education practitioners to develop their own capacity to understand the prevalence of white privilege, white standards and values in higher education.

As demonstrated by this study as well as previous research, PAR has been reaffirmed as a potential avenue to address white privilege in higher education (Cullen, 2008; McIntyre, 1997; Robbins, 2012) as it allows for creative and innovative approaches to problems from a theory of possibility (Wadsworth, 1998), and it is an apt tool for social justice work as it challenges power structures and gives agency and voice to marginalized groups (Ozanne & Saatcioglu, 2008). As indicated by findings from this study, PAR is a strong fit for investigating issues of race and privilege, it is a powerful medium for creating change in the racial consciousness of the participants and their momentum to affect meaningful change, and as a means of disrupting systemic racism in institutions of higher education. Additionally, research has shown that diversity change initiatives are most effective when aligned with institutional mission (Kezar & Eckel, 2007).

Therefore, as an institution whose core values encompass diversity and social justice, RAC would be well positioned to encourage staff and faculty exploration of white privilege, using PAR, as a means to demonstrate commitment to these values. Furthermore, as RAC has outlined a commitment in its new strategic plan to “cultivate and sustain an inclusive campus community that reflects, values, and celebrates the diversity of our members,” PAR could provide an avenue for a diverse group of students, staff, faculty and administrators to develop appropriate action outcomes to realize this goal. Although systemic racism and white privilege have served as a divide in higher education for far too long, RAC is poised to break down some of these barriers if they would be willing to embark on the difficult work of creating a truly inclusive community, by utilizing PAR to bring multiple voices and perspectives to the table, to imagine the possibilities and to affect change.

On Addressing Institutional Racism

In order for colleges and universities to address and interrupt institutional racism, this demands institutional accountability for the close examination of potential biases in curriculum, services, policies, procedures, pedagogy and practice. Such an undertaking requires the responsibility and commitment of all staff, faculty, and administration within higher education institutions. However, this is only possible if Student Affairs and other higher education professionals have first done their own personal work to “Move Toward Understanding,” including processing difficult emotions related to racialized differences, discerning one’s own racial identity, and understanding the complexity of white privilege and the white paradigm.

Again, CRT provides support for such conclusions as it calls for leaders in higher education to identify and challenge racism, whether it shows up in thinking, actions, or material

benefits in academia (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Although in most cases, colleges and universities only implement diversity change initiatives in response to a crisis (Williams, 2008), models such as the Equity Scorecard Project (Kezar, Glenn, Lester, & Nakamoto, 2008) may provide useful guidance to higher education institutions committing to ongoing assessment of curriculum, services, policies, procedures, pedagogy and practice in efforts to address institutional racism.

To examine institutional racism, participants in this study focused on RAC's campus racial climate, employee demographic composition, and best practices for staff and faculty. With regard to campus racial climate, it would be beneficial for RAC to conduct a climate survey in order to gauge student, staff and faculty perceptions of safety and inclusion on campus. With regard to employee demographic composition, it would be beneficial for RAC to adopt a policy on diversity in recruitment and hiring in order to proactively seek out diverse staff members. With regard to best practices for staff and faculty, it would be beneficial for RAC to incorporate professional development goals related to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion into employee performance reviews. Pursuing each of these recommendations would recognize the unique needs and values of employees as reflected in the human resource organizational frame (Bolman & Deal, 2008), and would actively address institutional racism.

The participants in this PAR group found strength in connecting to a network of other people with shared accountability, urgency and commitment to addressing systems of inequity. The ability to build community with others examining white privilege, and to establish new habits of being, were supported by Paxton (2002) as transformational practices. Indeed, regardless of how insignificant an action may first seem, the potential ripple effects of that action

may eventually help turn the tide of change for individuals as well as institutions. The work that unfolded from this PAR group demonstrated this ripple effect.

Early in the PAR process participants spent a lot of time engaging in discussion about white privilege at the individual level. That small action developed into heightened consciousness of white privilege. Members then began to feel unsatisfied with focusing exclusively on self-examination of white privilege. That ripple helped shift the discussion to privilege at the systemic level. Eventually the group grew restless with talking and wanted to take action at RAC. That helped set the stage for the development of action outcomes that the group agreed upon. One small action outcome focused on providing feedback on RAC's draft mission and vision statements. That one action developed into a series of further actions that influenced the direction of the College's strategic plan.

On Establishing Authentic Cross-Racial Relationships

Establishing authentic cross-racial relationships with Students and Colleagues of Color can take a considerable amount of time and requires the sincere demonstration of commitment to equity by white Student Affairs and other higher education professionals. It should not be assumed that this will come easily. CRT reminds us that the history of marginalization of People of Color within higher education and the systemic racism embedded within academia create inherent power dynamics that must be addressed (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995). Even knowing this, it can still be difficult for white practitioners engaged in anti-racism work to have their commitment and intentions questioned or distrusted by People of Color (Cullen, 2008).

However, in order to truly understand the nature of whiteness, white people need the knowledge and joining with People of Color (Allen, 2004). While there are no magic solutions, some particular steps that white people could take to help create a more inclusive campus racial climate and build bridges are to eliminate white-centric spaces, curricula and activities (Harper & Hurtado, 2007), to advocate for diversity in hiring, and to speak openly about race in efforts to foster dialogue between white people and People of Color. Finally, important guidelines that white practitioners desiring solidarity with People of Color should keep in mind are to acknowledge mistakes immediately, build the capacity to listen deeply, set aside white guilt, and to practice self-compassion (Kendall, 2006).

As indicated earlier, PAR members hoped to partner with Colleagues of Color at RAC but failed to make progress on related action outcomes. During the primary research phase there was the perception that because we could not agree on the right approach to building bridges with People of Color on campus, we therefore could not move forward. However, the root issue seeming to prevent us from reaching out to Colleagues of Color at RAC was our fear: fear of creating harm or irreparable damage to relationships, fear of appearing fraudulent, fear that even our best efforts would not be good enough, fear of facing rejection from Colleagues of Color, and so on, and all of these fears have one thing in common, which is ourselves. Participants needed to have confronted these fears in order to take action.

Therefore, white practitioners need to push beyond their fears of inadequacy and rejection in order to ever bridge authentic relationships with People of Color. This is said with a great deal of compassion, for it is understood that committing oneself to racial justice work is a lifelong process requiring that we learn from our mistakes. However, when we are successful we

may then experience the intrinsic rewards of authentic relationships with People of Color and the positive changes that we might impact together.

On the Interrelatedness of Racial Justice Activism and Student Affairs Practice

It is perhaps true that most professionals within the field of Student Affairs did not find themselves thinking as children, “I want to be a Student Affairs practitioner when I grow up.” It is probable that most young people would not even realize Student Affairs is a career path until they themselves attend college. Working in this field, I believe, is something that people discover a calling for. The intrinsic rewards of helping students to develop and succeed in college are often the biggest payoffs.

It is equally as likely that most white people did not find themselves thinking as children, “I want to be an anti-racist activist when I grow up.” It is understandable, given the ubiquity of whiteness, that most white people would not even realize the problem of racial privilege until it was made undeniably and even painfully obvious to them. Therefore, committing to racial justice activism, I believe, is something that people find themselves called to do. Finding the courage to live in congruence with our values, or as framed by W. E. B. DuBois in *The Ordeal of Mansart*, to live with integrity, honesty, decency and virtue, are the ultimate rewards.

As Student Affairs practitioners, our role is to be an advocate for *all* students, and as this PAR project has concluded, to effectively do so requires white professionals to engage in racial justice activism by: engaging in self-examination of privilege, examining white privilege in higher education, taking action to address institutional racism, and establishing authentic cross-racial relationships. Therefore, it is not enough to accept the calling as Student Affairs practitioners if white people will not also accept the calling to commit to racial justice activism,

for embarking on the former without the latter is to forge a journey of indifference, which is unfair not only to oneself but to one's students.

In summary, the findings from this PAR study presented several conclusions that are relevant to Student Affairs and other higher education professionals committed to engaging in the exploration of white privilege. While there are many possible methods for examining white privilege, by utilizing a PAR approach it aligned with institutional mission and values and included all participants as equal and valuable members of the process. Although there were challenges to examining white privilege in higher education, there were also intrinsic benefits experienced by each of the members and tangible outcomes implemented by the group. Next, recommendations for further research are offered.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study examined the impact of white privilege on professional practice in higher education and revealed ways that Student Affairs and other higher education professionals move toward understanding of white privilege and take action to disrupt systems of oppression. The data also revealed important considerations for further research.

One area of further research would be to examine the differences in process and outcomes between an all-white PAR group, a PAR group exclusively for People of Color, and a racially diverse PAR group, all investigating the impact of white privilege on professional practice. As there are differing philosophical positions that advocate exploring white privilege within same or different racial groups, and given the limitations of the demographics at RAC and of the respondents to my research invitation, it could potentially provide missing data in the existing literature as to the most effective group composition for PAR research on this topic.

A second area of further research would be to identify best practices for white professionals desiring solidarity with Colleagues of Color. Although there were many lessons learned by this PAR project's failure to build bridges with Staff and Faculty of Color, it could also prove useful to identify strategies and successes in establishing cross-racial collaboration. With this in mind, this topic may be best suited to address through a case study approach.

A third area of further research would be to identify best practices in collaboration and mentorship among white anti-racist activists. Given that the members of this PAR project came to the group with varied levels of consciousness about white privilege, it was sometime challenging to create a space where everyone could engage fully. In examining mentorship by and for white anti-racist activists, it may illuminate either helpful or destructive ways of providing challenge and support.

A fourth area of further research would be to conduct a PAR project with students examining the impact of white privilege on campus racial climate. The interest for this dissertation in part grew out of a desire to establish authentic relationships with *all* students in order to best "meet them where they are" (in terms of student development). What it also revealed is that campus climate has much to do with students' comfort level and success in college. Therefore, a PAR project with students could empower them to help create change in campus climate.

In conclusion, this PAR project filled gaps in the literature by addressing some best practices in preparing white practitioners to more fully and authentically serve *all* students, examine the impact of white privilege on individuals' personal and professional lives, and determine what actions individuals and groups take to address systems of inequity in higher

education. Additionally, this project revealed considerations for further research which would support and enhance this project. Next, I will share my personal reflections and lessons learned throughout this process.

Reflections

The following are lessons I learned through conducting a PAR study, what I learned about myself, and what I learned about others through this process.

- 1) I know that I grew as a researcher throughout the process of conducting the PAR project and analyzing data, but I do not know if I grew as much in this area as I did in other ways as a result of this project. It is humbling to reflect back on the primary research phase and recall how challenging it was for me at the time to navigate being a researcher/participant. I remember questioning everything that I did and wondering whether that was what I should be doing. I remember it being very difficult for me at the time to relinquish physical possession of some of the artifacts the group created such as the “Timeline” document and the “Charting a Course” document, even though the group needed to use them in my absence. I remember it being challenging that I felt like I was supposed to be the expert on white privilege even though I did not identify as such, and that I was being judged on my aptitude. I know that I felt defensive at times as a result of that. However, I do believe I grew in terms of my objectivity as a researcher/participant. For example, when I later looked back at the process the group went through during the primary research phase I was able to see with more objectivity how I might approach it differently, such as co-creating rather

than assigning the group “homework,” and deciding together early in the process what constitutes “action.”

- 2) As I theorized during the primary research phase, I learned that I will in fact “step in it.” During Week 10, I had shared that I feared how even though I was steeped in examining privilege and committed to racial justice work, I would still likely make unforeseeable mistakes. Imagery of me taking really hesitant steps came to mind, as if I was trying to avoid “stepping in it.” Of course the reality is that I made several missteps during and after the conclusion of the project. Earlier I discussed the instance where I elected to take an independent study course for which my Classmates of Color were not given the same opportunity, realizing soon after that by doing so I was demonstrating my white privilege. In another instance, I caught myself speaking harshly to a Colleague of Color in a meeting, immediately feeling regret and embarrassment for my microaggressive behavior. In yet another instance, I engaged in an email exchange with a Colleague of Color in which I defended my position rather than listened deeply to what she was explaining as being an obvious inequity. These are just a few of the more recent examples where I acted in contradiction to my values and then realized within a short period of time that I had made a big mistake. Although in each of these cases I went back and apologized for my actions, it was often painful, frustrating and humiliating that I did this. Even as I write this, I wish that I could go back and change the fact that those things happened, but I cannot. And just as bad, I am sure that I will misstep again. Given how contrary these actions are to my beliefs, and given the fact that none of the feelings I experience after I misstep

would seem to reinforce this behavior, this leads me to believe that white supremacist consciousness is so pervasive that it literally infiltrates my subconscious even when I intentionally make efforts to reject it. So that leaves me with only one choice, and that is to recommit myself every day to racial justice, rejecting white supremacist consciousness, and living my life with integrity and in congruence with my values.

- 3) If I had chosen a pseudonym for this project, it would have been Grace. One of the biggest lessons I learned is the importance of extending grace to myself (which is sometimes incredibly hard to do) as well as to extend grace to others. For example, concerning all of my lessons learned as a researcher/participant, I had to learn to extend grace to myself for even though there was plenty of room for improvement, I was doing the best that I could at the time. And as with the instances where I “stepped in it” and blazingly demonstrated white privilege, I had to learn to extend grace to myself because wallowing in self-deprecation would not make me any stronger of an ally. Extending grace to others who are examining whiteness is equally important, as their paths to understanding privilege, taking action to disrupt systemic oppression, and discerning lessons learned will be uniquely their own. And finally, for all that I did not know then, that I do not know now, and may not ever know, I must extend myself grace. A wise mentor once told me that everything he knew about the world could fit into a thimble. This coming from a man whom I believed to know a great deal, taught me that I will always have so much to learn, and for that I must be humble and gracious.

With that, I humbly and graciously conclude my dissertation, with immense gratitude to the members of this Participatory Action Research group for partnering with me on this journey.

Epilogue

Following the conclusion of the primary research phase the group officially dissolved but met informally two more times in the following weeks. Within a few months of the project, a total of three group members had left RAC to pursue other things; two feeling discontented at the time of their departure, in part related to their sense that change was not possible at RAC. Two other members gradually stepped back from the group, and although they remained at RAC they were not involved in most of the efforts following the primary research phase. However, five of the original 10 group members continued to pursue action outcomes to various extents for more than a year after the conclusion of the project.

Our work with the strategic plan was perhaps the most obvious success, and it provided us inroads to push forward other related initiatives at RAC. The following two projects, led by PAR group members more than a year after the conclusion of the primary research phase, were action outcomes originally indicated on the “Charting a Course” document :

- A free, day-long training open to all RAC staff and faculty on the topic of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, led by a trained facilitator. The email announcement of this training grounded the work in the mission and learning outcomes of the College (see Appendix N). PAR group members were responsible for all aspects of the planning of this event including soliciting Cabinet-level buy-in and support, seeking funding and co-sponsorship, securing a facilitator, setting the learning outcomes and agenda for the day, and recruiting and registering participants.

- Development of a Student Affairs Policy on Diversity in Recruitment and Hiring to guide managers on running effective searches, with the aim of increasing staff diversity. At the time of this report the policy was still in draft form (see Appendix O) but was preliminarily approved by the Student Affairs leadership team and was intended to be submitted to the Cabinet for consideration as a College-wide initiative.

Finally, I personally pursued the following actions within the purview of my position to further address systems of inequity:

- Took a public stand regarding the predominantly-white composition of a College-wide committee that I chaired, including creating a diversity statement for the committee, urging RAC to pursue diversity in hiring, and asking Staff and Faculty of Color to consider joining the committee. It is critical that I note, however, that this action would not have resulted without the email exchange I had with a Colleague of Color, which I mentioned previously as a lesson learned.
- Co-facilitated a restorative healing circle in honor of Michael Brown and in light of the grand jury decision in the Michael Brown case, open to all RAC students, staff and faculty.
- Supported a newly-formed Muslim student organization in finding appropriate prayer space on campus.

In their follow up interviews, all members spoke of their experience with this PAR project as being largely positive. However, Lake wished there had been more males in the group, Theresa wished there had been more People of Color in the group, and Sarah wished the group had pursued more aggressive action outcomes. For the core group of five that continued working

on action outcomes beyond the conclusion of the project, there seemed to be a sense that “we were in this together” and that for those particular members, this experience had been most transformative.

And finally, for me personally, I could not have foreseen the degree to which I have felt affected by the work of the PAR group when I embarked on this journey. I knew that this topic was weighty, and I knew that it was important to me personally as well as of global concern. But I simply could not have foreseen how profoundly impactful it would be. The ripple effects it has had in my own life, that I have seen in some of the PAR group members, and at RAC have been unmeasurably rewarding. It has truly been my honor and privilege to have been a part of this experience.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Semi-Structured Initial Interview Guide

Semi-Structured Initial Interview Guide

1. Tell me a little bit about how you came to work at RAC.
2. Tell me why you chose to work in Student Affairs/Higher Education.
3. Tell me about the neighborhood you grew up in and the school(s) you attended. Are there any other features about the neighborhood or school(s) you'd like to tell me about?
4. Do you remember the first time you noticed that somebody else was different than you?
5. Please describe your interactions with others from different racial groups.
6. Can you share about the racial background of your closest friends?
7. Can you think of an experience of prejudice, racism or discrimination? Can you tell me about it?
8. How would you define racism? Does this relate to the example you just described? In what way?
9. What does it mean for you to be white?
10. Tell me what you think white privilege has to do with student affairs/professional practice.

Appendix B

Semi-Structured Follow-up Interview Guide

Semi-Structured Follow-up Interview Guide

1. Choose a pseudonym.
2. Would you describe any changes you have noticed in yourself since participating in the PAR project?
3. Some of my initial findings are (share summary of initial findings)..... Your thoughts on any of these findings?
4. What insights do you have about what it means to be a white practitioner working in higher education?
5. In what settings and with what individuals have you talked about white privilege?
6. What was the most difficult part of being involved with this project for you?
7. What professional or personal experiences have led you to reflect on your racial identity?
8. Have your views about white privilege changed since the beginning of the project. If so, how? Has your increased awareness caused you to question your privilege more?
9. What is your sense of how white privilege operates within the field of student affairs?
10. Would you say the quantity or quality of the relationships you have with People of Color has changed in any way since participating in the project? What about with other whites who identify as anti-racist?
11. Is there a question I didn't ask that you'd like to answer?

Appendix C

Reflection Journal Prompts

Reflection Journal Prompts

The reflection journal is an opportunity to reflect on your experiences in this Participatory Action Research project, record your personal observations, and develop a greater self-awareness. This is a learning experience and awareness of white privilege deepens over time.

1. Reflect on this week's group meeting. What impact did it have on you? What hopes and fears do you have for next week?
2. One of the ways to increase your ability to see and understand white privilege is to observe its effects in other people. Try to observe for one day all the ways you see white privilege happening around you. If you can't "see" it, write about how the effects of privilege might influence your ability to see privilege.
3. Choose an environment in which you spend several hours per week that is predominantly white. As you interact with people in that environment, ask yourself "Does the fact that we are (or most people are) white mean anything in this situation"? Reflect on this.
4. Try to raise the subject of white privilege in conversation. Discuss how you felt in doing so, and remember that even if it feels awkward at first it becomes easier the more clearly you're able to articulate the experience of privilege.

Appendix D

Timeline Document

Timeline Document



Appendix E

Clay Creations

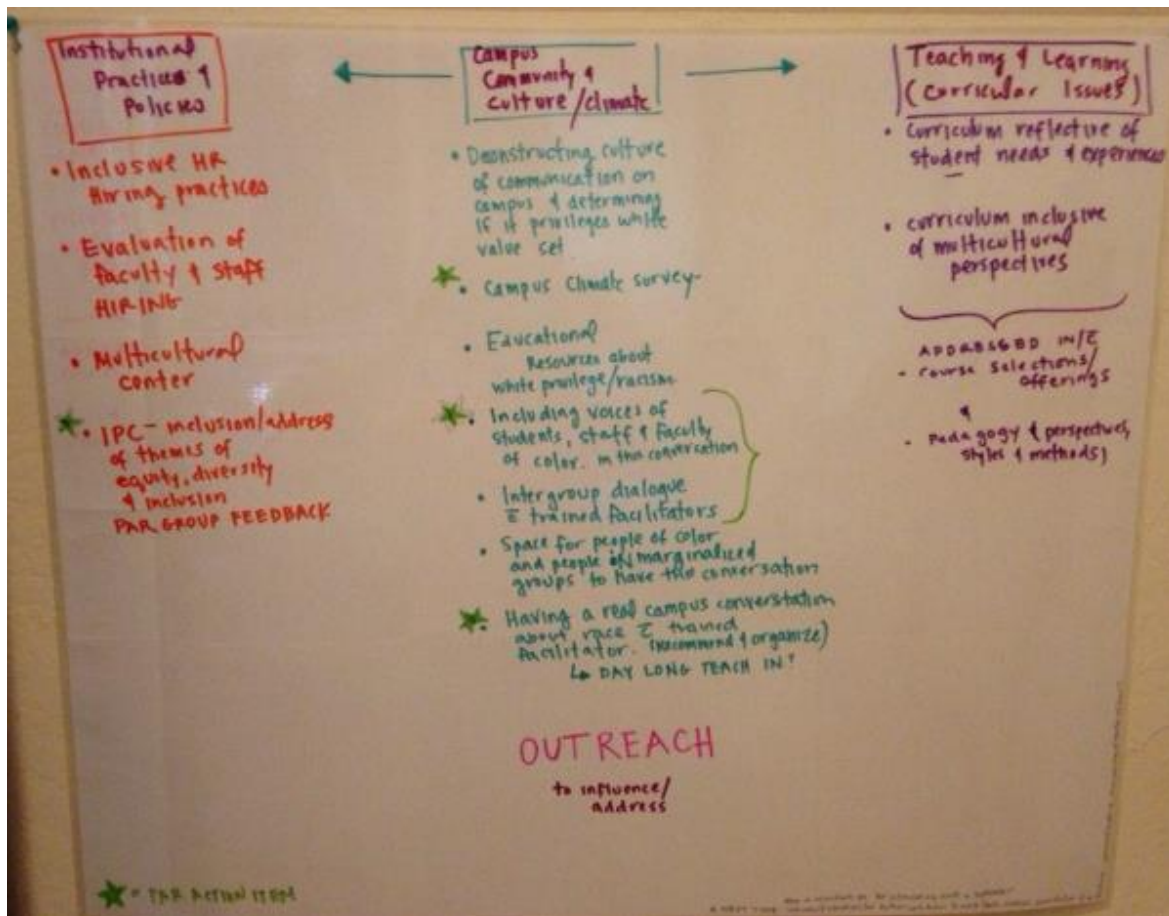
Lisa and Lake's Clay Creations



Appendix F

Charting a Course Document

Charting a Course Document



Appendix G

Sample Schedule of Meetings and Activities

PAR Schedule

Week 1

Initial meeting:

- Description of PAR
 - What is PAR and what is this project?
- My role vs. role of co-researchers
- Overview of proposed summer schedule and agreement on meeting time
- Review of consent forms, counseling resources, confidentiality agreement
- Q & A
- Confirm next week's agenda

Week 2

- Interviews
- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Checklist
- Read Peggy McIntosh Article for next week

Week 3

- So how are we going to do this together? (Guided activity)
 - What happens if...
 - Deciding on opening and closing rituals
- White Privilege article discussion
- Journal #1:
 - Reflect on this week's group meeting. What impact did it have on you? What hopes and fears do you have for our work together?

Week 4

- Clay models activity

Week 5

- Pathology of White Privilege video – Part I & Discussion
- Journal #2:
 - One of the ways to increase your ability to see and understand white privilege is to observe its effects in other people. Try to observe for one day all the ways you see white privilege happening around you. If you can't "see" it, write about how the effects of privilege might influence your ability to see privilege.

Week 6

- Pathology of White Privilege video – Part II & Discussion

- Complete “pre-assignment” for next week.

Week 7

- Congrats! We’re half way there! We’ll do something to celebrate during our weekly meeting.
- As a “pre-assignment” to this week’s meeting – ask a person of color about their experiences on our campus. Be willing to accept their experiences as true, real and accurate. This will be the basis of our discussion this week.

Week 8

- Looking at White Privilege at the institutional level – Part I

Week 9

- Looking at White Privilege at the institutional level – Part II
- Journal #3:
 - Choose an environment in which you spend several hours per week that is predominantly white. As you interact with people in that environment, ask yourself “Does the fact that we are (or most people are) white mean anything in this situation”? Reflect on this.

Week 10

- TBD

Week 11

- Journal #4:
 - Try to raise the subject of white privilege in conversation. Discuss how you felt in doing so, and remember that even if it feels awkward at first it becomes easier the more clearly you’re able to articulate the experience of privilege.

Week 12

- Heather is out of town. The group can meet if you choose, to do any activity you choose, or just meet over lunch and socialize. It’s up to you!
- Read article for next week.

Week 13

- Developing our students as racial justice allies - article discussion.

Week 14

- We did it! So what does it all mean?
- Next steps... data analysis, writing the report, an article, a presentation, action outcomes, the sky is the limit!

Appendix H

RAC Draft Mission and Vision Statements

DRAFT OF RAC MISSION STATEMENT

Rosewood Ascension College, rooted in intellectual and spiritual traditions, empowers a diverse student body for leadership and service. Guided by the core values of its founders, RAC is a progressive, inclusive, and rigorous academic community offering a liberal arts and professional education. Our goal is for students to think critically and imaginatively; to understand the sources of knowledge and how to best employ these; to speak clearly and persuasively in advocating for and enacting the common good.

DRAFT OF RAC VISION STATEMENT

We seek continually to be responsive to the opportunities and challenges of our times.

- We will deepen our culture of rigorous scholarship with opportunities for experiential learning [on or off campus], and fluid and flexible utilization of technology.
- We will strengthen our commitment to liberating action, courage and altruism, teaching students and ourselves to embrace the common good and ideas bigger than ourselves, effecting socially just change through intellectual and cultural competency to ensure the continuing development of the whole person throughout our lives.
- We will invest in transformative educational practices that honor the collaborative nature of learning and prepare students to succeed in a rapidly changing world.
- We will build new bridges to the local communities, reinforce those already existing, and publicly advance the aspirations, achievements, and image of Rosewood Ascension College.
- We will pursue operational efficiencies to focus our resources to optimize these outcomes.

Appendix I

PAR Group's Feedback to Strategic Planning Group

Rosewood Ascension College holds strong values of diversity and social justice. To further explore these values and our authenticity embracing them, a group of 10 RAC faculty and staff joined together for a Participatory Action Research (PAR) project titled “Deconstructing Whiteness: Understanding White Privilege and its Impact on Professional Practice” during the summer of 2013.

Parker and Chambers (2007) state, "living a white experience is so pervasive and normalized that it is usually difficult to see" (Parker & Chambers, 2007, p. 10). Additionally, it is not enough to simply see cultural awareness as the solution to inequity and to focus understanding on the other, as by doing so, white practitioners are exempt from self-examination and are not impelled to reflect upon their own cultural experiences (Parker & Chambers, 2007, p. 15). In order to see the invisible systems that hold white privilege in place, one must explicitly examine ones' understanding of whiteness in order to comprehend and take ownership of the multitudes of ways that white privilege permeates our society, our institutions, and our relationships.

This PAR group offers the following recommendations for your consideration in shaping the next draft of RAC's mission, vision and goals. Please do not see this as a suggested redrafting of the statement itself, but rather the important elements we believe are absent from the current work in progress:

- Hiring of staff, faculty and administrators representative and proportionate to the diverse ethnic origins of our student body, as well as from the communities we serve
- Education and training that explicitly teaches to and reflects the experiences of communities of color, presented by teachers who embody the cultural and academic traditions of those communities
- Actively exploring our personal and institutional power and privilege and creating educational opportunities related to race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, class, ability, and religion
- Understand that RAC is an economic as well as an educational entity and aim to have resources spent by the institution return to those communities who are contributing through tuition

With these elements embedded in the mission, vision and goals, Rosewood Ascension College will truly be working to build an equitable and inclusive campus community.

Appendix J

RAC Draft Mission, Vision and Goals

DRAFT OF RAC MISSION STATEMENT

Rosewood Ascension College, rooted in intellectual and spiritual traditions, empowers a diverse student body for leadership and service. Guided by the core values of our founders, RAC is a progressive, inclusive, and rigorous academic community offering a liberal arts and professional education. Our goal is for students to think critically and imaginatively, to understand the sources of knowledge and how to best employ these, to speak clearly and persuasively in advocating for and enacting the common good.

DRAFT OF RAC VISION STATEMENT

We will promote collaborative teaching and research, experiential learning, and intellectual and spiritual growth.

We will challenge ourselves to create an educational experience that reflects and honors our multicultural reality.

We will be responsive to the opportunities and challenges of our times through our ongoing commitment to liberating action, courage and integrity.

We will create an inclusive campus community that recognizes and considers the voices and contributions of students, faculty, and staff in College decision-making.

DRAFT OF GOALS

1. Deepen our cultivation of rigorous scholarship.
2. Explore, appreciate, and critically engage the meaning and dimensions of diversity within our multicultural community.
3. Invest in transformative educational practices and technologies that honor the collaborative nature of learning and prepare students to succeed in a rapidly changing world.
4. Engage Rosewood Ascension College with the global community through education, service, and partnerships, especially in the local area.
5. Strengthen and sustain the College's identity, our founders' heritage, and our stewardship of resources to enable innovation for excellence in all areas and programs.

Appendix K

Initial Draft of Strategies to Meet Goal 2 in Strategic Plan

Explore, appreciate, and critically engage the meaning and dimensions of diversity within our multicultural community.

- Art gallery reflecting multicultural art, artwork on campus in general, student photos on campus including student stories related to those photos/art pieces, etc.
- Staff, faculty, and students included in discussions, not just students. Allow students to have a voice in a safe space. Engage the entire community.
- Training staff and faculty in multicultural awareness. Host a multicultural institute for staff and faculty. A series of workshops, a retreat, etc., but something that is intentional.
- Participate in a Campus Climate Survey.
- Become a resource to other institutions.
- Compile or create an accessible resource that accurately depicts the multicultural resources on our campus. Classes, clubs, policies, staff, international student services, study abroad, faculty research and community involvement, etc.
- Intentional recruitment plan for international students.
- Further build our study abroad program.
- Do a needs assessment.
- Multicultural course requirement in the GE, more intentionally using existing programs to explore multiculturalism.
- Create a major or other academic program like Ethnic Studies.
- Actively recruit people who reflect the community we serve. Identify key places to post jobs.
- Hire an equity and inclusion officer to work with Mission Effectiveness.
- Multicultural center. Heck ya!
- One of the priorities of the office supporting teaching effectiveness will be a focus on multicultural pedagogy and/or faculty development around multiculturalism in the classroom.
- Embed professional competencies as outlined by ACP, NASPA, NACADA, into job expectations and evaluations, professional development, all-staff meetings, etc.
- Include gender neutral and inclusive language in applications, HR benefits, facilities (restrooms, locker rooms, residence halls) and in communication with donors, alumni, families, prospective students.
- Fair and equal treatment for live-on staff and their same sex partners.
- Have safe spaces for students with non Christian religious practices, recognition that our academic calendar is based on a Christian calendar and that students have time to celebrate other traditions, dining options, etc.
- Explore the vendors we work with and ensure that they reflect the mission and values of RAC. Ensure that all service level positions are diversely represented.

- Ensure that guest speakers on campus reflect and do not tokenize populations.
- Build partnerships with other organizations to further community and learning opportunities.
- Have a strategic plan to address accessibility, ADA compliance, and universal design (videos, website, classroom documents, campus traditions).
- Lactation space.
- Commuter student awareness (access, time, location, sign up, transportation, scholarship differences).
- Generationally respectful spaces. Encouraging programs that admit a significantly older population to intentionally program for and accommodate the needs of their students.
- Find/create housing that better accommodates older students.
- Assessment of how our current programs meet the needs of first generation students.
- Identify people on campus who speak other languages who would be willing to assist in translation services if necessary.

Appendix L

Final Draft of Strategies to Meet Goal 2 in Strategic Plan

SPG Working Group-Multiculturalism

Explore, appreciate, and critically engage the meaning and dimensions of diversity within our multicultural community.

- Cultivate an environment where faculty and staff [members of the college community] reflect the diverse experiences of our campus and demonstrate a commitment to multicultural competence.
 - Actively multicultural awareness within the campus community (i.e. multicultural institute, workshops, retreat)
 - Actively recruit employees who reflect the community we serve.
 - Embed competencies as outlined by professional organizations into job expectations and evaluations, professional development, assemblies, etc.
 - Ensure that positions at all levels are diversely represented.
- Value and integrate multicultural perspectives in the creation and development of curriculum and academic programs at RAC.
 - Enact a multicultural course requirement in the GE; more intentionally use existing programs to explore multiculturalism.
 - Create an academic program such as Ethnic Studies.
 - Provide faculty development in multicultural pedagogies.
 - Intentionally partner with vendors who share and support the values of RAC.
 - Ensure that guest speakers reflect and respect diverse populations.
- Engage with and serve the ~~diverse~~ needs of our [diverse] students
 - Create a campus advisory group consisting of staff, faculty, and students to address campus climate issues.
 - Increase awareness of commuter student needs.
 - Adequately prepare for generationally diverse students.
 - Assess how current programs and services meet the needs of first generation students.
 - Increase services and resources in support of students with learning differences
- Leverage resources in a data driven process to ensure that the ~~diverse~~ needs of our [diverse] campus population are met.
 - Participate in a campus climate survey and needs assessment.
 - Compile and create an accessible directory that accurately depicts the multicultural resources on our campus (classes, clubs, policies, staff, international student services, study abroad, faculty research, community involvement, etc.)

- Hire an equity and inclusion officer to work.
 - Recognize diverse faiths and perspectives of students and make information and resources available to allow them to adhere to their beliefs and practices.
 - Identify staff and faculty on campus who speak other languages and could serve as a translator.
 - Recognize as models departments that are demonstrating and exemplifying best practices
- Create and sustain a physical environment that recognizes, supports, and promotes an inclusive community.
 - Identify places on campus to display artwork that represents the diversity of our campus community.
 - Establish a multicultural center that would create a space for students' cultural identity development.
 - Include gender neutral and inclusive language in applications, HR benefits, facilities (restrooms, locker rooms, residence halls).
 - Develop a plan to address accessibility, ADA compliance, and universal design (videos, website, classroom documents, campus traditions)
 - Provide a lactation space for faculty, staff, and student use.

Appendix M

Strategic Plan Goal 2 and Strategies

GOAL 2:

Explore, appreciate, and critically engage the meaning and dimensions of diversity within our multicultural community.

STRATEGIES:

- Cultivate an environment where faculty, staff, administration, and trustees reflect the diverse experiences of our campus and demonstrate a commitment to multicultural competence.
- Value and integrate multicultural perspectives in the creation and development of curriculum and academic programs at RAC.
- Engage with and serve the diverse needs of our students.
- Leverage resources in a data-driven process to ensure that the diverse needs of our campus population are met.
- Create and sustain a physical environment that recognizes, supports, and promotes an inclusive community.

Cultivate and sustain an inclusive campus community that reflects, values, and celebrates the diversity of our members.

Appendix N

Email Announcement of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Training

Dear Faculty and Staff,

Please mark your calendars and **“Save The Date”**.

Join us this day for RAC’s first joint faculty and staff training focusing on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, where we will:

Learn – through self-reflection and examination of our mission, strategic plan, and campus demographics

Apply – new knowledge to our professional practice and pedagogy

Lead – the College in cultivating and sustaining an inclusive campus community

Grow – in our commitment to critically engaging the meaning and dimensions of diversity

Look for more information and registration coming soon! Hope to see you there.

Best,
Heather French

Appendix O

Draft Student Affairs Policy on Diversity in Recruitment and Hiring

RAC has been recognized as having one of the most ethnically diverse student body in the region. However, its staff and faculty diversity is not yet proportionate to the student body.

Rosewood Ascension College's current strategic plan states that RAC aims to cultivate an environment where faculty, staff, administration, and trustees reflect the diverse experiences of our campus and demonstrate a commitment to multicultural competence. As such, we strive to recruit, hire and retain quality candidates for employment who are reflective of the rich diversity found in our student body.

RAC Student Affairs is committed to developing a staff that includes an array of nationalities, races, ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, religions, socioeconomic statuses, abilities, and ages, and RAC Student Affairs is particularly interested in fostering a staff where groups that have been historically underrepresented and undervalued are fully present and integrally engaged. Though we conceptualize "diversity" broadly and inclusively, we recognize that it is important to pay special attention to certain identity domains, for example, race, that have historically been excluded from higher education.

RAC is an Equal Opportunity Employer as indicated in our Statement of Nondiscrimination (below); however, we go beyond this mandate to proactively seek out diverse staff members and to create an environment that is conducive to their success.

Statement of Nondiscrimination

RAC does not discriminate based on pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions, race, color, creed, gender, gender identity or expression, religion, marital status, registered domestic partner status, age, national origin or ancestry, physical or mental disability, medical condition including genetic characteristics, sexual orientation, or any other consideration made unlawful by federal, state, or local laws. It also prohibits unlawful discrimination based on the perception that anyone has any of those characteristics or is associated with a person who has or is perceived as having any of those characteristics.

Diversity is critical to RAC's mission and it is known to have many specific benefits: 1) critical thinking, intellectual curiosity, creativity, and collaboration are all enhanced when a diverse faculty, staff and student body interact and learn from one another, 2) a more attractive, inviting, and supportive environment for underrepresented students; 3) enhancement of the College's capacity to educate and empower a diverse student body for leadership and service.

Therefore, this policy addresses three areas to increase diversity in recruitment and hiring: (a) planning with department managers, (b) job announcements, and (c) Search Committees.

Planning with Department Managers

- Prior to starting a search process, department managers and other members of the Student Affairs Leadership Team will review the Division's and Department's current profile of employee diversity

- Consider opportunities for diverse hiring
- Discuss best practices in outreach, recruitment, and hiring with respect to staff diversity

Job Announcements

Before job announcements are posted publicly, the hiring manager or Search Committee Chair must consult with Human Resources (HR) on language and terminology in order to ensure a script that is most likely to attract diverse candidates. For example, it is important to include language in the job announcements that articulates RAC's commitment to multiculturalism and inclusion, which is an important vehicle for signaling to prospective candidates our commitment to diverse hiring.

Hiring managers or Search Committees are expected to make every effort to disseminate the Job Announcements widely and broadly and to target publications, associations, websites, and listservs that reach diverse prospective candidates. The following is a list of suggested recruitment sources for Student Affairs.

Suggested Recruitment Sources

www.norcalherc.org – Higher Education Recruitment Consortium

www.projecthired.com - Connecting employers with people with disabilities

www.HispanicOutlook.com – Targets higher education sector

www.diversejobs.net – Focus on diversity trends and issues in higher education

www.lgbtcampus.org - Consortium of Higher Ed LGBT Resource Professionals

www.insightintodiversity.com – Connects diverse professionals to diverse careers

www.jbhe.com/jobs - Journal of Blacks in Higher Education

www.wihe.com – Women in Higher Education

www.naaap.org – National Association of Asian American Professionals

www.higheredjobs.com – National higher education job search directory

Search Committees

Search Committees are expected to work diligently to achieve a diverse pool of candidates and to continue outreach and recruitment until such a pool is identified. Search Committees should employ optimal strategies for recruitment of diverse candidates as well as effective, culturally competent, and welcoming interview techniques. Additionally, each Search Committee must appoint one member of the Committee to serve as the Diversity Officer of the Committee. The Diversity Officer is responsible for:

- Providing leadership to the Committee around diversity issues and consulting with HR as needed.
- Documenting the search processes and outcomes related to issues of fairness and inclusion.

Accurate and thorough documentation will allow for the ongoing tracking and collection of demographic data on applicants and interviewees, thus providing a mechanism to monitor our success in the recruitment of diverse candidates.