

EXPLORING WHITE PRIVILEGE AMONG ADULT LEARNERS IN
THE HISTORICALLY WHITE COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY CLASSROOM

by

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(Under the direction of RONALD M. CERVERO)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to understand how adult learners experience white privilege in higher education classrooms. There were two research questions guiding this study: (1) how does the social position of adult learners affect their experience of white privilege in the classroom; and (2) what are the manifestations of white privilege in the classroom.

This was a qualitative case study conducted during the spring 2002 semester at a historically White university. The cases consisted of two higher education classrooms. Twelve racially diverse adult learners and two instructors participated in the study. Data collection methods included semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis.

The study found that race, class, and gender affected how adult learners experienced white privilege in the classroom. First, White racialness privileged White adult learners and non-White racialness burdened adult learners of color in the classroom. Class was found to be empowering only to White adult learners who could claim higher social locations. When class intersected with race, White adult learners at the lower end of class claimed power from Whiteness. Adult learners of color from higher and lower social class locations drew on their class backgrounds to negotiate issues of race that operated in the classroom. A higher social class location was of no benefit in the classroom for non-White adult learners who could claim that status. The study found

male gender and African American racialness of one of the instructors to be intimidating only among his White students in the study. Manifestations of white privilege included (1) assumptions of race that privileged Whiteness; (2) White domination of classroom discourse; (3) White domination of authorship of the subject content in the classroom; (4) White domination of instructional resources of the classroom; and (5) White domination of physical space of the classroom.

The conclusions were: (1) white privilege is a major factor in the dynamics of higher education classrooms; (2) the historically White college and university acts to enable the operation of white privilege in its classrooms; and (3) adult learners of color are complicit with White adult learners in perpetuating white privilege in the classroom.

INDEX WORDS: Adult education, Adult learner, African American, Classroom, Higher Education, Race, Skin color, Whiteness, White privilege

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DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation to my oldest sister, Brenda E. Logan. For all my life, my oldest sister has been an inspiration and an example to follow. Although she graduated seventh in her high school class and magna cum laude of her undergraduate college class, she always told me that I was smart. When she earned her doctorate in 1983, even though I barely understood what a Ph.D. was, she gave me a dream to pursue. A retired teacher of 30 years, Brenda persuaded me to teach at the college level. And even now, as I make the final corrections to my own dissertation and pen this dedication, it is my sister Brenda, who now is a full time college professor, encouraging and inspiring me, still. Thanks, Brenda.

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For four years, I lived away from home, in a quaint, on-campus apartment. As I began to make new friends, the physical separation from my family and familiar places

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	v
CHAPTER	
1 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM.....	1
Background of the Study.....	4
Problem and Purpose of the Study.....	8
Significance of the Study.....	9
Definition of Terms.....	12
2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	13
Race and Racism in the United States.....	14
Whiteness/White Privilege in Higher Education.....	28
Whiteness/White Privilege Studies in Adult Education.....	41
3 THE RESEARCH DESIGN.....	49
The Sample.....	52
Data Collection.....	65
Data Analysis.....	70
Reliability.....	72
Validity.....	74
Ethics.....	75
Researcher Subjectivity.....	77
Summary.....	83

4	FINDINGS: PAINTING A PORTRAIT OF WHITE PRIVILEGE	86
	Features of Social Position Affecting Classroom Experiences.....	86
	Manifestations of White Privilege in the Classroom.....	112
	Summary.....	131
5	CONCLUSIONS: THE FACE OF WHITE PRIVILEGE.....	133
	Summary.....	133
	Conclusions and Discussions.....	142
	Implications of the Study.....	152
	Concluding Remarks.....	154
	REFERENCES.....	157
	APPENDICES	
A	CONSENT FORM.....	165
B	INTERVIEW GUIDE.....	167

CHAPTER 1

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Overt racial domination of people of color in America is a thing of the past. Jim Crow, Black codes, and legal segregation are gone with the wind. It is no longer legal to require people of color to correctly answer mathematical equations in order to vote in public elections or require them to sit at the back of the bus behind White bus riders. Aside from being a punishable violation of the law, discriminatory acts against people of color are usually frowned upon when such performances are noticed.

Contemporary literature shows that many in mainstream society overwhelmingly believe that that changes in the law have, by and large, successfully driven away race discrimination against people of color (Hacker, 1992; *One America in the 21st Century*, 1998). The fact of the matter is that changes in the law have only driven it out of sight. Racial discrimination still abides in America. It is housed in an elaborate social paradigm known as white privilege. In collusion with all major U.S. social structures, such as education, criminal justice, media, banking and finance, white privilege is understood as unmarked social favor demonstrated towards persons with white skin. Understanding and seeing the face of white privilege begins and ends with the legacy of race and skin color in the United States.

The infrastructure of race discrimination in America's past was made up of a synchronized dyad. That is, race operated as a blended, two-part structure that privileged some at the same time it oppressed others. Prior to the mid 1960s, American society was structured, in part, around legal social practices and traditions of race that showed favor and disfavor to people on the basis of their skin color. However, with mounting racial

unrest among Americans, Black, as well as White, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 spurred the ending of legalized racial practices against people of color. Nearly four centuries of legalized racial discrimination against people of color that had existed since 1619 in the United States had finally ended. Not surprisingly though, racial discrimination in America had not ended. One half of the dyad of racial discrimination had ended. The other half of America's racial dyad, that of racial privilege, which had also existed since 1619, was remarkably left intact and ignored in society. Thus, racial discrimination exists in contemporary American society as undisturbed, ignored, unacknowledged implicit social practices that privilege Whiteness. These acts or practices or traditions or assumptions that discriminate in favor of people counted as White that are conducted or allowed to occur systematically in public arenas is known as white privilege. White privilege functions to oppress and disenfranchise people of color today, not because they are Black, but because they are not White.

White privilege is umbilically tied to White racialness. It exists as a result of White racialness. White privilege is not individualistic. It is not necessarily noticeable in the context of one person's life. It is a societal phenomenon that reveals itself more readily in the context of the group of people upon whom it is bestowed. White privilege is not classism. Lower, middle, and upper class people racialized as White are all granted white privilege at birth. The extent to which an individual will benefit a lot or not benefit as much is situational. White privilege is not racism. Although racism is perpetuated by white privilege, it should not be conflated as synonymous with racism. White privilege translates to systemic access and control of social terrain, material wealth, natural resources and distribution of cultural capital that accrue disproportionately to Whites as a racialized group. White privilege operates through society's expectations, willingness, and tradition to embrace, understand, and pardon those who are White. The privilege factor is White skin. White skin is indigenous to white privilege. White privilege remains entrenched in all major societal structures because American society continues to

be largely White-owned and White-run. White privilege is a phrase that captures conceptually the activity of White racial domination. White privilege marks the many ways that White racialness celebrates, affirms, and advances itself through domination (Harris, 1995; McIntosh, 2001; *One America in the 21st Century*, 1998).

Over time, ironically with the aid of the academy, race has been manufactured in the social consciousness to be a problem of people of color (Bowser & Hunt, 1996). For many in mainstream society, race not only connotes Black people but also biology (Gotanda, 1995; Lopez, 1995). According to Omi and Winant (1994), “it has taken scholars more than a century to reject biologist notions of race in favor of an approach which regards race as a social concept” (p. 64).

From America’s inception until the Civil Rights era of the 1960s, “white” was a popular term commonly used in the law and in society. Today, however, with a prevailing colorblind view of society, most Whites choose not to see or articulate themselves in racialized terms. The prevailing racialized ideology asserts that when one is color conscious, one is thought to be racist. Thus, many Whites tend to self identify most often as just individuals or members of the human race. According to Omi and Winant (1994) race has no “fixed meaning, but is constructed and transformed socio-historically through competing political projects” (p 71). They argue that “suffused” racialized projects in society have created a racialized social structure, which shapes racialized experience and conditions our meanings of race (p. 59).

Race is understood in the context of group experience and orientation. Blauner (cited in Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 70) asserts that members of racialized minority groups see the “centrality of race in history and everyday experience” while Whites see race as “a peripheral, nonessential reality.” Bowser and Hunt (1996) argue that the Black experience is not only “quantitatively but often qualitatively different from others.” *One America in the 21st Century* (1998, p. 47) posits that as a consequence of race “. . .

minorities and people of color experience certain life conditions far more negatively than non-minority citizens.” At the close of the 20th century, race in America is a matter of experience and interpretation.

Background of the Study

In the absence of a definitive explanation and a unified experience of race in the U.S., race lingers as a significant American dilemma. While white privilege is a conceptual antecedent of race, it is through the examination of white privilege that Americans can begin to more fully understand the origin and problem of race and color in the United States (One America in the 21st Century, 1998).

White privilege is pervasive in American society (Wildman, 1996). From 1619 with the arrival of the first 20 enslaved Africans in America (Smitherman, 1977) until the mid 1960s with the Civil Rights movement, skin color in the U.S. functioned as a signifier of human treatment in society (Gotanda, 1995; Hacker, 1992; Harris, 1995; Morrison, 1992). Even with the advent of Civil Rights legislation more than 30 years ago, White skin in the 21st century continues to be a silent, yet denied marker of privilege, while colored or Black skin functions as a marker for oppression by tradition. Supporting societal structures of white privilege, such as U.S. law contribute to the proliferation of white privilege in society (Gotanda, 1995; Harris, 1995; Lopez, 1995; Wildman, 1996). According to Stephanie Wildman (1996), law professor and white privilege expert, “law plays an important role in the perpetuation of privilege by ignoring that privilege exists. And by ignoring its existence, law, . . . ensures the perpetuation of privilege” (p. 13). Wildman notes, “we [White people] do not perceive privilege as something bestowed on us specially; rather it appears as the fabric of life, as the way things are” (p. 3).

White privilege is, however, more or less a fixed circumstance of the Black experience in the U.S. The Black experience is a social location situated on the other side of white privilege. A striking characteristic of being non-White in the U.S. is the

capacity to recognize variance in social expectations and opportunities. In Black culture, conceptual knowledge of white privilege dates as far back, perhaps, as antebellum slavery. According to African American linguist and scholar Geneva Smitherman (1977) runaway slaves understood the advantages and power of the “master’s language” as a defining element in their ability to thwart suspicion and remain free. Runaway enslaved Africans used “good English” as a kind of social leverage. They were strategically bidialectal; that is, they spoke both their native tongue and standard American English as a condition of survival. This practice among Blacks in colonial America resulted from “a knowing” about the privilege of Whiteness. In contemporary society, non-White people notice white privilege on a routine and largely powerless basis.

According to African American scholar and social critic bell hooks (1992), Black people have been socio-historically driven to develop “special knowledge” of Whiteness as a means of managing White supremacy patriarchy or White social dominance. The special knowledge to which hooks refers is a capacity or aptitude that acts as a cultural filter for dealing with performances of white privilege and as a strategy for managing one’s own psychosis in the face of interminable social injustice. The capacity to distinguish white privilege is unique. In the face of enduring social inequities rejected as such in the mainstream, Black people have been able to rely on their special knowledge to help them interpret their dilemma and persevere. Nayak (1997) examined Black adult student accounts of schooling to understand how they identified the normativity of Whiteness. Her study supported hooks’ “special” knowledge theory. Nayak’s study revealed that while Black students get along with their White peers, society inherently positions Blacks opposite Whites, thus forces Blacks to develop strategies to respond to performances of Whiteness and privilege.

Characteristically, white privilege is denied, unacknowledged, and invisible (Keating, 1995; McIntosh, 2001; Wildman, 1996). The dissension over the existence of white privilege is apparent. People are generally reluctant to dispute that which they

cannot see. The hallmark of white privilege is its invisibility to those who benefit from it. Blindness to white privilege is also apparent. Society has carefully conditioned White people and others how not to see it. According to Crenshaw (cited in Wildman, 1996) there is implicitness to the privileging of Whiteness, which makes it virtually unperceivable. Tacit assumptions and practices associated with being White contribute to the unacknowledged and denied status of white privilege. As unacknowledged and denied, white privilege easily becomes virtually un-seeable or invisible.

The perpetual missing of white privilege by mainstream society has significantly contributed to the virtually un-seeable state of white privilege. Mainstream blindness to white privilege is heavily informed by the prevailing racialized ideology in the U.S. According to Omi and Winant (1994), a re-articulation of race evolved during the Reagan administration as a neo-conservative measure to undermine the gains of racialized minorities during the 1960s. During the 1980s, America was heralded as a colorblind, egalitarian society where individual merit was equally available to everyone (Omi & Winant, 1994). Within the context of this ideology, minorities were no longer viewed as underprivileged victims of a racialized America. Rather, they were now being seen as unfairly receiving preferential treatment in egalitarian America, particularly in the areas of education and employment. People of color were perceived as recipients of race privilege. With the social lens and the national consciousness focused on governmental benefits to racialized minorities, mainstream Whites lost sight of America's enduring legacy of white privilege, thus denying the historic privileges of their own Whiteness to the seeable evidences of perceived preferential treatment to Blacks (Omi & Winant, 1994). According to Wildman (1996), the theory of intersectionality holds that when we perceive oppression or subordination to ourselves, we act from our most dominant position of power to remove or diminish the oppression we perceive. Crenshaw notes (cited in Wildman, 1996) that no one is completely without privilege; rather, we all have varying degrees and forms of privilege accorded us by race, class, gender, religion, or

physicality. However, because perceived oppression drives us to focus only on the oppression we feel, we tend to view ourselves as victims while the privileged position from which we act becomes invisible to us in the process. Whites tend to rely on the dominance of White race privilege, using it in conjunction with other privilege forms, thus ignoring the existence of white privilege. As Wildman (1996) posits, seeing privilege is virtually impossible if one is not looking for it.

Mainstream blindness to white privilege is also a consequence of U.S. law (Gotanda, 1995; Harris, 1995; Wildman, 1996). According to Wildman, “the notion of privilege . . . has not been recognized in legal language and doctrine” (p. 8). This failure to acknowledge privilege in America’s legal domain seals the invisibility of white privilege. Wildman argues that during the Civil Rights era, U.S. law focused exclusively on anti-discrimination doctrine. The over-attention to discrimination practices against people of color created a stark in-attentiveness to America’s legacy of discrimination practices in favor of Whites. Wildman uses the metaphor of the two headed monster to illustrate how American justice channeled its focus on one head of the White supremacist power dyad, that of oppression, only to leave the dyad of privilege undisturbed. The legal abandonment of white privilege functioned to safely hide white privilege from view. Keeping privilege hidden bolsters and preserves its power.

The collusion of mainstream America to conceal white privilege ensures its incontestability. With the opportunity to oppose white privilege removed, it is virtually impossible to effect change. In contemporary American society, white privilege continues to operate implicitly and remain invisible in society largely because it has been left methodically unchallenged by U. S. law.

Much of the blindness of white privilege occurs because those who benefit from it have no incentive to interrogate it. To question the social favor they receive is to doubt that they should receive it. Such doubting is rejected by social teachings about Whiteness. Recurring media portrayals of Whites throughout society are

overwhelmingly positive. With their attributes and practices constantly affirmed as normal and perpetuated as typical (Keating, 1995; McIntosh, 2001; Wildman, 1996), Whites are daily conditioned to perceive themselves as deserving and the social benefits and terrain to which they have access as entitlements. A common but unseen social advantage is legacy admissions to certain colleges and universities. Although such admissions are perceived as merit-based, they actually stem from White racial affiliation with the social power structure. The practice of cognitively transforming a race-benefit to individual-merit is a tightly woven piece of the White American worldview. The inherent convenience and ease of white privilege makes it illogical for White Americans to call their own Whiteness into question, thus rendering white privilege even more elusive.

Those Whites who have become aware of their privilege are faced with an enduring struggle to try to see privilege at the same time they benefit from it (Keating, 1995; Maher & Tetreault, 1997; Wildman, 1996). To develop a discernment of the social privileges accorded to them so incessantly and willingly, Whites must somehow transform their struggle into an opportunity. Internalizing struggle as opportunity positively situates the task at hand.

Problem and Purpose of the Study

White privilege permeates all social structures, including school environments. Schools act as sites that produce and transmit the social practices that reinforce the dominant culture (Giroux, 1999). Thus, power systems that exist in society, based on race, are replicated in schools. This focus of this study is higher education classrooms within higher education. The 1995 National Center for Educational Statistics reports that participation of adult learners in higher education has increased dramatically over the last fifty years. According to Kasworm, Sandmann, & Sissel (2000), adult learners now comprise almost 50 percent of credit students in higher education programs.

Social change is a fundamental goal of adult education. An implicit tenet in the field is that society changes as individuals are changed. However, the classroom in the context of higher education avails itself to the manifestation and perpetuation of white privilege (Colin & Preciphs, 1991). Although these classrooms are believed to be a meritocracy, and the field is believed to be poised to address social change, individual merit and equality in higher education adult education classrooms are called into question in the face of white privilege.

In the adult education literature, race is projected as irrelevant and inconsequential to practice (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2000). Since the 1920s when adult education emerged as a field of practice, the goals of adult education have been focused around an un-raced adult learner. The literature base of the field has continually addressed the adult learner in higher education institutions without any systematic or comprehensive attention to race (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2000). To date only a limited number of studies exist in the field that addresses issues of race: racism (Colin & Preciphs, 1991), power relations based on race (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2000), white privilege (Barlas, 1997; Barlas, Kasl, MacLeod, Paxton, Rosenwasser, & Sartor, 2000), and Whiteness (Shore, 1997; 2000). In fact, no empirical evidence is available on the adult learner's experience of white privilege in higher education classrooms.

The purpose of this study was to understand how adult learners experience white privilege in the higher education classroom. The research questions guiding this study are: (1) how does the social position of adult learners affect their experience of white privilege; and (2) what are the manifestations of white privilege in the classroom.

Significance of the Study

In spite of the known systemic unfairness faced by non-White adult learners because of white privilege, and in spite of the field's pro-active stance to social change, educational practice continues to ignore race in the classroom. What is troublesome about this stance is that in selecting not to see race, white privilege also goes unseen. To

overlook white privilege in the classroom is to turn away from the democratic ideals of adult education philosophy. A practical significance of this study was that it provides practitioners with new insights about the relationship between the organization and operation of the adult education classroom and white privilege. The insights gained will potentially lead to the development of pedagogical strategies that can be used to challenge white privilege in the classroom. Classroom structures include instructional materials, discourse, resources, and activities engaged by the instructor to deliver the instruction. In this study, an examination of these structures helps practitioners learn to broadly question their assumptions, practices, and verbal references as a way to resist participating in the perpetuation of white privilege in the classroom. The study also equips adult learners with skills to help them recognize white privilege and provide them with knowledge to help them understand the significance of White interrogation of privilege in the classroom.

Learning in adulthood is significantly impacted by the life experiences of adult learners. According to Lindeman (cited in Merriam & Brockett, 1997) the practice of adult education begins at the point of adult experience. Adults experience their environment through the various features of their social position, including race, religion, gender, physicality, sexual orientation, among others. Race is an important dimension of social position. According to Frankenberg (1993), race is an organizing structure and predictor of the quality of our of life experiences. In contemporary American society, race is undergirded by an implicit privileging of White racialness which influences how we act out racially in social settings (Harris, 1995).

In the setting of the higher education classroom, all adult learners bring with them a race-based orientation. Choosing not to see white privilege among adult learners in higher education classrooms creates a critical gap in the teaching and learning environment. The tendency among adult educators to disregard the adult's experience of white privilege has serious implications for the field. If contemporary adult education

indeed starts at the point of adult experience, yet practice, informed by the literature base, repeatedly fails to regard the impact of white privilege as a significant organizing structure of adult life experience, adult education practice and theory are at odds with each other. Such a position signals internal conflict. This study contributes to a heightened awareness of this existing philosophical conflict that may lead to the field's re-conceptualization of the adult learner. This study raises questions and hopefully can inspire scholars to revisit theory and assumptions about learning in adulthood.

There is a need to deliberately seek out white privilege for examination because while we can document its relevance to adult learning, we have not taken it into account and do not know empirically the magnitude of its impact. Understanding the adult's experience of race privilege will likely lead to the development of more and different ways of delivering adult education and potentially shed new light on why more non-White adult learners do not participate in adult education. This study may result in theory building in the field by providing possible new perspectives about traditional adult education delivery models based upon insights gained from what adult learners say about their experience of race privilege in the classroom.

With escalating student demographics changing the complexion of schools and classrooms throughout the U.S., and sharp increases in applications of diversity and multi-cultural teaching approaches, particularly in higher education, adult education practitioners and teachers of adult learners in higher education contexts, as well as teachers in industry, government and in-service teacher training settings would likely benefit from the findings of this study. This study would be particularly useful to teachers across disciplines in higher education who have begun or who desire to begin to challenge Whiteness in the primary texts in their subject areas. Traditional teaching models are based on the normalization and standardization of Whiteness. Outside the higher education context, the findings of this study may provide insights and practical

knowledge to managers and training staff that might use these findings to help design training manuals and establish policy in workplace classrooms.

Definition of Terms

- Adults:** refers to those persons at least 25 years or older (Merriam & Brockett, 1997).
- African American:** racialized category that includes Americans of African descent (Omi & Winant, 1994).
- Race:** a socially constructed category that organizes people by skin color and other discernible physical features (Omi & Winant, 1994).
- Racialized:** the socialized condition of having an assigned race (Omi & Winant, 1994).
- Racism:** the transformation of race prejudice and/or ethnocentrism through the exercise of power against a racialized group defined as inferior, by individuals and institutions with the intentional or unintentional support of the entire (race or) culture (Jones, 1972, p. 172).
- White:** racialized category that includes the diverse group of Europeans who become White in the United States (Bernardi, 1996)
- Whiteness:** the race-based system of structural power that grants racialized domination in American society to persons classified as White (Bernardi, 1996; McIntosh, 2001; Wildman, 1996).
- White privilege:** White racial domination of society based upon historic factors that results in tangible and intangible social advantages accorded disproportionately to persons who count as White in the United States (McIntosh, 2001; One America in the 21st Century, 1998).

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to understand how adult learners experience white privilege in higher education classrooms. More specifically, this study will examine social and structural factors present that affect the process and manifestations of white privilege in higher education classrooms. This chapter will review literature that provides the conceptual framework of this study in three major sections.

The first section will trace America's heritage of race and racism, then explore how race has been characterized and conceived over time in the consciousness of mainstream American society. The second section will examine empirical and theoretical literature on Whiteness and white privilege, discussing the history, features, and theory of Whiteness and white privilege that lend clarity to the dominant aspects of this study. The third section will identify studies in the field of adult education that have explored race and race privilege. This examination will elaborate on approaches and findings of that literature as it relates to the adult learner in higher education.

In the field of adult education, practice has been centered on an un-raced adult learner, and race literature is limited. As a corollary of race and a recent phenomenon in higher education, white privilege is largely un-named in the literature and unacknowledged in practice. This study was therefore buttressed by empirical studies and theory out of the Whiteness/white privilege literature base. This chapter will establish that while there has been some inquiry around white privilege in the field, virtually nothing is known about student experiences of white privilege in the classroom. It is the gap of student experiences that this study seeks to fill.

Race and Racism in the United States

Race in the U.S. is an enigma. It is an issue that has confounded America and its philosophers for centuries. In spite of sweeping pronouncements of its impending mortality, race has managed to live and not die. According to Omi and Winant (1994), grand theorists of the 19th century believed that “racialized and ethnic social bonds, divisions and, conflicts . . . would decline in significance in the modern period” (p. 9). However, Gossett (1963/1997) notes, “by the early 1990s it had become clear that no systemic analysis of American reality . . . could ignore the subject of race as an idea.” Hence, race remains today a significant and baffling domestic issue in the U.S. (Bowser & Hunt, 1996; Feagin & Vera, 1995; Gossett, 1963/1997; Jordan, 1968; Kovel, 1970; Lopez, 1995; Myrdal, 1944; Omi & Winant, 1994).

Origin of Race in the United States

The concept of race originated during the age of Enlightenment (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1998). Ideas of race were inherent in the general social knowledge in Europe during the 16th century (Williams, 1990). This racialized awareness was under-girded by notions of superiority and by skin color. Jordan (1968) suggests that the term “black” was a function of race long before there was ever English contact with Africans. Prior to the 16th century, the term black was defined in the Oxford English dictionary as “deeply stained with dirt, soiled, dirty, foul having dark or deadly purposes, malignant indicating disgrace, censure, liability to punishment” (p. 7). Connotations of black were fixed in the social consciousness of Europeans at the subliminal level. Within the public sphere of 15th century Europe the “accepted standard of beauty was a fair complexion of rose and white” (p. 9) while the perception of black was “a symbol of baseness and evil, [and] a sign of danger and repulsion” (p. 7). A European hierarchy of color had been established where the perception was that black was inferior to white and white was supreme. Although this was the prevailing British worldview, in 1694, a rare complaint was registered by slave shipmaster, Captain Thomas Phillips. He wrote of his own

difficulty in understanding “why they [Africans] should be despis’d for their colour, being what they cannot help, and the effect of the climate it has pleas’d God to appoint them. I can’t think there is any intrinsick value in one colour more than another, nor that white is better than black, only we think it so because we are so, and are prone to judge favourably in our own case . . .” (p. 11). Phillips’ testimony illuminates the illogical and social nature of the evolving concept of race. It also delineates the primary factors of race that have over centuries remained constant.

White English men first encountered Black Africans in West Africa and the Congo around the mid 1500s (Jordan, 1968). These encounters were situated around the slave trade in that part of Africa. The British worldview held negative connotations toward blackness. These connotations were a consequence of entrenched societal associations with the meaning of not only ‘black’ but also ‘white.’ According to Myrdal (1944, p. 100) “the color white is associated with everything good, with Christ and the angels, with heaven, fairness, cleanliness, virtue, intelligence, courage, and progress. “Through the ages, black has carried associations with all that is bad and low: black stands for dirt, sin, and the devil). Thus, Englishmen perceptions of and contacts with Black African people were shaped by their aversive understandings of blackness as opposite of the virtue of whiteness. (Myrdal, 1944; Roediger, 1991). Myrdal states that race doctrine held the Negro as the “antithesis of character and properties of the White man” (p. 100). According to Jordan (1968), knowing full well that Africans were human, the English imagination exoticized them to beasts to make them “seem to Englishmen a radically different kind of men” (p. 28). Jordan notes “the Englishmen found blackness in human beings a peculiar and important point of difference” (p. 20). Skin color became an immediate and indistinguishable point of departure between the African and Englishmen. Skin color and physical features became a way to think about race. The concept of race is thought to have emerged in Europe initially as a category of people “different” from and “other” than White.

As White Europeans traveled to North America, they came face to face with enslaved Africans in the United States in 1619 (Jordan, 1968). The European color value system followed the Europeans to America as they were transformed to European American colonists. Before 1619, European colonists in America had no contact with Black Africans in America. European colonists frequently identified themselves in relationship to their marital status, religious affiliation, or economic status, but not to their skin color. However, with the arrival of twenty enslaved Africans to the Virginia colony, the European color value system that had thus lay largely dormant was now awakened. The 1619 African confrontation with colonists at Virginia kindled race as an idea on American soil. According to Gossett (1963/1997), “race theory in European thought had a great effect upon American race theory” (p. xii) He posits that “the contact of the English with Indians, and soon afterward with Negroes, in the New World led to the formation of institutions and relationships which were later justified by appeals to race theories” (p. 17). Race in the U. S. began as an idea. The concept and use of race emerged largely around Black skin and White skin. Steinberg and Kincheloe (1998) suggest that “only after . . . slavery around 1680 did Whiteness and Blackness come to represent racialized categories” (p. 9).

Origin of Racism in the United States

From the 1600s until the 1960s, America was a racialized dictatorship (Omi & Winant, 1994). According to Gossett (1963/1997), “it was the White man’s relationship with the Negro rather than his relationship with the Indian which was eventually rationalized into the most powerful racist doctrine this country has known” (p. 28). Black slavery in White America operated as a schism. Myrdal (1944) points out that most enlightened slaveholders “saw clearly the inconsistency between American democracy and Negro slavery” (p. 85). Smitherman (1977) acknowledges a pattern among Whites to preach Christianity as they practiced slavery. deCrevecoeur (1963/1981) expounds the same theme raised by Smitherman:

A clergyman settled a few years ago at George Town, [South Carolina] . . . and warmly recommended to the planters, from the pulpit, a relaxation of severity; he introduced the benignity of Christianity and pathetically made use of the admirable precepts of that system to melt the hearts of his congregation into a greater degree of compassion toward their slaves than had been hitherto customary. “Sir,” said one of his hearers, “we pay you a genteel salary to read to us the prayers of the liturgy and to explain to us such parts of the Gospel as the rule of the church directs, but we do not want you to teach us what we are to do with our Blacks. (p. 172)

In spite of manufactured doctrines of inferences to defend slavery, White perpetuation of slavery co-existed with a measure of dissension. The institution of slavery itself began, according to Gossett, (1963/1997) “when twenty Negars were landed at Jamestown in 1619.... [then] spread after 1680 because not enough English born-servants could be secured” (p. 29). According to Myrdal (1944), “if White Americans can believe that Negro Americans belong to a lower biological species than they themselves, this provides a motivation for their doctrine that the White race should be kept pure and that amalgamations should, by all means, be prevented” (p. 102). The system of Black slavery in American society was a matter of perception as much as anything else. Thus, the European imagination justified the oppressive social treatment of Negroes in America with mythological associations of Black Africans with beasts and savagery (Jordan, 1968).

American colonists realized that the preservation of slavery required “mass consent among the White population” (Jordan, 1968, p. 110). There had to be unanimous agreement throughout society to abide by the rules and conventions of slavery. To accomplish this goal, White legislators and law makers developed slave codes and concluded that “placing Negroes under different laws than White men [was a] practical necessity [for] . . . the proper ordering of society was at stake” (p. 110).

By the end of the seventeenth century chattel racialized slavery had “proliferated” throughout the colonies of the U.S. “without opposition or comprehension, gradually becoming attached to tradition, folkways, and lifestyles” (Jordan, 1968, p. 97). Gossett (1963/1997) notes that “in the 18th century, . . . slavery was virtually unchallenged in the South” (p. 31). Whites thought about the institution of slavery and those physically enslaved by it had been managed by a lack of humanity. According to deCrevecoeur (1963/1981),

[White Southerners] their ears by habit are become deaf, their hearts are hardened; they neither see, hear, nor feel for the woes of their poor slaves, from whose painful labours all their wealth proceeds. . . . Oh Nature, where are thou? Are not these Blacks thy children as well as we? . . . day after day they drudge on without any prospect of ever reaping for themselves; they are obliged to devote their lives, their limbs, their will, and ever vital exertion to swell the wealth of masters who look not upon them with half the kindness and affection with which they consider their dogs and horses. Kindness and affection are not the portion of those who till the earth, who carry burthens, who convert the logs into useful boards. This reward, simple and natural as one would conceive it, would order on humanity; and planters must have none of it! (pp. 168-169)

As a group, Whites were largely complacent about the peculiar institution of slavery. However, deCrevecoeur (1963/1981) distinguishes the contrast between northern Whites and northern slaves. He says, “I have not resided here long enough to become insensitive of pain for the objects which I every day behold. . . .we have slaves likewise in our northern provinces. . . . but how different their lot . . . they participate in many of the benefits of our society without being obliged to bear any of its burthens” (p. 171). Black slavery in the U.S. did not go unopposed by all Whites. However, it was a commonly practiced institution throughout the early America.

In addition to leveraged White sentiment about slavery, colonists recognized a further necessity of the peculiar institution. Colonists needed to establish a reliable means of implementing and controlling slavery. Maintaining the system of slavery depended on a clear demarcation between free Americans and enslaved Americans. The colonists believed skin color was salient enough to be relied upon to make that distinction. According to Tannenbaum (1946), “the distinction had been drawn in absolute terms, not merely between the slave and the free man, but between the Negro and the White man” (p. 107). Thus, skin color, Black skin and White skin, became the American social marker for human treatment. According to Harris (1995, p. 118), “rights were for those who had the capacity to exercise them, a capacity denoted by racial identity. This conception of rights was contingent on race-- on whether one could claim Whiteness.” Skin color became a way to define who was White and who was not White. Under this arrangement, the Black skin of the Negro signified bondage and was linked with slavery. Conversely, white skin was linked with freedom and functioned as a marker for privilege. Tannenbaum (1946) notes that indeed, “the contrast was between color—the Negro was the slave, and the White man was the free man. . . . [and] all the things denied to the Negro as a slave were permitted to the White man—as citizen” (p. 107).

According to Jordan, “what may have been his [Negro] two most striking characteristics, his heathenism and his appearance were probably prerequisite to his complete debasement” (p. 97). The complete debasement of the Negro in America was perceptual and physical. He faced a psychological perversion in the psyche of White Europeans concurrent with a material perversion in the institution of Black slavery (Jordan, 1968; Kovel, 1970). Thus, as a group, White Americans largely availed themselves to the complexion, practices, and assumptions of slavery. In so doing, racialized White colonial Americans created a society with skin color as a guiding principle (Colin & Preciphs, 1991). Skin color not only differentiated free and enslaved

human beings in America, it also determined human eligibility for societal favor or disfavor. According to Harris (1995), “many laws parceled out differential treatment based on racial categories: Blacks were not permitted to travel without permits, to own property, to assemble publicly, to own weapons, -- nor were they to be educated” (p. 278). White skin was the marker of privilege in American society and Black skin was the marker of difference from White. Interwoven in all emerging societal structures of the new nation, Whiteness was celebrated, affirmed, and promoted. The supremacy of Whiteness in American society was enforced by the legal authorities. According to Jordan (1968), the laws that were written for slaves restrained “all Negroes from full participation in the White man’s world . . . [until] it had become a widespread pattern” (p. 123). America’s system of slavery was normalized among its citizenry and validated in its legal process. Although White and Black resistance to the system of slavery did occur, America’s slave system went predominantly unquestioned and unchallenged and gradually became an invisible and acceptable part of American society. It was in this social context of a largely uncritical acceptance of slavery and its conventions that racism first emerged in the United States.

Race in Contemporary American Society

Race remains a dominant issue in the U.S. in large measure because of racism. Race and racism are interconnected but different systems that reinforce and sustain the vitality of each other. Most scholars today characterize race as a social construct (Bowser & Hunt, 1996; Jacobson, 1998; Jordan, 1968; Lopez, 1995; Omi & Winant, 1994; Wildman, 1996). Omi and Winant (1994) define race as “a concept that signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies” (p. 55). They theorize that races are socially designed categories of human organization, and that they are “created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed” (p. 55) by a sociohistorical process called the racialized formation. They argue that the process

of choosing human characteristics to racially stratify people is “always and necessarily a social and historical process” (p. 55).

Lopez (1995) agrees that races are created structures and belabors the superficiality of races by characterizing their origin as a fabrication. He says, “the fabrication of races emphasizes the human element and evokes the plastic and inconstant character of race” (p. 196). Lopez (1995) defines race as “a vast group of people loosely bound together by historically contingent, socially significant elements of their morphology and/or ancestry” (p. 193). According to Lopez, there are four elements in the social construction of race:

- (1) Humans rather than abstract social forces produce races;
- (2) as human constructs, races constitute an integral part of a whole social fabric that includes gender and class relations;
- (3) the meaning systems surrounding race change quickly rather than slowly;
- (4) races are constructed relationally, against one another, rather than in isolation. (p. 196)

Omi and Winant (1994, p. 55) argue that “the effort must be made to understand race as an unstable and decentered complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle.” A central feature of race is its social interplay. Race carries meaning only in society and acquires its meaning from society (Omi & Winant, 1994). Keating (1995) suggests that there is a social instability about race that has remained constant over time. She notes that understandings of race, specifically as it references Blacks and Whites, are highly “sociopolitical and cultural ” (Keating, p. 912). Keating states that the meaning of White as a race “has undergone significant changes ” (p. 912). She says that those who are today classified as White, such as Jews, Irish and European Catholics were excluded from that classification during the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Likewise, the array of terms used to describe Blacks, such as Colored, Negro, Black Afro-American, and African American are, too, indicative of social, political, and cultural factors.

Omi and Winant (1994) point out “there is a continuous temptation to think of race as an essence . . . and an opposite temptation to imagine race as a mere illusion” (p. 54). The essence and illusion of race are conflicting and problematic conditions of race yet are fundamental to interpretations of race in society. As an essence, race is understood to be static or rigid. From this perspective, race is unchangeable. According to Keating (1995) assumptions of race as a “permanent characteristic of U.S. life” (p. 909) are practically common sense in American society. Keating states “after all, in the United States categorizing people by race has become an accepted way of comprehending and explaining ourselves and our world” (p. 909). In this regard, race becomes a structure that cannot be un-done, and people are in turn confined to and by their race.

As illusionary, race is a fabrication of ideals (Jacobson, 1998). It is a construct out of the thinking of men, an invention of the mind of man. Jacobson notes, “we tend to think of race as real . . . it seems a product not of the social imagination but of biology” (p. 1). Lopez (1995) argues that race is “neither essence nor illusionary” (p. 193); rather, it is “an ongoing . . . plastic process subject to the macro forces of social and political struggle and the micro effects of daily decisions” (p. 193). Omi and Winant (1994) note that we must “challenge both these positions, . . . to transcend the presumably irreconcilable relationship between them” (p. 54). Keating (1995) warns, however, that the traditional pattern of discourse that relies on racialized adjectives, such as “Blacks” “White” and “Indian,” is in fact a reinforcement of “fictionalized identities as permanent unchanging facts” (p. 913). In other words, Keating’s caveat cautions that as racialized awareness and dialogue proliferate, the racialized referencing used to identify people potentially can adversely function to re-construct race as an essence as it seeks to de-construct race as socially constructed.

Still, the dualism of race as essence and illusionary is the reality for different groups, and it is a standpoint to understanding how those different groups experience

race. This racialized binary is very encompassing for it mirrors the state of race for the two racialized groups that tend to dominate U.S. racialized discourse, Black people and White (Feagin & Vera, 1995; Hacker, 1992; Jordan, 1968; Kovel, 1970; *One America in the 21st Century*, 1998). Race substantially accounts in part for the way society is organized and for the temper of people's overall life experiences. For people of color, race and its corollary issues are constant in their daily routines. Race for them translates as static because their life experiences are regularly and adversely a consequence of their Blackness. Race for White people, however, is largely invisible, not really there. Race is much more removed from their daily lives. A consequence of being White raced is not having to confront race based social oppression. The experience of race for White people is matter of choice, that is, having the option to notice race or not notice race. The reality of the privileged racialized position of White is that race is hardly noticeable in their lives. Thus, these two divergent worldviews of the exact, same phenomenon convey the prevailing experience of race in the U.S. in the 21st century (*One America in the 21st Century*, 1998).

The biology of race is a salient aspect of race that demonstrates the entrenched and misguided nature of the concept of race in the American mindset. Tannenbaum (1946) notes:

a prevailing belief [was the Negro] carried all of the imputation of the slave inside him. In fact, the Negro was considered a slave by nature, and he could not escape his natural shortcomings even if he managed to evade their legal consequences.

(pp. 106-107)

Moving beyond a consciousness of race as science is a paramount task. Jacobson (1998) points out that “the awesome power of race as an ideology resides precisely in its ability to pass as a feature of the natural landscape” (p. 10). According to Lopez (1995, p. 194), those who retain biological subscriptions to race include members of “Congress and the

Supreme Court.” Lopez captures and contextualizes the prevailing fallacies of race. He states that:

The notion that humankind can be divided along White, Black, and Yellow lines reveals the social rather than the scientific origin of race. The idea that there exists three races, and that these races are “Caucasoid,” “Negroid,” and “Mongoloid,” is rooted in the European imagination of the Middle Ages, which encompassed only Europe, Africa, and the Near east. This view found its clearest modern expression in Count Arthur de Gobineau’s *Essay on the Inequality of Races*, published in France in 1853-55. The peoples of the American continents, the Indian continent, East Asia, Southeast Asia, and Oceania—living outside the imagination of Europe and Count Gobineau—are excluded from the three major races for social and political reasons, not scientific ones. Nevertheless, the history of science has long been the history of failed efforts to justify these social beliefs. Along the way, various minds tried to fashion practical human typologies along the following physical axes: skin color, hair texture, facial angle, jaw size, cranial capacity, brain mass, frontal lobe mass, brain surface fissures and convolutions, and even body lice. . . .the nineteenth century was a period of exhaustive and—as it turned out—futile search for criteria to define and describe race differences. (p. 194)

Lingering genetic notions of race highlight the necessity of unlearning-based strategies. These strategies use various approaches that teach people how to unlearn the distorted perceptions they hold about race. Unlearning-based strategies allow for new learning to occur.

Race also remains a political issue embedded in U.S. law (Gotanda, 1995; Harris, 1995; Lipsitz, 1998; Lopez, 1995; Wildman, 1996). Although America has dismantled its legal race-based oppressive social practices, the judicial system continues to not notice the implicit privileging of Whiteness as an oppressive racialized structure within the law.

The controlling and authorizing capacity of race in society to oppress some at the same time it privileges others has yet to be adjusted and accounted for in America's legal system. Instead, race and White racialness in particular remain lost to objective scrutiny in America's most powerful social structure. According to Lopez (1995),

Human fate still rides upon ancestry and appearance. The characteristics of our hair, complexion, and facial features still influence whether we are figuratively free or enslaved. Race determines our economic prospects. . . permeates our politics . . . and mediates every aspect of our lives. (p. 192)

Lopez argues that “no body of law exists untainted by the powerful astringent of race in our society” (p. 192). He indicts judges, legislators, and legal scholars for perpetuating the power of race. In fact, he says of them, “few seem to know what race is and is not” (p. 193). Lopez suggests that a common wisdom in society about race operates in the legal system and is, in actuality, a common ignorance. Lopez acknowledges that a vast number of judges and scholars in law schools have adopted this common way of racial-knowing. Lopez characterizes this practice as a code of racialized manners that acts to clarify and process meanings of race that operate in society.

The illiteracy of race that masks itself as public knowledge abounds in contemporary American society and is fueled in part by ancestral mythologies of race. According to Feagin and Vera (1995) “racialized myths are part of the mind-set that helps Whites interpret their experience and that influences behavior, alters emotions, and shapes what Whites see and do not see” (p. 12). Racialized issues in America have historically, universally, and erroneously been socially processed to be the problem of people of color. Among those in mainstream American society, the problems of race are perceived as non-White issues. According to Bowser and Hunt (1996) “at the start of the twentieth-century, Americans called racialized issues “the colored problem.” By the mid century, it had become “the Negro problem.” More recently, it has been labeled “the Black problem” (p. xiii). All are misnomers. Bowser and Hunt (1996) indict 20th

century race research scholars for intentionally skewing scientific inquiry towards people of color and away from Whites. The unilateral focus on the experiences of African Americans and other people of color to the exclusion of Whites was consistent with mainstream interpretations of race as a problem of the racialized others. Subsequently this approach functioned to codify societal perceptions of race as a problem of people of color. Bowser and Hunt explain the rationale that supported this approach to race research: (1) mainstream students of race rationalized that racism was caused by White ignorance and could be fixed by a sense of knowledge and understanding of Blacks; (2) rather than interrogate this theory, social science scholars followed and endorsed the theory by exploring the problems in society created by race; and (3) appraisal of this research approach provided a manageable explanation of race and never warranted interrogation of itself.

Racism in Contemporary American Society

Traditional race theory faced serious challenges during the decade of the 1970s and was gradually replaced by a social systems theory of race relations (Bowser & Hunt, 1996). Saenger (1965) and Weston (1972) are credited as among the first scholars to explicitly contest the absence of Whites in race research and the potential ill effects. Among the first studies published that addressed the paucity of Whiteness in race research included For Whites Only (Terry, 1970) which interrogated the meaning of Whiteness and correlated racism to White identity, and Portraits of White Racism (Wellman, 1977), which examined the interconnectedness of White attitudes toward race and White identity. This new wave of theory about the race problem was premised upon the concept of racism.

Jones (1972) formally conceptualized racism in the early 1970s as a complex psychosocial system that operates at the individual, institutional, and cultural level. Jones characterized the individual racist as one who:

Considers that Black people (or people of color) as a group are inferior to Whites because of physical (genotypical and phenotypical) traits. . . that these physical traits are determinants of (inferior) social behavior and moral or intellectual qualities, and ultimately presumes that this inferiority is a legitimate basis for inferior social treatment of Black people (or people of color) in American society. (p. 118)

Jones described institutional racism as “established laws, customs, and practices which systematically reflect and produce racialized inequalities in American society. . . whether or not the individuals maintaining those practices have racist intentions” (p. 131). Jones described cultural racism as:

The belief in the inferiority of the implements, handicrafts, agriculture, economics, music, art, religious beliefs, traditions, language, and story of African (Hispanic, Asian, and Indian) peoples . . . [that] Black (and other non-White) Americans have no distinctive implements, handicrafts, agriculture, economics, music, art, religious beliefs, traditions, language or story apart from those of mainstream White America. (p. 148)

According to Terry (1996), White racism is a relatively recent phrase that is infrequently used in public discussions of racism. The term is perceived as culturally offensive to Whites. More socially tolerable references to racism include diversity, or diversity training, or environmental justice. However, in spite of the nuances around White racism and racism, scholarly references and literature denoting White racism appear generous (Bowser & Hunt, 1996; Feagin & Vera, 1995; Kovel, 1970). Feagin and Vera (1995) describe White racism as “the socially organized set of attitudes, ideas, and practices that deny African Americans and other people of color the dignity, opportunities, freedoms, and rewards that this nation offers White Americans” (p. 7). They refute allegations of the existence of Black racism, suggesting instead that what is

often thought to be Black racism is in effect Black responses to White racism. According to Feagin and Vera (1995),

We conceptualize racism in structural and institutional as well as individual terms. Racism is more than a matter of individual prejudice and scattered episodes of discrimination. There is no Black racism because there is no centuries-old system of racialized subordination and discrimination designed by African Americans to exclude White Americans from full participation in the rights, privileges, and benefits of this society. Black or other minority racism would require not only a widely accepted racist ideology directed at Whites but also the power to systematically exclude Whites from opportunities and rewards in major economic, cultural, and political institutions. (p. ix)

Racism is no longer believed to be a serious problem for America (One America in the 21st Century, 1998). According to Feagin and Vera (1995), “the substantial White consensus on the decline of racism is not based on empirical evidence. On the contrary, research shows that Black men and women still face extensive racialized discrimination in all arenas of daily life” (p. 4). The findings of the Presidential Commission on Race in America revealed that “most Whites believe that much of the problem of racialized intolerance in this country has been solved” (One America in the 21st Century, 1998, p. 46). According to Omi and Winant (1994) America’s “transition from a racialized dictatorship to a racialized democracy has been a slow, painful, and contentious one; it remains far from complete” (p. 66). Race and racism remain pervasive and profoundly misunderstood concepts in American society (Bowser & Hunt, 1996; Kailin, 1999; Lopez, 1995; Omi & Winant, 1994).

Whiteness/White Privilege in Higher Education

An understanding of white privilege begins with an understanding of the broader construct of Whiteness. Most definitions of Whiteness and white privilege situate the two terms as interlocking concepts that share attributes and characteristics. Whiteness is

largely seen as the broader concept that sustains white privilege (Harris, 1995; McIntosh, 2001). Explanations of Whiteness invariably tend to include descriptions of white privilege.

Overview of Whiteness

The concept of Whiteness is based on White supremacy and results in white privilege (Harris, 1995; Wildman, 1996). According to Bernardi (1996) Whiteness is a discourse of description and explanation of race in the United States. He notes that its discourse pertains to “the persistence of racialized hierarchies that, in the United States, have systematically privileged those who count as White--generally European Americans--at the expense of those who do not count as White--generally non-European Americans” (p. 104). Bernardi’s definition of Whiteness incorporates white privilege as complicit in the system of Whiteness, and it suggests key descriptive elements of racialized domination, power, and racialized privilege.

Frankenberg (1993, p. 1) addresses the origin of the term Whiteness, “if race shapes White women’s lives, the cumulative name that I have given to that shape is “whiteness.” In her broader explanation, she explicitly merges both Whiteness and privilege: “Whiteness is a location of structural advantage, of race privilege a standpoint, a place from which Whites look at ourselves, at others, and at society [it] refers to a set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed” (p. 1). Frankenberg’s characterization of Whiteness, like Bernardi’s, similarly identifies descriptive elements of racialized privilege and power, but adds the notion of othering and invisibility.

McIntosh, (2001, p. 83), who focuses more on the concept of white privilege, defines it as “unearned power conferred systematically.” Here the system of Whiteness is understood as the grantor of the power. The system of whiteness is owned by people who count as White. Though unnamed in McIntosh’s description, Whiteness and white privilege are conceptually interlocking. McIntosh’s discussion of white privilege also

invokes invisibility, a principle characteristic of Whiteness suggested in the Frankenberg (1993) characterization.

Overview of White Privilege

According to Wildman (1996), white privilege has no existence apart from Whiteness. White privilege is theoretically located within the context of Whiteness (Frankenberg, 1993; Giroux, 1999; Harris, 1995; Lopez, 1995). According to McIntosh (2001), white privilege is the conferred dominance of Whiteness. It is a skin color based, unearned advantage. McIntosh finds white privilege to be like “an invisible, weightless knapsack of special provisions, assurances, tools, maps, guides, codebooks, passports, visas, clothes, compass, emergency gear, and blank checks” (p. 77). The phenomenon of white privilege is made particularly difficult by its attributes of invisibility and weightlessness. It is the normalcy of white privilege that makes it easy to bear and unnoticeable. The more normal or ordinary privilege is made to appear, the more invisible and entrenched it becomes. Societal structures aid white privilege in accruing ordinariness to itself that not only makes it difficult to see but hard to believe that it exists. In this regard, invisibility and weightlessness contribute to white privilege as also unacknowledged and denied (McIntosh, 2001).

According to Keating (1995, p. 904), “the most commonly mentioned attribute” of Whiteness seems to be its pervasive non-presence, its invisibility. The invisibility factor of Whiteness/white privilege is critical because the inability of Whites to see privilege seriously compromises efforts to successfully end race privilege, which requires that Whites first see it as a problem of themselves (Bowser & Hunt, 1996).

Based on findings of One America in the 21st Century (1998), racialized attitudes among Americans are virtually split between Blacks and Whites. Most Whites continue to believe that the dismantling of racialized discriminatory practices during the 1960s transformed the terrain of American society into a place of equal opportunity for Blacks and Whites. In spite of these perceptions, Black people continue to face race-based

oppression that today results from white privilege (Hacker, 1992). As Whites continue to unnoticeably benefit from the privilege of White racialness, non-Whites suffer material oppression from white privilege. As an example, *One America in the 21st Century* (1998, p. 46) cites instances of white privilege that demonstrate this point. The report states that automobiles are negotiated at lower costs for Whites than minority or persons of color; public service for minorities and people of color is much less prompt and sometimes denied; and minorities and people of color are routinely followed around by security guards and detectives in department stores while Whites are ignored.

The attitude of Whites that “much of the problem of racialized intolerance in this country has been solved and that further investigation is unwarranted and inappropriate” (*One America in the 21st Century*, 1998, p. 46) is a source of racialized tension for Blacks who perceive this attitude as oppressive (McIntosh, 2001). According to Hacker (1992, p. 55) most conservatives deny responsibility for race related issues and tensions, and “don’t really care whether Black Americans are happy or unhappy.” White privilege is generally noted in the literature as invisible, unacknowledged, and denied by Whites. Hacker takes exception. He suggests that Whites tacitly acknowledge that there is social value to White skin based on their systematic refusal to exchange their Whiteness for Blackness, even with the richest Black American. He suggests that Whites do indeed understand that there is a value imputed to White skin in society. Hacker notes that to admit a value exists would also be to confess to injury of people of color by white privilege. Thus, they deny its existence.

Whiteness Studies in Higher Education

Whiteness studies is an expression of the existence of the phenomenon of Whiteness. Conceptually, Whiteness studies is an emerging strain within critical race theory. Critical race theory began with the work of Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman as a racialized justice movement. Critical race theory emerged in the mid 1970s out of the discontent of legal scholars with racialized reform measures advanced by mainstream

civil rights law (Delgado, 1995). During the early 1990s, taking exception to the longstanding academic practice on race research, a cadre of cross disciplinary academicians and scholars of literature, film, history, sociology, and anthropology including bell hooks, Toni Morrison, David Roediger, Andrew hack, Noel Ignatiev, Ruth Frankenberg, and others corporately rejected the assertion of race as the problem of the racialized minority. Their ideological position, which stressed the systemic social, political, and cultural privilege of Whites, produced the genre loosely labeled White Studies or Whiteness Studies (Rodriguez & Villaverde, 2000).

Scholars and academics who study Whiteness approach the topic from perspectives that distinctly address the future of Whiteness. There are currently three major projects in the academy dedicated to addressing Whiteness (Rodriguez & Villaverde, 2000). The first perspective is an examination of the historical and social formation of Whiteness. In this perspective, Whiteness is interrogated to understand its meanings and to probe questions of Whites identity development. Scholars seek to understand about the effects of the variability of Whiteness as a racialized category on identity development in Whites. Interrogating Whiteness to make it visible is a perspective embraced by authors such as Toni Morrison, bell hooks, and Peggy McIntosh.

The abolition of Whiteness is the second project and is viewed as the most radical of the three approaches to Whiteness. This perspective seeks to move the examination of Whiteness to an ultimate place of disintegration where no one is White. Noel Ignatiev and John Garvey (1996) are the chief advocates of this approach. Advocated through their journal, Race Traitor, the authors emphasize the domination and oppression of Whiteness as the rationale for destruction of the White race. The movement to abolish Whiteness emerged as a shift from the hovering interpretive gaze of interrogation, which is the prevailing academic attitude towards Whiteness.

Henry Giroux (1999) champions the third perspective, which is a rearticulation of Whiteness. This perspective opposes the premise of the abolition of Whiteness on what appears to be a humanitarian basis. The rearticulation addresses a certain hopelessness that would be imposed by the abolitionist perspective. A rearticulation would instead provide hope as Whites would be given an opportunity to engage their own Whiteness to undermine the domination and oppression of Whiteness and thereby reframe their identity. While these two projects appear to diverge, I would argue that they are not diametrically opposed. The abolitionists call for those who pass as White to challenge the system. The notion here is that the system of Whiteness would literally cave in on itself if enough turmoil were imposed from inside the system by those who pose as white. In some ways, the re-articulation of Whiteness makes the same request in proposing that Whites utilize the power accorded them by Whiteness not to undo but to redo Whiteness. I think the basic difference is in the outcome of the two perspectives. White as a racial category would survive under the re-articulation movement but would not survive in the abolition project.

While there are many who would argue against the abolition of the category of Whiteness (Rodriguez & Villaverde, 2000), I agree with Ignatiev and Garvey (1996). I think abolishing the category of White to achieve a socially and politically congruent American society is appropriate, reasonable, and just. To expect to undo what has been done by four hundred years of history, which is the tacit assumption underlying two of the projects, is both naive and disingenuous and raises the question of commitment and whose interests are being served. I think it is extremely ambitious to think that the humanitarian component embedded in a rearticulation of Whiteness, in which Whites would voluntarily lay aside their privilege and power would really work. I believe that a reconstruction of Whiteness in which Whites would have an opportunity to design a more viable venue to project their Whiteness would take several lifetimes to produce. I also feel that the project of interrogation is highly likely to collapse under its own weight,

which is what happens when only dialogue is the singular, guiding principle. I feel it is unreasonable to ask those situated on the other side of the oppressions of Whiteness to entertain such ideas. Underlying both of these perspectives seems to be an investment not in humanity but in Whiteness (Lipsitz, 1998). One way to think about abolishing Whiteness would be to look at the three projects sequentially as a whole and not as three separate options. I think dialogue can clarify our understandings and lead us to more civil ways of behaving towards each other. But we must continue to move towards an ultimate racialized goal of doing away with Whiteness, relying on the successes achieved in and through interrogation and rearticulation approaches. While this may appear simplistic, I assert this notion only in the potential it presents to contribute substantively to the eradication of Whiteness as a racialized category.

Conceptualizations of Whiteness and White Privilege

A principle goal of academics and scholars is to unveil and expose the silent veneer that empowers and sustains Whiteness and white privilege (Giroux, 1999; hooks, 1992; Lopez, 1995; McIntosh, 2001; Morrison, 1992; Wildman, 1996). Most scholars agree that the problems of race are intricately tied to the silence of white privilege. In this section, I will review theoretical and empirical studies relevant to understanding how Whiteness and white privilege have been conceptualized in the literature. The selected studies were situated largely in higher education settings with primarily adult populations.

Based upon the premise that Black and White racialized identities are inherently oppositional to each other, Nayak (1997) characterized Whiteness as an “activity” to which Blacks respond (p. 58). According to Nayak, Whiteness contains privileges and a dimension to which dominance and assumptions are ingrained. Her analysis of Whiteness further indicated that Whiteness imposes its assumptions upon “Others” and acts to compel “Others” to respond. Naka’s study revealed that Whiteness extends beyond skin color, as it can be “practiced by people of Black parentage where a socially

recognizable White identity is immediately available within the family” (p. 71). What is striking here is that while being White is static, by virtue of one’s birth, acting White is an achievable activity based upon choice. Nayak’s study found that Whiteness functions differently for Whites than it does for Blacks. She notes that Whiteness as an “elusive, transparent norm for Whites. . . is vividly identified” by Blacks (p. 74).

Barnett (2000) characterizes Whiteness as co-existing with dominance (p. 2). According to Barnett, Whiteness “represents a political and relational activity disguised as an essential quality of humanity that is fully accessible only by a few” (p. 5). Barnett describes Whiteness as appearing “distanced, neutral, non-raced, objective” and suggests that Whiteness “is ultimately an issue of power” (p. 6). He argues that Whiteness operates as a discursive power and uses its authority to define itself as “ordinary” (p. 11). Barnett found Whiteness to be “an invisible yet powerful entity that absents itself by highlighting others” (p. 18).

Jackson (1999) examined the meanings of Whiteness as articulated by White students enrolled at predominately Black colleges and universities. White students in that study “presumed Whiteness . . . to be synonymous with American culture” while others were “unsure of how to define it” (p. 9). The Whites respondents understood Whiteness not as a racialized identity, rather as “an identification referent” (p. 9). They indicated that Whiteness was “the center from which all societal norms must come [and] . . . to which all non Whites must idealize their identities to mirror” (p. 11). Jackson described Whiteness as “a universal insider” because of its “ability to transcend social boundaries and be accepted as an insider” (p. 12).

Keating (1995) reported similar to Jackson (1999), that her students “had no idea what this Whiteness entailed” (p. 904). Whiteness is multi-dimensional. Its formulations are more and less visible to Whites. The Whites respondents in Jackson’s study (1999) were at a loss to explain Whiteness, yet they were fully conscious of their dominant, majority social status. This indicates that the privilege, power, and dominance ingrained

in Whiteness (Nayak, 1997) translate as choice. I think students of Keating (1995) and Jackson (1999) were exercising the choice afforded them by their Whiteness to be conscious of selective levels of Whiteness. Keating (1995) further described Whiteness as a “pseudo-universal category that hides its specific values, epistemology and other attributes under the guise of a non racialized supposedly colorless human nature” (p. 904). Keating (1995) and Barnett (2000) understood Whiteness as having an artificial quality. This understanding is significant because it contradicts notions of the immutability of Whiteness. Keating further characterized Whiteness as having a “pervasive non-presence” and an “unmarked superiority” (p. 904). According to Keating, Whiteness advances itself as an “unacknowledged standard or norm against which all so called “minorities” are measured (p. 905). Keating’s definitions align Whiteness with “negative qualities” (p. 908) and suggests that overall, Whiteness is a set of feigned assumptions. An interesting observation is Keating’s argument about the “shift from Whiteness to White” (p. 905). She admonishes that “Whiteness” does not uncritically apply to all “White” people. Rather, she suggests the relationship between Whiteness and White is a “conditional” one. Nayak (1997) supports Keating’s (1995) argument, as Whiteness was observed in the Nayak (1997) study as an activity that could be “assimilated into and practiced as an identity” by people of “Black parentage” (p. 71).

Bradford, Krizek, Martin, and Nakayama (1996) conducted a study to understand preferences and meanings of identity labels for Whites. Identity labels included “White,” “Caucasian,” “White American,” and “European American” (p. 9). Empirical data from their study showed Whites respondents preferred “White” over other labels. Bradford et. al (1996) described Whiteness as “nearly unmappable. . . elusive resistant” (p. 14). The implication of the choice of “White” as an identity label by White respondents was interpreted by Bradford et. al as a preference among Whites to be “non regional, non specific” but “universal” (p. 12). Bradford et. al suggest that the power and dominance

of Whiteness confers choice or preference upon Whites, according them “the choice to be ethnic or non ethnic” (p. 12). Choice is a benefit of Whiteness and a manifestation of white privilege. The power, dominance, and ubiquitous nature of Whiteness conflate to authenticate the choice accorded to Whites.

Swim and Miller (1999) investigated the strength of feelings, relationships, and consequences of White guilt. An interesting finding of this study was that “feelings of White guilt result from recognition of white privilege and discrimination and leads to support for affirmative action ” (p. 19). According to Miller and Swim, guilt and shame differ in the object of the bad feelings. That is, shame is present when the object of the bad feelings is oneself while guilt is present when the object is specific behaviors. The authors also suggest that shame is more prone to defensive reactions while guilt is susceptible to corrective action.

Maher and Tetreault (1997) frame their discussion of Whiteness in terms of its assumptions. The suggestion is that Whiteness, apart from its assumptions, is somehow less sinister than the confluence of Whiteness and its assumptions. According to Maher and Tetreault, the “assumptions of Whiteness operate as an unacknowledged social location . . . and at the same time as active ideology” (p. 338). Their characterization presents Whiteness as much more than a unitary construct, which as only a unitary construct, may be found offensive to some Whites. They further describe Whiteness as an “assumed normative condition of life rather than a privileged position within networks of power” (p. 326), and as a “social construction organizing people into social relations of dominance and oppression.” It is precisely the normative status of Whiteness that masks its privilege and makes it virtually impossible for those in possession of it to detect.

Gallagher (1994) addresses Whiteness research from the vantage of a young White, university population. His findings problematize conventional Whiteness wisdom and interject intensity to Whiteness scholarship and pedagogy. Gallagher argues that a

“contemporary process of White reconstruction is taking place for a sizeable part of the White population, particularly among young people . . . because Whiteness is in crisis” (p. 168). Gallagher’s findings among young Whites suggest that universally accepted characterizations of Whiteness as invisible and the standard no longer prevail. He suggests that racialized identity politics have forced Whites to think about the meanings of White. Whiteness is “. . . mutating, in response to challenges from racially defined minorities” (p. 174). Gallagher warns that “a fundamental transformation” of how young Whites define and understand themselves racially is ongoing. These students have “. . . generally embraced the belief that the U.S. class system is fair and equitable” (p. 182). Gallagher suggests that if the “illusion” of Whiteness as “ordinary . . . can be maintained . . . a White identity and White culture modeled on a Disney American theme park . . . will allow Whites to reinvent a cultural history . . . synonymous with egalitarianism, rugged individualism, and democracy” (p. 184). Gallagher’s study suggests a dire need for corrective courses and approaches. The responses of Gallagher’s respondents are indicative of what Miller and Swim (1999) addressed as White shame: “I don’t feel responsible for my father’s sins. . . I’m sick of. . (p. 179), I don’t know why they have to keep bringing it up . . . keep causing stuff” (p. 176). I think the desired outcome of interrogating Whiteness is White guilt, which was shown to lead to corrective action (Miller & Swim, 1999).

Interrogation of Whiteness and White Privilege

The interrogation of Whiteness was pervasive throughout the literature. Interrogation is the most widely embraced project of Whiteness. Scholars and academics now understand that the power of Whiteness is sustained by the silence it attaches to itself. Interrogation functions as a conduit through which Whiteness and white privilege might be exposed and dis-empowered. In this section, I will now look specifically at how the authors address the concept of interrogation of Whiteness and white privilege.

According to Nayak (1997), the Black experience is a daily response to the activity of Whiteness and that Black students and teachers possess socially acquired expertise to deconstruct Whiteness (p. 75). She suggests that “progress towards destabilizing the norm can be made if White students and teachers are encouraged to view Whiteness as sustained through actions, rather than as a static location of power and privilege” (p. 76). Nayak asserts that “new techniques for challenging the normative presence of the category “White” can be advanced by “exploring” Black responses to Whiteness (p. 58). More specifically, Nayak characterizes and recommends that approaches challenging Whiteness reflect “inquiry” consistent with “. . . anti-oppressive practice advocated by feminist methodologies” (p. 58).

Barnett’s work (2000) extends the work of Stockton (1995) in which the White ground is identified as the operating environment of dominance, whether it be the classroom or a rhetorical interpretation of text. Barnett views interrogation as a task incumbent upon academics:

better. . . would be a concerted effort on the part of academics to consider the Whites ground from which English studies too often emerge and the way this ground is used to nullify threats to White dominance. Only through such work, will we be able to achieve the laudable goal of celebrating difference in all its forms. (p. 17)

Interrogation is a disturbance of Whiteness. According to Bradford, Krizek, Martin, and Nakayama (1996), the pervasive inattention to White identity accounts largely for the “historical power that privileges Whites in the U.S.” (p. 2). The investigation undertaken in their study cites as its intent “to make explicit the mostly implicit meanings that Whiteness has for Whites” (p. 3). The authors note that we can know Whiteness “by examining how individuals label themselves and how they want to be labeled by others” (p. 6). However, they say that because of the social privilege accorded Whites “labels and interpretations of labels do not emerge in naturally

occurring conversations, and do not function in the same way as they do for marginalized groups” (p. 6). The authors embrace interrogation in their research intent:

We are, in effect, forcing the issue and assume that examining the preferences and meanings for self- and other-labels is a first step in unmasking and naming what it means to be White in the United States today. (p. 6)

Jackson (1999) calls for interrogation but warns that it invites “defensive discourse and retaliatory feedback.” He admonishes, however, that “the racialized climate in America does not facilitate a simple reading of White space” (p. 16). Keating (1995) acknowledges the legitimacy of interrogation by denouncing any dismissals of interrogation as “the latest scholarly fad” (p. 902), but like Jackson (1999) issues caveats. One of the potential problems of interrogation is the inherent difficulty for students “not to blur distinctions between . . . literary representations of Whiteness and real life people classified as White” (Keating, 1995, p. 908). Another issue, as was mentioned earlier, was the potential for interrogation to over emphasize Whiteness to the extent that efforts to deconstruct race instead reconstruct race.

Gallagher (1994) addresses the issue of interrogation with intensity. It is his position that Whiteness “must be addressed” because of the impact of the politics of race upon the belief system of young Whites. Gallagher’s rationale for this urgency is the likelihood for the reconstruction of a grossly distorted White cultural history premised upon the belief that America is an egalitarian society.

Interrogation of Whiteness by White people is both a teaching and a personal learning experience. The notion of interrogating Whiteness has dual meanings for Whites. That is, Whites are encumbered with not only challenging exterior Whiteness structures, but they must also confront their own Whiteness. Maher and Tetreault (1997) “missed . . .the invitation” (p. 322) to self interrogate while Keating (1995) “had never considered including an analysis of “White” in her explorations of literary texts (p. 903).

White privilege unconsciously undergirds the attitudes of White students about racial privilege. In her study on white privilege, Banning (2000) found numerous seemingly neutral and normal actions that White students used to ignore race, without ever detecting the presence of white privilege. Some of these include: denying the existence of any reason to focus on race; distancing racism from oneself by turning the topic from race to class or gender; and ratcheting up the discussion of race to abstract theoretical inquiry. To see privilege as one benefits from it is clearly a psychosocial struggle faced by Whites: “the pressure to avoid it is great” (McIntosh, 2001, p. 81). Those who have, however, reached what Frankenberg (1993) refers to as race cognizance, find themselves, as well, mentally encumbered. Recognizing privilege means that Whites must “give up the myth of meritocracy” (McIntosh, 2001, p. 81). They must contend with the notion that how one fares in life has skin color based consequences. Recognizing privilege also raises emotional issues related to White self esteem, that is, contending with the idea that one’s perceived goodness has, in actuality been mediated by the social value of White skin (McIntosh, 2001; Rodriguez & Villaverde, 2000). Finally, recognizing white privilege and working against it may mean being labeled a race traitor (Ignatiev & Garvey, 1996). In the past, Whites who were sympathetic to struggles of African Americans were internalized in the White imagination as lovers of Black people. Today, their acts are perceived as treason and they are subject to be cast as race traitors. Many Whites struggle with the fear and promise of racialized group alienation for their stance on white privilege.

Whiteness/White Privilege Studies in Adult Education

When we talk about race, we are invariably talking about Whiteness (Bernardi, 1996; Omi & Winant, 1994). Whiteness is the broader racialized construct under which white privilege is situated. The interdependency of these concepts demonstrates the systematicity with which the concepts exist and operate. While all of these concepts are interspersed in this proposal, white privilege is the primary focus. In this section, I will

review literature produced in the field of adult education practice that deals with white privilege specifically and with issues of race in general because it contextualizes my study.

Barlas (1997) conducted a qualitative case study to investigate the process of transformation of consciousness about white privilege. According to Barlas, the proliferation of racism is due in part to a general ignorance about white privilege. She theorizes that learning processes that awaken and broaden White consciousness to its entrenched White worldview can impact rampant racism. Implementing these learning processes will challenge racist practices at the individual and institutional levels. Barlas' paper reports on the experiences of 13 White participants who were part of a six month research project designed to transform their consciousness about white privilege using a process called Synergic Inquiry. According to Barlas, synergic inquiry works to probe the underlying assumptions and logic that establish and influence how we perceive the world.

Barlas' study found that the synergic inquiry process did bring about changes in the meaning perspectives and the consciousness of the White participants by enabling them to scrutinize their deep-seated assumptions over the course of the study. An important finding of the study was that White consciousness actually operated at an unconscious level. That is, the entrenched normativity of being White carries with it no stimulus or incentive for self imposed interrogation. Thus, to be White is to be unconscious rather than conscious of one's identity. The study's significance is in its contribution of a transformative pedagogical approach to dealing with differences among groups. The author concludes by noting the necessity for additional discourse on processes and knowledge that foster transformation and ultimately social change in educational institutions.

Barlas, Kasal, Kyle, MacLeod, Paxton, Rosenwasser, and Sartor (2000) describe a self-directed process of cooperative inquiry among people of European descent. Their

study focuses on a specific challenge to white privilege. In the study, four groups of volunteers met at various times over the course of a year to address the topic “the meaning and impact of White supremacist consciousness in my life” (p. 26). Barlas et. al define cooperative inquiry as a research method of systematic self-inquiry for groups that has recently been identified as a structure useful in liberatory adult education. They interviewed a cohort of participants to understand their experience of change as reported by the participants and to understand the role of the inquiry process in facilitating those changes.

The authors found that the various levels of consciousness of the participants about White supremacy that they possessed going into the study changed in significant ways. Some of the changes in participants included a new attentiveness to societal prejudices driven by a newly acquired compassion; an acquired ability to identify oppression in ones’ self as well as in others; and a greater appreciation of the destructive nature of the dominance of Whiteness. The changes in consciousness of the participants led to changes in the behavior of the participants at their places of work. Some of the behavioral changes included a self initiated broadening of the social circles of participants to include people of color; an emphatic intolerance to observed racist practices in the workplace; a deliberate seeking out of people of color for opportunities in the workplace that would have otherwise been inattentive to racialized disparity; confidently and effectively talking about race; and self initiated development of diversity workshops and activities at their respective work sites.

An important finding about the process of cooperative inquiry was the emergence of themes of vulnerability and trust. Vulnerability and trust permeated group participants’ descriptions of cooperative inquiry. According to the authors of the study, shame and distrust must be dealt with in the context of dealing with race or white privilege. They noted that if a safe environment can be developed, Whites will yield to their own vulnerabilities and to the vulnerabilities of others. They further stated that in a

safe environment Whites can learn to challenge entrenched habits of mind. The study concludes with a recommendation for adult educators to engage this practice and its strategies.

Shore (1997) wanted to understand the relationship between learning theories in adult education and the whole adult learner. That is, how the race, class, and gender experiences of adult learners fit into a generic adult paradigm. In her paper, she challenges the apparent mismatch in practice and policies in adult community education in Australia that portray their services as amenable to adult learners with special needs. She states that “the discourse of multiculturalism with its features of tolerance and diversity . . . is a discourse which pluralizes the notion of identity but leaves in place the unified concept of self and the binary framing of self/other ” (p. 414). Shore questions the lack of opposition to the “ideal embodied in the White (male) western canon” that preserves and perpetuates the “mythical Whites norm” (p. 415) in adult community education. The intent of her paper is to “foreground” the presence of Whiteness in the processes that produce the adult learner and adult education pedagogy. In the paper, Shore identifies and addresses one of five categories in Australian adult education literature espoused as representative of the services of community adult education: “the range of social and cultural groups identified in government policy as the target for special programs in adult community education” (p. 415). According to Shore (1997), the design of this category works to normalize Whiteness in adult education practice through the covert process of “othering.” She claims that groups that have been targeted for inclusion in ACE because of their social and cultural disadvantaged status are by their presence in ACE counted worthy based upon their location outside the mythical norm of Whiteness. She argues that the visible “Other” carries with it a tacit assumption of deficiency in “the trappings of White (male) knowledge” (p. 415). Shore clarifies that her main concern is “with the silenced discourses of Whiteness and the degree to which these discourses frame what is and is not legitimate adult education” (p. 416). Shore

raises several “complex and contentious” issues in adult education literature for investigation, calling for a foregrounding of Whiteness, gender, poverty, and the racialized experiences of the adult education subject (p. 416).

Shore (2000) investigated post colonial and Whiteness theory to develop an alternative approach to analyzing inquiry processes used over the last 10 years in community adult education in Australia. Shore’s intent was to highlight the correlations between the direction of Whiteness studies and imperialist and colonialist theory with the social justice components embedded in Australian adult education policy and literature. In her paper, Shore (2000) challenges the invisibility of Whiteness as a discourse in Australian community education. She says:

Whiteness is indeed a set of visible discursive practices that have material effects. Furthermore, these discourses are enmeshed in the cultural practices and beliefs of a particular form of White, heterosexual civility that informs the masculine consciousness pervading many public institutions in Australia. (p. 424)

Shore states the purpose of her paper is to “acknowledge this tension, demand even, in some adult education sites to provide scripts for practice” (p. 424). In the paper, Shore focuses on Whiteness and policymaking. What she found was that the privileging of the values and beliefs of the Committee of Australia’s Adult Community Education (ACE) were unseen by the Committee, and the internal structures of the processes used by the Committee were unacknowledged and unchallenged by the Committee. Shore suggests that claims of democracy embedded in the ACE educational system in Australia are compromised by pervasive practices that do not acknowledge or interrogate Whiteness.

According to Colin and Preciphs (1991), preparation for an impending “multicultural society and world” will require adult educators to expand their comprehension of the role racism plays in adult education practice. They argue that racism’s influence adversely spans the entire learning environment. They charge that a

socio cultural racism exists today predicated on remnant assumptions and implications of Social Darwinism, the eugenics movements, and Teutonic origins theory” (p. 61). These racist assumptions and implications function to guide and shape adult educators’ beliefs, attitudes, and values, which in turn are reflected in the teacher-learner exchange. Colin and Preciphs describe racism as the subordination of people of color by White attitudes, actions, and social structures. They state that skin color and other physical features continue to function as a marker for the subordination of non-White groups. Further, they state that racism is pervasive and embedded in American society and its institutions, is a creation of White Americans, and is perpetuated by White Americans.

They suggest that skin color accords both power and privilege in society and in the classroom, noting empirical research affirming that color “determines the quality and quantity of interaction between educational practitioners who are members of the dominant racialized group and learners from non-White racialized groups” (p. 62). They state that the adult education literature and research have been remiss in addressing the destructive patterns of racism and the need for concern among adult educators. They contend that consequently, the racist malaise in the literature and research has left many adult educators clueless about the cyclical nature in which White racism is reflected in and reinforced by the literature and research.

Perceptual patterns are characterized as “consistent views of the world based on mental images formulated from the standard and ideals of the individual’s social reference group” (p. 63). They note that negative perceptions harbored by practitioners about non-White adult learners produce assumptions based on a White norm. From that point, the behavior of the practitioner in a teacher/learner exchange is a direct result of the influence of perceptual patterns. Colin and Preciphs (1991) assert that adult education is ethnocentric by design and reflects and reinforces negative perceptions of non-White adult learners. They say the teacher/learner interaction is fundamental to an effective learning climate and is measurable by the intensity of the interactions that

occur. They conclude with five classroom-based recommendations for responding to the distorted perceptual patterns of adult practitioners: (1) acknowledging racism (2) commitment to address racism in the learning environment (3) exchange of information about other cultures and histories (4) utilization of the affective domain of learning (5) assessment of learning experiences.

Johnson-Bailey and Cervero (1998) conducted a qualitative study to understand the ways power relations in the teaching/learning environment are played out in the classroom. They compared two self-taught courses in a university environment. Data were collected using observations and interviews. According to Johnson-Bailey and Cervero (1998), adult education classrooms do not represent the real world in their disregard to societal power structures that follow adult learners into the classroom. The authors embrace theory that adult learners' experiences are impacted by their culture and should be taken into account in the context of their learning in the classroom. In their study, Johnson-Bailey and Cervero conducted interviews of each other's students using an interview guide that indirectly focused on issues of power. Seven students were interviewed. Their transcripts were masked and each professor read about their own classes. Following that reading, the two professors interviewed each for a second time. Themes of mastery, voice, authority and positionality organized the study. What they found was that power dynamics were present in both classes and was fundamental to student learning. An important finding was that the positionality of the professors strongly affected the process of the dynamics in the classrooms. Positionality addresses the ways the social status of the subjects intersect and interact. Positionality includes such factors as gender, race, age, sexual orientation, and religion. Mastery addresses student learning and was reported to have been affected by the positionality of the professors. Authority was central to power holders. In the study, power was characterized as having been "seized, negotiated and forfeited" (p. 396). Data analysis revealed also that Whiteness had a significant influence on the development and

actualization of classroom dynamics. An important implication of the study was that the environment of the adult education classroom as egalitarian and neutral as indicated in the literature is untrue. The classroom instead reflected and reinforced the social hierarchies in mainstream society. The authors concluded that the facilitation model is a mismatch in the adult education classroom as this model is unable to account for the plethora of dynamics that occur.

There are a very limited number of studies in adult education that deal specifically with white privilege among adult learners in higher education; however, more research is needed to understand the manifestations of white privilege among adult learners in the particular setting of higher education classrooms. The next chapter details a proposal to conduct research that will add to this literature.

CHAPTER 3

THE RESEARCH DESIGN

The purpose of this research study was to understand how adult learners experience white privilege in the higher education classroom. There were two research questions that guided this study: (1) how does the social position of adult learners affect their experience of white privilege in the higher education classroom; and (2) what are the manifestations of white privilege in the higher education classroom.

Qualitative research is a systematic description of facts and characteristics of a particular area of interest (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). I chose a qualitative methodology for the study because the methods and approaches of qualitative research allowed me to accomplish the major goals of my study. I was interested in understanding the perspective of the adult learner relative to how white privilege operates in the classroom.

The qualitative research paradigm lends itself to the perspective of the participant and to methods for gaining an “emic” or participant perspective (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). I wanted to be able to study white privilege in context. The context was critical to understanding the process of how the phenomenon unfurls in the classroom. Qualitative research methods endorse the natural setting. The natural setting advantaged me in gathering sources of data directly from the participants in that setting and from the setting itself.

In the study, I was seeking thick, rich descriptions from participants. As the primary instrument of analysis, I was involved with interpretation, expression, and intent. The nature of my study emphasized a concern with process rather than simply with

outcomes or numbers. The qualitative approach allowed for descriptive rather than numerical representations of facts and other details of the study. It also permitted me to use multiple means of collecting data. In this way, I was situated to get at “meaning,” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Silverman, 1999) and present the perspectives and experiences of participants bolstered by their actual words (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; McCracken, 1988; Patton, 1980). By using multiple data collection strategies, I was able to acquire differing perspectives and viewpoints. Moreover, by designating me, the researcher as key instrument, the qualitative approach granted me the freedom to vary the ways in which I interacted with my data.

Finally, the qualitative approach emphasizes inductive analysis of data. The purpose of my study was not based on a theory guiding the results. I was purposed with a desire to understand about the process of white privilege in the classroom. To access that process, I needed to be able to determine from the data itself the portrait being painted by the data. The intent of the study was not to verify or refute a preconceived theory but to provide a description of the phenomenon under study. The qualitative paradigm afforded me with research methods that allowed me to study my research topic. There were five features of qualitative research identified by Bogdan and Biklen (1992, p. 29) that undergirded this study: (1) qualitative research has the natural setting as the direct source of data and the researcher is the key instrument, (2) qualitative research is descriptive, (3) qualitative researchers are concerned with process rather than simply with outcomes or products, (4) qualitative researchers tend to analyze their data inductively, and (5) “meaning” is of essential concern to the qualitative approach.

The goal of qualitative research is to illuminate our understanding of human behavior and experience (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). I used the qualitative case study and the bounded case study in particular. The case study was characterized by Merriam (1998) as “an intensive description and analysis of a phenomenon or social unit such as an individual, group, institution, or community”(p. 108). In my study, I examined two

classrooms. These classrooms represented the “case.” In the case study approach, the researcher examines multiple variables within a single unit while focusing on a single phenomenon. The phenomenon of focus was white privilege. The points of interest were the people in the class, the interactions between the people, and the structures within the classroom. These components were situated within the classroom. The arrangement of these components in the classroom setting enabled me to uncover the “interplay of significant factors that are characteristic of the phenomenon” (p. 108). The interplay or exchange that occurred in this environment among these identified components was naturally occurring. That is, the operation of this classroom environment is indigenous to the phenomenon of white privilege. Thus, this setting as the site of observation of this phenomenon revealed significant knowledge about the process in which white privilege is played out.

The bounded case study exists as a single unit around which there are boundaries (Merriam, 1998). These boundaries exist to limit what exactly will be studied. Bounding the case study focuses the observations and defines what is relevant. The two classrooms in my study were bounded and or defined by the following: (1) the setting of the higher education education classroom.; (2) the adult learners in the classrooms, i.e., professors and adult learners; (3) the generated documents used to deliver the instruction in the classes; (4) the classroom structures or systems that operated in the classroom; and (5) researcher generated documents about the University’s on-going race litigation.

Merriam (1998) also notes that the case study design is particularly “suited to situations in which it is impossible to separate the phenomenon’s variable from their context” (p. 29). I was interested in the process of white privilege. I was looking to understand how the setting of the classroom lends itself to the operation of white privilege. To accomplish that, I set up guidelines. The guidelines delineated those factors that were significant and those that were not.

Finally, white privilege is a recently embraced interdisciplinary genre in the academy. It is only within the last decade that explanations and descriptions of white privilege have begun to emerge. Thus, the phenomenon remains conceptually vague. Choosing the case study approach to examine this topic is appropriate. Merriam suggests that this methodology is particularly well suited for “exploring an area of a field of practice not well researched or conceptualized” (p. 112).

The Sample

I used purposeful sampling for my study. According to Bogdan and Biklen, (1992, p. 71) “the method of sampling in analytic induction is purposeful sampling.” In this form of sampling, the researcher chooses specific subjects for the study because the subjects are believed to be potentially capable of significantly contributing to the researcher’s study. According to Goetz and LeCompte (1984), purposeful sampling is criterion-based. The researcher determines, then satisfies, the established criteria essential to the study.

Because of the sensitivity and unfamiliarity of this topic, gaining entry into the classroom was determined by the suitability of the professor. Professor selection was based upon the following criteria: (1) an expressed or demonstrated understanding of issues of race and/or white privilege, (2) a propensity to accommodate a study of this sensitivity in their classroom, and (3) a scheduled on-campus higher education course during the spring 2002 session.

I identified two classrooms for the study. Both of the instructors were recommended to me by other Angle faculty. These instructors were considered for participation because they had met the selection criteria. I met and talked with both of the professors on campus. I informed them that my study foregrounded race privilege among adult learners in a higher education setting and that I would be, for the most part, a non-participant observer in their classrooms. They granted tentative permission, then full permission to observe their classrooms. Both instructors informed their classes that a

doctoral student would be coming into the classroom. Each instructor elicited feedback or concerns from members of their classes. None of the adult learners in either classrooms indicated to the instructors that my presence would be problematic for them. In an effort to maintain confidentiality of the professors and integrity of the study during the prospectus part of the study, I identified them only by race and gender: one as African American and one as White.

Gaining entry into the classroom also required an explanation of the research to the classes selected for the study. The researcher's description of the study was critical to gaining the cooperation of the subjects. According to Bogdan and Biklen, (1992) "it is a good idea to emphasize that you are a student and seek their sympathetic cooperation." (p. 82). They also advise that the researcher's explanation be carefully drafted to avoid being perceived as disruptive to the class, too patronizing, or too honest about the actual topic. Thus, given a brief opportunity by each instructor to introduce my research to their classes, I told the students that I wanted to observe their class as part of my dissertation study, and that I was looking at group dynamics among adult learners in the classroom. I added that the study foregrounded race privilege. I told them that I would be a non-participant observer, and that I was looking for volunteers among them to participate in the interview part of my study. I also told the class that as the principal researcher of the study, I offered no incentives, but I could guarantee confidentiality. I also told them that they would be contributing to the knowledge base of adult education. Also, during my first class visit, the adult learners in the class were invited to or voice their concern about the study.

I chose to pitch the broader nature of the study, "group dynamics among adult learners in the classroom," rather than isolating "white privilege" as the focus of the study because the study contained critical other factors that were vital to understanding the process of white privilege. I did not want to compromise the integrity of the study and risk a mis-perception among the White adult learners, in particular, that I was

somehow “looking to catch people being racist in the classroom.” My presentation to the classes was influenced by the five general areas of participant inquiry identified by Bogdan and Biklen (1992). They assert that potential research subjects generally question: (1) the nature of the researcher’s behavior in the class; (2) the extent of disruption to the class by the researcher’s presence; (3) the intended use of the findings of the study; (4) the selection process of subjects for the study; and (5) the benefits for participants in the study.

Selection of the Classrooms

There were two classrooms and two different instructors involved in the study. The instructor of the first classroom in the study was an African American male who chose the pseudonym Doc. Doc expressed an interest in my study after our first meeting, which was held on campus in October 2001. At that meeting, I provided him with a general overview of the purpose of the study and the research questions guiding the study. I met with Doc on two other occasions to obtain a copy of his syllabus and to work out the details of my presentation to the class regarding my presence and research purpose in the class. I also interacted over email with Doc concerning other class-related information.

Securing a second classroom was problematic. Over a period of three months during the fall 2001 semester, I interacted with three White instructors individually and then a fourth before securing a second classroom. The instructor of the second classroom who agreed to participate in the student was a White male who chose the pseudonym Jean. The first three instructors that I talked to about my study each expressed an initial interest in participating the study. All three were tenured professors at the university. One was a female and two of the three professors were department heads. Based upon telephone conversations, meetings, and emails exchanges with these initial three instructors, I perceived each time that each one was leaning toward granting me access into their classroom. However, after a time, when I followed up on initial contacts, each

of them carefully explained and delineated why they could not grant the access I requested.

At the beginning of the spring semester 2002, I contacted the fourth Angle instructor, Jean. Jean had been referred to me by Angle faculty. As I had done with the others, I emailed Jean and scheduled a meeting to discuss my research topic and purpose. Like all of the other instructors, Jean expressed an interest in my research topic. However unlike the other instructors, Jean granted me access into his classroom. During our first meeting, he stated that he did not foresee any problems with my coming into the classroom. In fact, he reinforced my presence in his online syllabus with a notation that read, “an opportunity” in which he encouraged members of the class to take part in the study. Jean became the second instructor involved in the study.

Selection of Participants in the Study

The criteria for participation in the study were racial status and age. The major racialized population targeted for the study was White. White students were targeted as the primary population because as a group, they benefit from white privilege. Research shows that white privilege is a social phenomenon that tends to operate without being noticed, particularly among those whom it benefits (McIntosh, 2001; Wildman, 1996). It was anticipated in the design of this research project that the White students in the study would likely not see white privilege. The societal advantages that accrue to Whites are often misperceived by Whites as merit based when in fact it is race-based (Wildman, 1996). African Americans were targeted secondarily in the study because as a group, they are generally able to discern the operation of white privilege among Whites (hooks, 1992; Nayak, 1997). Research shows that the advantages of white privilege, such as access to material resources, social terrain, and power are unavailable on the same scale to members of other racialized groups. Particularly among African Americans, as well as other people of color, white privilege is more readily discerned (McIntosh, 2001; Nayak, 1997; Wildman, 1996). The participation of other students from racialized groups who

were neither White nor African American was anticipated for their potential to point out white privilege outside the Black-White racial paradigm. Overall, the different racialized groups of White, Black, and Other were solicited to ensure a balanced perspective toward white privilege. Because white privilege is generally visible to members of racial groups positioned on the other side of it (Nayak, 1997) the race of the population of adult learners for this study included African Americans, one Latino adult, and one North African adult.

The targeted age of the participants for the study was 25 and older. Adults are generally distinguished in the context of age 25 or higher (Merriam & Brockett, 1997). The ages of the adult learners and the two instructors in the study ranged from 25 to 56. One student whom I interviewed revealed during the interview that she was 22 years old. I continued the interview but chose to exclude the transcript from data analysis because of the age of the student. Over half of the adult learners (57 per cent) were the ages of between 25 and 30. All of the adult learners in the study were currently enrolled in a higher education program at the institution. These adult learners were in a position to provide rich examples of the phenomenon of study in its natural setting. There were two classrooms observed in the study. In the first classroom, the participants in the study consisted of eight adult learners and their instructor for a total of nine. In the first classroom, the instructor was an African American male. Of the eight adult learners in the first classroom, there were two White females, two African American females, one Hispanic female, one African American male, and two White males. The African American male was not enrolled in this class but was affiliated with this classroom as a resource to this classroom. The second classroom consisted of four adult learners and their instructor for a total of five. The instructor of the second classroom was a White male. In the second classroom, two of the females were African American, one female was White, and one female was of North African descent. The instructors in the first and second classroom had earned doctorates. The racial breakdown of all participants in the

study included six White, six African American, and two participants who were neither White nor African American; they were born outside the United States. The majority of the participants or 64.2 percent were born in the Southern part of the United States. Ten of the participants were born in Georgia, Alabama, South Carolina, or North Carolina. White and African American racialized groups each comprised 42 percent of the total of the adult learner participants. Of the twelve adult learners in the study from both classrooms excluding the instructors, nine were female or 64.2 percent. Of the twelve adult learners in the study from both classrooms excluding the instructors, 35.7 percent consisted of male participants. There were only two African American males in the study, one was the instructor in the first classroom and the other was the adult learner who was affiliated with the first classroom. Among the adult learners, specifically, seven were pursuing the master's degree. Two adult learners were pursuing the specialist degree, and three were pursuing the doctorate degree.

The interviews ranged from one to one and one half-hours long. The majority of the interviews were conducted on campus, in a face-to-face setting. The interviews were conducted in private rooms in two different academic buildings on campus. We met either in a conference room, a classroom, or a large office area. The interviews were each attended by only the participant and me. However, one fifth of one student's interview was conducted in her car. After her interview in one of the main academic buildings had ended, she asked if she could add comments to her interview. I agreed. As she drove, I held the tape recorder within range of her speaking. Also the entire interview with one of the instructors was conducted in his truck. I met with two of the participants at their work locations.

I initiated contact with and extended invitations to the majority of the participants in the study based on their race and age. The two instructors in the study also suggested names and contact information of adult learners enrolled in their classes for possible participation in the study. I approached some adult learners in person, while I contacted

others by email. In addition to the one White female who participated in the study who was enrolled in Jean's class, four other White adult learners from that same class were also invited to participate in the study. One of the four was a White male student who did agree to be interviewed but then canceled the interview in person. He told me that he could not stay for the interview but would consider doing the interview on the following Monday. I made several attempts by email to contact him to confirm another time to interview. He never responded. On two occasions, I contacted two other White males in Jean's class by email to invite their participation in the interviews. I never got a response back from them. One of them however did tell me early on that he would participate if we could work out the scheduling of the interview. He came to class directly from his high school teaching job. I was unable to follow up with him to work out a schedule. I spoke with another White female in Jean's class who was also a school teacher. She agreed to be interviewed. However, she had to cancel our scheduled appointment because of a school commitment. We were unable to work through rescheduling her interview.

Case Descriptions

There were two cases involved in the study. These cases bounded by the fact that they were higher education classrooms that fit the criteria of this study. These cases will be described according to the topic and of the classrooms, setting the racial breakdown of the adult learners and the professors in the class, and the physical makeup of the classroom.

Doc's class.

Doc was the African American instructor in the study. Doc taught a psychological theory class. The course was taught during the spring semester of 2002. The course met once a week for 10 weeks, beginning at 4:30 and ending at 7:15 pm. I observed 9 out of ten sessions at 150 minutes each. Classes were taught on campus on the third floor of in one of the main academic buildings on campus. There were 25 adult

learners enrolled in the class. There was one Hispanic female, one African female, four White males, eight African American females, and eleven White females.

The classroom appeared to be approximately 20 feet by 20 feet. This was an interior, windowless classroom. The room was air-conditioned. It was equipped with standard fluorescent ceiling light panels. There were approximately 30 chairs around the room. Most of the chairs matched except for three of them. Most were made of a hard dark plastic with arms. They had a padded back and padded seat. There was a stack of about 15 chairs out of the way in the front of the room in a corner. The classroom was organized most nights around approximately eight long desk tables that were assembled in an L shape. Doc usually sat at the front of the table arrangement which allowed him to face the door. The table arrangement allowed all of the students to face each other. Routinely, the adult learners would begin to file into the classroom shortly after 4:15 p.m. The adult learners were very chatty. They would enter in groups of two's or three's fully engaged in conversation or short bursts of laughter. Sometimes two or three of them would talk standing around another student who was seated. There was vigorous and stable interaction between the adult learners of color and the White adult learners and between the males and the females in the class. Doc would generally lecture for the first hour. The adult learners usually took a break from five to fifteen minutes. Most of the adult learners brought food items with them; others bought food items from the vending machine. After the break the adult learners would assemble together in their groups. The culminating activity of the class was a major group activity that the adult learners would have to present before the class. The groups were self-formed. Doc gave the class a one-hour lab to work on their group activity. Most evenings, the adult learners would take the same seating arrangements around the table. Even when they sat in different locations around the table, they tended to sit with the same group of people. There was a computer projector attached to the ceiling of the room and a computer set up in the corner at the front of the room. Doc used PowerPoint slides to deliver his lectures. The lights were

usually turned down and not off. Many of the adult learners took notes during class from the slides and the lectures. Doc usually lectured while standing behind a wooden lectern adjacent to the screen.

Doc generally entered the classroom after the adult learners had assembled and had begun to visit with each other. He usually greeted the entire class with “okay, let’s get started.” His voice was not harsh, but it was a deep male voice. The quiet in the room that followed his greeting was deafening. In the first couple of sessions, Doc spoke earnestly to the adult learners about the kind of atmosphere he wanted in the classroom. He told them on one occasion, “I want everyone to have a good semester. If there are any issues, we need to talk about them. You can’t expect people to change what they don’t know about.” Doc also stressed the importance of recognizing people. He would often say, “there are no extra people in here.” He said to them, “people need to be affirmed. When you work in your groups, you need to affirm the presence of people and you need to affirm their absence. When they come back to the group you need to let them know that they were missed. That is important.” Doc also displayed a lighter side. Every now and then he would giggle with the adult learner in his class. Sometimes from the grease board as he wrote on it or from a chair around the table, or even in circulating around the room, he would make humorous comments to which they often laughed. On one occasion, he told the adult learners,

I am easily distracted. Now while I don’t mind your eating in class, please do so quietly. I’m distracted by noises and sounds. So for those of you who will be eating raw cabbage and carrots and things like that, please do so quietly.

Jean’s class.

Jean taught a course on learning theories. The class was a 15-week course that met once a week from 4:40 p.m. to 7:15 p.m. Jean taught the class as a distance learning class using two-way interactive technology. GSAMS is an acronym for Georgia Statewide Academic and Medical System. GSAMS is two-way interactive audio-video

technology used throughout the University System of Georgia to support academic instruction and tele-medicine throughout Georgia. GSAMS is the world's largest and most comprehensive distance learning and health care networks. Using advanced telecommunications, people in up to 16 different sites or locations can see and speak with each other regardless of geographic distance. Jean had two sites. The local site was at the University and the remote site was about two hours away in another county. Jean rotated teaching the class each week between the main campus and the other county. The local site on the main campus, was a traditional classroom on the basement floor in one of the main academic buildings. The technology classroom was equipped with two television monitors in the front and two in the back of the room. The color TV monitors were approximately 30 inches wide. The two monitors in the front of the room were free standing. The two in the back of the room were each strapped onto black metal TV carts with wheels. There was an electric projector screen located on the front wall of the classroom. Approximately six long, desk tables were arranged in the middle of the room. There were approximately 20 cushioned arm chairs on rollers in the room. Ceiling microphones hung from the ceiling in the center of the room. There was also a hand held microphone. The instructor usually held the microphone as he circulated around the room, or he would hand it to adult learners in the class who made comments. The room was equipped with traditional florescent ceiling panel lighting. There was a computer monitor, keyboard, and other computer peripheral on a steel desk that sat on a platform in the front of the room. A White female student who was not a part of the class, sat behind the desk and operated the equipment. There was also a fax machine on a table near the desktop computer. Along one side of the classroom was a row of windows that opened to a courtyard and play area outside. Along another wall, two coat racks stood adjacent to the two entry doors to the classroom. There was also a table beside the wall. This table was used for food items that were brought into the classroom and for displaying other instructional classroom resource materials used in the classroom. There were four White

males, two African American females, and four White female adult learners at the on-campus site.

The remote site was also a traditional classroom setting. The classroom was equipped with the same technology found in the classroom on campus. The remote site was an interior classroom with no windows. The room was always brightly lit by fluorescent panel ceiling lights. There were two entry doors to the classroom. Students used both doors. Long desk tables were usually arranged by the instructor and adult learners to form a broad “U” shape. There were approximately 25 chairs in the room. There were six White males, seven White females, and one North African female in the class. This was a 15 week class that met once a week for two and one half hours. I conducted a total of 20 observation hours or eight sessions at 150 minutes each.

Description of Participants

Carly is a 36-year-old White female born in Evanston, Illinois. Carly is married and has 3 children. She has a B.S. degree and is currently pursuing a master’s degree. Carl is a full time middle school teacher. Carly’s father is deceased. Her mother has an associate degree.

Jason is a 29-year-old White male born in Alabama. He is single and has no children. Jason has a B.S. degree in biology from Indiana University. For a while, he attended the University of Alabama in Birmingham studying genetics. Currently Jason is working on a master’s degree. Jason’s sister is completing a masters, and his brother is finishing a Ph.D. Jason’s father has a Ph.D., and is a retired associate dean of engineering at a large university. His mother is a retired lab researcher and technician. She has a B.S. degree in chemistry.

Shaka is a 29-year-old African American male born in Alabama. Shaka is single and has no children. He currently holds a master’s degree in biology from a large southern university. Shaka was enrolled in the medical school of a major southern

university. Currently, Shaka is a third year Ph.D. student. Shaka's father has an associate degree, and is a former military air traffic controller. Shaka's mother is a retired registered nurse. She was the associate chief nurse of psychiatry at a major government hospital.

Michael is a 27-year-old White male born in Georgia. Michael is single and has no children. Currently Michael is pursuing a master's degree. His mother is an elementary school teacher. His father is retired from IBM. Michael's father has a masters from Notre Dame University, and his mother has a masters from Indiana University. Michael's older sister is a teacher. Michael grew up in a mostly White upper middle class neighborhood. He went to a private high school. There were only two Black people in his graduating class.

Laurel is a 30-year-old White female born in Georgia. Laurel is married and expecting her first child. Laurel has been teaching English for the last 7 years in a predominantly non-White middle school. Laurel has a master's degree and is currently pursuing a specialist degree. She will be leaving the classroom to become a school counselor. Laurel's father was an English teacher, a principal, a school administrator and is now a superintendent. Her mother is an English teacher, her husband is an English teacher, and one of her brothers is training to be an English teacher.

Kim is a 38-year-old White female born in rural Georgia. Kim is a former high school English teacher. She is a divorced mother of three children. Kim has a bachelor's degree and is currently pursuing a master's degree. Kim is the oldest of three girls and is the person in her family to graduate from college. She grew up in a single parent home. She was 11 years old when her father was killed in an automobile accident. Both of Kim's younger sisters also have bachelor's degrees. Kim's mother finished high school and took a couple of classes at a community college.

Ivonne is a 25-year-old Hispanic female. Ivonne is bilingual. She is single and has no children. Ivonne attended a major southern university for a couple of years to

pursue medicine. She is currently pursuing a master's degree. Ivonne is the first in her family to go to college and to graduate. Ivonne was born in Mexico. Both of her parents live in the United States. Her mother finished high school. Her father did not. Ivonne has one sister who is in college. Her mother works for a pharmaceutical company and her father works in construction.

Christi is a 30-year-old student of color pursuing a Ph.D. Christi was born in Tunisia, North Africa. She speaks six languages. Christi is married and has no children. Both of her parents are retired. Her father is a poet and a journalist and her mother is a nurse. Christi has two brothers who are students at the University of Tunisia.

Rebecca is a 28-year-old African American female born in South Carolina. Rebecca is pursuing the Ph.D. She is single and has no children. Rebecca is a former elementary school teacher. Her father is retired from the military. She has a mother, an older sister who is a director at the department of health, and she has a younger brother who is working on his specialist certification.

Sylvia is a 45-year-old African American female born in Georgia. Sylvia is pursuing a masters degree. She has bachelors degree in nursing and is a registered nurse. Sylvia has worked as an operating room nurse and supervisor for more than 20 years. She currently administers a teaching program for operating room nurses. Sylvia is a widowed mother of two children. Sylvia has one brother who is a practicing physician. Sylvia's mother is a middle school language arts teacher, and her father was a teacher and is currently a school principal.

Karen is a 25 year-old African American female born in South Carolina and raised in Virginia. She is an out of state full-time student. Karen is single and has no children. Karen has a bachelor's degree in English. Currently she is pursuing a master's degree. Karen is the youngest in a family of two brothers. Her mother has Ph.D. in English. Her father has a Ph.D. in business. Karen grew up in an upper middle class neighborhood. She has had only two Black professors in her undergraduate education.

Marcy is an African American female. She agreed to participate in the interview but was not comfortable disclosing her age. Marcy was born in South Carolina and raised in New York. Marcy disclosed that she is an only child, and that she is happily married. She has no children. She has a master's degree and is currently pursuing a specialist degree. Marcy is a full-time student. Marcy previously worked with a major department of the Federal government.

Doc is a 42-year-old African American male born in North Carolina. He has one younger brother. Doc's mother died when he was six years old. His mother and father were divorced. Doc has an Ed.S. and a Ph.D. from the University of Virginia. He is married and has no children. Doc has been at the university for three years. He is an assistant professor on tenure track.

Jean is a 56-year-old White male born in Missouri. Jean is married and has two children. Both of his parents are deceased. Jean has a masters degree from the University of Utah and a Ph.D. from the University of Missouri-Columbia. Jean is a tenured, full professor and a member of the graduate faculty. He has been at University since 1990.

Data Collection

My application was approved by the Human Subjects Office to begin collecting data beginning the spring semester, January 2002 and concluding in June 2002. The university is a predominately White, research university located in the southern United States. The IRB and consent form that I used to conduct my pilot study on race privilege during the summer of 2001 was resubmitted to the Human Subjects Office. Because this study for the dissertation was the same as the pilot study, the Human Subjects Office considered a new application based upon the previously approved pilot study and granted me an expedited approval for the current study.

Prior to participating in my study, participants indicated their understanding of and agreement to the conditions of my study via their signatures to a consent form (see Appendix A). Aside from providing a brief explanation of the study, the consent form highlighted, among other things, participant expectations and researcher intentions. I stipulated on the consent form the purpose of the study, a guarantee of participant's confidentiality, participant risks, benefits, and rights. Participants were also asked to self-select a pseudonym for the study. I used a semi-structured interview guide. Interview questions from my pilot study were re-worked and used for this study (Appendix B). The interviews lasted from one to one and one half-hours.

According to Merriam (1998), the “researcher gathers data . . . that are related to the phenomenon being studied in order to systematically reach conclusions” (p. 144). My study centered on the experience, the perpetuation, and the activity of white privilege in the classroom setting. As a researcher, I am interested not only in the experiences of race privilege of the adult learner but also in the process of how race privilege is reinforced and played out in the classroom. I believe the most appropriate data collection techniques for this study are interviews, observations, and data analysis.

Interviewing

The invisibility issues of white privilege coupled with the passion of the legacy of race and skin color in the United States makes race privilege a sensitive and unpopular research topic. According to Merriam (1998), the interview is especially useful “in gathering data when the topic to be explored is complex and emotionally loaded” (p. 152). I used the interview format to understand how adult learners' social position impacts their experience of race privilege in the classroom.

Interviews have two major formats: structured and unstructured. The semi-structured interview is the most common and is lodged between the structured and unstructured interview. Because my study tried to probe the meaning of race privilege from the perspective of the adult learner based upon their positionality, it was important

for me to collect that data actively. Actively collecting data allowed the participants and me semantic flexibility to expound, re-cast, and ultimately say what we mean. In that regard, the semi-structured interview was the most appropriate technique for collecting data on my first research question: how does the social position of adult learners affect their experience of race privilege in the classroom. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1992), semi-structured interview questions ask specific information of the subjects. The interview questions were open-ended. Closed questions that entail a yes/no response were avoided. The questions were constructed and ordered ahead of time. However, some of the questions were re-worded and asked out of order during the interviews. Participants were asked to talk at length about a particular topic, such as their interactions with the instructor or their place in the classroom. As the interviewer, I asked new questions that evolved from participant responses (Merriam, 2000). I conducted semi-structured interviews with the instructors and with the adult learners. There were a total of 15 student and instructor interviews conducted; however, only 14 analyzed. I learned well into one of the interviews that the participant was only 22 years old. I continued with the interview but conducted no analysis of it. Because I wanted to analyze the data set using Labov's evaluation model (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996), I intentionally designed the questions to elicit stories. The interview guide that I used to conduct interviews in my pilot study was revisited to determine the re-usability of those questions for student interviews in this study. A slightly modified interview guide for faculty was developed (Appendix A). I used a tape recorder with a counter to collect interview data. I used a transcription machine to transcribe interview data. I transcribed all but four of the interviews. I contracted the transcription of four of the interviews to a very reliable and competent transcriptionist.

Observations

To understand the procedure of race privilege in the classroom, I conducted observations. I was an unobtrusive participant observer. As an unobtrusive observer, I

did not participate in classroom discussions although I did receive handouts distributed by the instructors. I generally came in and sat quietly in the same or a different corner of the room. I did not regularly maintain conversations with the instructors nor the adult learners although I did talk to the instructors and the adult learners in the classroom at different times. I chose to be a non-participant observer because I did not want to offer comments to discussions in the classrooms. I knew that any comments I would make, particularly around classroom discussions of race would be colored by the literature I had reviewed and I did not want to inadvertently inform the behavior or disposition of those adult learners I was observing. I believed that a non-participant observer status for myself would maintain the integrity of the study by not allowing me to possibly alter the thinking and ultimately the behaviors of the adult learners in the classroom. Merriam (2000) describes unobtrusive observation as “those techniques of observation not inducing response or reaction from participants. Unobtrusive observations techniques assess behavior or behavior patterns without the knowledge or awareness of those who are being observed” (p. 159).

Data gathered by observation enabled me to identify the behaviors, activities, and practices in the classroom that play out as race privilege. A major concern with classroom observation in qualitative research is recognizing what to note on the record (Boostrom, 1994). To maximize the observation technique in my study, I used structured observations. According to Merriam (1998), “only after the events to be observed have been described precisely can the observation technique be a useful tool for gathering data” (p. 155). Different from casual observations, structured observations identify “the relationship of independent variables to a dependent variable” (155). The independent variables reveal the “events to be observed.” The observation then proceeds as “a description of the method in behavioral terms” (p. 155). I identified three areas to examine in my observations: (1) people: adult learners and professors (i.e., voice, body language, gender, gestures, emotional displays, race), (2) classroom structures (i.e.,

physical makeup, arrangement, and character of classroom, discourse used in class, group activities, course-related extra activities), and (3) classroom dynamics (i.e., student-teacher interactions, student-student casual interactions, student-student group-work interactions, underlying dynamics operating in the classroom). Identifying these areas and their component parts helped me focus on what I should concentrate during my observation sessions of the two classes. The structured observation was the most appropriate technique for collecting data on my second research question: what are the manifestations of white privilege in the classroom. Interview data also provided manifestations of white privilege that operated in the classroom.

Fieldnotes

Two material aspects of field notes guided my classroom observations. Fieldnotes are the “written account of what the researcher hears, sees, experiences, and thinks in the course of collecting and reflecting on the data in a qualitative study” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 107). Because accuracy and objectivity are principal goals of the qualitative researcher in the field, taking descriptive fieldnotes means that the researcher’s observations should be written in the form of detail versus summary or evaluation (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Therefore, what I wrote as a result of what I saw (i.e., the words, phrases, expressions) was descriptive of what I saw. It was not an assessment of what I saw. It was not an analysis or summary of what I saw. In reflective fieldnotes, “the emphasis is on speculation, feelings, problems, ideas, hunches, impressions, and prejudices” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 121). Representative of the personal side of fieldwork, reflective fieldnotes allow the researcher to talk out loud about her own perceptions of what is or is not happening. Because fieldnotes are taken around or during the time of the observations, they can function as a cumulative organizer of the researcher’s intuitions throughout the study. Reflective fieldnotes are indicated by the use of parentheses and the characters “O.C.” [observer comments] and may be scattered throughout a set of fieldnotes. I took fieldnotes that stressed both

precise description and reflection to help me gradually manage my data. I wrote the fieldnotes in longhand in the field then typed them as soon as possible.

I used memos, a form of fieldnotes. Memos are the expansive researcher notes attached to the end of a set of fieldnotes. Reflective fieldnotes and memos usually include researcher reflections on analysis, method, ethical dilemmas and conflicts, researcher frame of mind, and points of clarification. Descriptive and reflective fieldnotes, as well as memos are helpful to the researcher particularly during the data analysis process when the researcher attempts to manage the data. I used all of these variations of fieldnotes in this study.

Documents

To understand the manifestations and the process of white privilege in the classroom, I collected documents. I looked at course syllabi, handouts, textbooks, and other written and otherwise tangible materials used in the delivery of the course. Also, I examined online news articles relevant to the ongoing diversity litigation of the university in the federal courts. I also examined online statistics specific to the university student, faculty, and staff demographics. I examined all of these data in the context of theory based characterizations and conjecture of white privilege as White racial domination of public space in order to get a composite sketch of how and what white privilege would look like in the classroom setting.

Data Analysis

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) define data analysis as “ the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, fieldnotes, and other materials that you accumulate to increase your own understanding of them and to enable you to present what you have discovered to others” (p. 153). Bogdan and Biklen, (1992), further advise that the researcher conduct analyses as the data are collected. I analyzed my data as I collected it in order to form a bond with it early on. I transcribed data from interviews and typed fieldnotes and memos as quickly as possible following the interviews and

observations. I formatted my transcripts with a three-inch right margin, triple spacing, line numbering, and a repeating subject and date heading to facilitate my analysis.

Throughout data collection, I reflected over the data to get a sense of the question, “what is going on with the data?” I responded to that question by actively marking up my raw data, that is, underlining or highlighting words or sections of data, jotting down questions or symbols or scribbling abbreviated ideas directly to one set of fieldnotes, transcripts, and archival data. A master set of all data was set aside. Marking up my data helped me establish patterns, themes, and categories and see outliers in the data. Whenever I interacted with my data, I tried to always be motivated by my research purpose and/or research questions. Aside from conducting multiple readings of the data, I developed data displays, such as charts and bold lines and boxes to help me look at the data differently.

To facilitate the first level of my analysis, I organized my data according to the data collection methods that I used. I sorted data gathered from (1) interviews and fieldnotes and/or memos, (2) observations and fieldnotes and/or memos (3) documents and fieldnotes and/or memos. I conducted data triangulation by applying the analysis methods selected over different data sets.

The semi-structured interviews gathered data that explained how the positions of adult learners impacted their experience of race privilege in the classroom. I analyzed interview data using Labov’s evaluation model. I identified salient units of story data from the data set based upon the responsiveness of that data to the research question and/or research purpose. I then coded that data and organized it using Labov’s evaluation model to see what emerged.

The structured observations, interviews and document analysis revealed the manifestations of white privilege. I analyzed observation data using a taxonomy analysis. I extracted salient data from each of the observed events (1) adult learners (2)

classroom structures (3) classroom dynamics using a form of a keyword analysis technique. These keywords were extracted from the data set based upon their relationship to literature-based characterizations of white privilege. The key words were a word, words, or phrases. I then coded those data to see what emerged.

Reliability

According to Guba and Lincoln (1981), reliability applies to the consistency of the findings of a research study. That is, reliability is concerned with whether the researcher's findings can or will be replicated (Merriam, 2000). Because human behavior is neither fixed nor unmoving, qualitative research findings will not repeatedly "yield the same results" (p. 102). In this way the concept of reliability in qualitative research differs from reliability as a concept in quantitative inquiry. In qualitative research, data collected by one researcher may yield different findings because of different theoretical constructs and interests that may have guided the study (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). In the quantitative paradigm, such a result would deem reliability as not reliable. The role of the qualitative researcher is to function as the primary instrument of analysis of the data. The process of analyzing data is one in which the researcher avails herself to analysis of the data. The researcher acts as a sieve to sift through data for the purpose of making sense of the data. Because individual researchers are equipped with diverse values, worldviews, and abilities, identical conclusions as evidence of reliability from the same data are highly unlikely (Merriam, 2000).

Moreover, in a quantitative paradigm, reliability would require the researcher to manipulate conditions of the study. In the qualitative paradigm, the object is not to conform to theory; rather, the researcher is concerned with the process of how something happens. Thus, reliability of outcomes of qualitative and quantitative research is dissimilar. Wolcott (1994) argues that the task of the qualitative researcher is to explain the inappropriateness of reliability for assessing fieldwork. Merriam (2000) notes the concern of qualitative research is "whether the results are consistent with the data

collected” (p. 102). She also suggests that researchers give careful attention to the documentation of the whole research process.

Reliability was a major goal of this study. I used three strategies to ensure consistency of outcomes with the data collected. First, I used the audit trail. The audit trail is a process that marks the researcher’s course of actions in the research process through accounts that provide detailed descriptions of all decisions and procedures used in data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Merriam, 2000). I relied on memos to chronicle or trail my actions and decisions during the collection and analysis process. I prefaced the various sections of my study with descriptions that informed the consumer about the rationale behind the courses of action that I take with my data. Triangulation was another strategy I used in the study. Triangulation involves the use of multiple investigations, multiple sources of data, or multiple methods to confirm the emerging findings (Silverman, 1999). I applied multiple methods of analysis across different data sets. In so doing I was able recognize when I had reached critical points in the analysis. This strategy helped me determine if it was time to close or if I should continue with my analysis. Finally, I used peer examination (Merriam, 2000). This is a technique in which the researcher involves peers and colleagues not specifically tied to the study to comment on emerging findings. I invited two of my peers in this process to help me debrief. They were two current doctoral students at the university. Both were White females. One was in a different department and had finished collecting data. Another was in my department and at virtually the same stage of the research process as I was. I asked them to proofread or listen to parts of my drafts of interpretations, methods, and meanings. I also engaged my peers as listening boards where I just talked out loud about what was going on. This procedure allowed me to go through the research process with an expanded vision of the study. These techniques to ensure reliability were rigorously followed in this study.

Validity

Merriam (2000) suggests that assurance of internal validity is a question of reality. The qualitative paradigm assumes reality to be an individual construction. As the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, I located the reality of the participant through observations and interviews. As researchers we can assure validity by engaging strategies that will get us “as close to reality as possible” (p. 102). External validity refers to the ability of a study’s findings to be generalized or applied to a wider population. In qualitative research, statistical generalizability is impossible. However, in a broader sense, Merriam (2000) suggests the qualitative working hypothesis, in which the researcher draws situation specific-assumptions from the study, that this working hypothesis is presented in the study and the consumer of the research is left to determine the applicability of the findings to other settings.

According to Merriam (2000) thick, rich description can be used to bolster findings and enhance generalizability. She notes that this strategy will allow consumers of the research sufficient information to generalize the study’s findings to outside settings. A chief goal of this study was to have the ability to generalize its findings to a wider population. Therefore, this study heavily included a profusion of precise descriptions and actual words of the participants. In this way, consumers of the research are provided with not only the interpretations of the researcher but the actual words and precise descriptive information relative to the participants in the study. Given this level of information, consumers of the research are equipped to generally apply the findings as broadly as they choose. Applicability of the study’s findings is structured as a decision for consumer and not the researcher. Merriam (2000) also suggests the use of multi-site research designs, which is the use of “several sites, cases, situations, especially those representing some variation, will allow the results to be applied to a greater range of other situations” (p. 103). The organization of this research design entailed a multi-site component. The use of two classrooms, two instructors and two sets of participants

provided additional validity for the study to be more broadly generalized to other settings.

Ethics

Based on literature dealing with race and White racial identity, and based on my own racial knowings, I made an assumption that I would likely be perceived as a cultural outsider to the White participants in this study. I realized that how I thought about and understood race was a factor of empirical and theoretical scholarship that espouses race as a social construction. I knew that my perceptions of the White participants in my study and the presumptions I possessed about them were shaped by the lens of my own life experience of being just on the other side of societal advantage, as well as theory and scholarship on race. Therefore, I thought it was important that I concern myself with the presumption I made about my White participants because the insider perspective is critical to qualitative research and one I needed to obtain (Bartunek & Louis, 1996; Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Merriam, 1998; Silverman, 1999). To gain access to the insider perspective of my participants, I chose to appropriate my disposition. Appropriating my disposition means that I consciously manipulated my demeanor, slightly. I believed adjusting my demeanor would affect the receptivity of my presence and purpose among the White participants, in particular. Again my concern was how I might gain their acceptance and ultimately, a measure of their confidence. I recognized that it was important for me not to convey the sense that I was the expert. Sometimes an intense familiarity with one's topic and with the literature predisposes the researcher to others as unapproachable and aloof. I wanted to be in touch with how I was being received by the participants as well as the other adult learners in the classes. Thus, I monitored my disposition to the extent that I assumed a needful persona during interviews and observations.

Needful was chosen because to me it conveys neutrality as opposed to judgmental, arrogance, and acumen. In a needful mode, I engaged in the following

practices while gathering observations and interview data. Sometimes, I would intentionally doodle on my note pad. I would often times look around the classroom and try not to focus on anyone in particular. Sometimes, I would fidget with my fingernails or twist the ends of my hair, or quietly chew bubble gum. At other times I would slide forward in my chair a stretching mode and extend my legs forward. I would often sit in a chair at the back of the room. The adult learners in the class would often work in small groups in different locations in the room, or they would sit as one large group around the assembled tables. These arrangements sometimes caused me to feel very conspicuous in the classrooms. In fact, my presence was very often all too obvious and frequently I felt the eyes and breath of the adult learners on me. In my view, these seemingly mindless, off-centered practices made me appear less attentive to what the adult learners were doing and subsequently less worthy of being watched by them. Additionally, I chose not to be as alert or astute during interviews because I was concerned with creating an environment that would make the participants in the study feel at ease. I did not want to foster in any way a competitive environment where the adult learners might perceive that I was coming across as judgmental, arrogant or erudite relative to their performance in class or their re-countings of their experiences of the higher education classroom.

In these practices, I do not feel that I compromised obtaining good data. Adjusting or appropriating one's disposition is commonplace among many people of color, and it represents an extension of the special knowledge of Whiteness that Black people use to manage the activity of Whiteness (hooks, 1992; Nyak, 1997). Kailin (1999) conducted a study of Midwestern middle school teachers to determine how they understood racism. A surprising finding of that study was that White teachers perceived Black and White students who displayed similar attributes very differently. For example, the study noted that White students who did not indicate a need for teacher help and who appeared self directed and independent were perceived by the teachers as "promising." However, when those same attributes were projected among Black students, the students

were perceived by the teachers as “threatening.” Kailin's findings offered empirical evidence about what was for me, just common racial knowledge. Kailin’s study, among others was instrumental in my decision to appropriate my disposition. These were some of the strategies I used to navigate through the research process. I announce these as ethically sound and literature based.

Researcher Subjectivity

In this study, there was no attempt or intent to catch a glimpse of racism. This study sought to uncover the process of white privilege. It is, however, important to document the history and character of racism in order to ferret it out as an entrenched part of society and apart from white privilege. Although there are salient parallels between racism and white privilege, to identify the process of white privilege is not to single out acts of racism. Racism like white privilege is pervasive in American history, society, and thought (Feagin & Vera, 1995; McIntosh, 2001). Thus, the assumption in this study that white privilege exists in the classroom is a valid one. However, a foreknowledge of the existence of white privilege in the classroom does not translate to a certainty of what it looks like. To know what white privilege looks like in the classroom was a goal of the study. As racism is basically misperceived and not fully understood in the public domain (Kailin, 1999; Omi & Winant, 1994), so white privilege is equally a misperceived concept (Wildman, 1996). Obviously to know what white privilege looks like will require that it be observed in action, in its natural environment. Looking for white privilege is necessary in order to develop strategies to counter it. To be observed performing white privilege is not to be caught being racist. I do not collapse white privilege into racism in this study because I believe they are different.

This study was organized around multiple components or variables, with race as a central variable. I believe an investigation of white privilege will inherently include social factors that extend beyond the race of participants. Looking at White race privilege will by default require a consideration of the obvious factors such as gender,

physicality, sexual orientation, and religion. I think adult learners are much more than racialized beings. They are who they are as a consequence of the intersection of multiple genetic and social variables. Moreover, I believe all of these variables will be present in the classroom and the study will consider variables other than race.

By my own non-White racialized status, I am familiar with the daily sting of societal marginalization based on race. In fact, many of the social struggles today experienced by non-White citizens of the U.S. are a consequence of our nation's racial past (One America in the 21st Century, 1998). Relegation to social disfavor has been by the nature of American society a generation predicament, particularly for African Americans and for people of color, as well. As an African American woman, I feel, for an entire racialized group of people, committed to making a meaningful contribution that will lead to the dismantling of White skin privilege as it exists today. I believe such a contribution is probable in part if I can emphasize the variable of race, even as I only consider other apparent social variables.

“White and all racialized others” prevails as a racially correct model for discussing issues of race today largely because of its design of inclusiveness. While there is value in considering all racially and otherwise oppressed groups in the discourse on race, extending the racial paradigm beyond Black and White effectively delays an emphatic disruption of white privilege. I find the tendency to look at all Whites othered groups as a kind of universal racialized minority to be extremely troublesome. I am disturbed by that approach because I feel it masquerades as moral when it really functions as intrinsic protection against the emergence of significant new insights of race and race privilege. Such an approach is overwhelming and unfair to those who have been trapped into grappling with the burden of race in the United States. I endorse the Black-White racial paradigm. I think emphasizing such a paradigm is justified and critical to illuminating our understanding of the history of race and skin color in the U.S. After all, the genesis of the concept of race in the United States began in the 16th century as Black

and White, and the fundamental design of race has remained stable over the centuries. The principal players in the United States race relations have been racialized White and Black people (Gotanda, 1995; Harris, 1995; Jordan, 1968; Myrdal, 1944; Omi & Winant, 1994; Tannenbaum, 1946). Beginning in the early 1600s until the mid 1800s in America, Whites imported and systematically enslaved Black Africans, not Asians or Latinos. During the mid 1800s, the War Between the States in America was a factor of maintaining a slave labor force driven not by the enslavement of gay men or lesbian women, but by the enslavement of Black people. Reconstruction was a period from 1866 to 1877 in American history in which Congressional acts were designed to mainstream not Appalachian whites, but former enslaved Black Africans into American Society. The most incredible period of race for Black people in the U.S. occurred between the mid 1960s and the 1980s. During this period a second reconstruction occurred. Once again, African Americans were targeted. However, they were now the targets of affirmed social actions, intentioned to integrate them equally and equitably into American society. However, like the first reconstruction period, the second one also came to an abrupt halt. The Reagan administration in the early 1980s declared that America had become an egalitarian society, no longer in need of governmental interventions to help Black people (Omi & Winant, 1994). What was so incredible about this period was the daft logic of this doctrine and the universal buy-in by both Black and White Americans. It was irrational and yet an incredible ploy to imagine that the period from the mid 1960s to the early 1980s, a period of less than 20 years, had completed America's reparations to the darker American. How could America become an egalitarian society in 18 years after having been a racial dictatorship for nearly 400 years? Incredible as it was, according to Omi and Winant, (1994) the consequence of domestic racial policy of the Reagan era was that Blacks were no longer perceived among mainstream Whites as entitled to social interventions. They were now perceived as receiving preferential treatment based on their race.

Historically race has been cast in Black and White. Societal binaries such as cultured and culturally deprived, privileged and underprivileged, urban and suburban, have and have nots, can be linked to America's Black-White racial history. Although racial categories have multiplied and shifted over the centuries, as a nation, we have only witnessed a magnification of who is White and who is not White. By and large, Black and White racialized groups have shaped and dominated our thinking of race in the U.S. I believe we can expose and amplify our knowledge about white privilege through the Black White racial paradigm (Feagin & Vera, 1995; *One America in the 21st Century*, 1998). Therefore, in this study, I do not arbitrarily lapse into the Black/White racial paradigm; I intentionally shift to it.

I acknowledged at the outset of the study that there were aspects of my worldview that were of concern to me in the research process. I identified the disposition of my racial emotions and my assigned racial status and my gender as aspects of my worldview that could potentially impact data collection.

I found it helpful to frame those features of my worldview in the context of personal subjectivities and to monitor them throughout this process (Peshkin, 1988). I found it advantageous to sort through and identify how I felt about issues of race and skin color. As I lined up my racial emotions, I found that I was still firmly committed to sifting through the layers and layers of lies and truth about race and skin color to get at a perspective that could contribute in a meaningful way to the eventual dissolution of white privilege. I also found it useful to tap into the reality of the impact of my racial status and gender on the research process. In so doing, I realized much.

First, I realized that I had come face to face with academic elitist resistance. I realized that my research was not normal but was important and needful. I came to terms with the fact that the nature and construction of my study was intimidating. I was an African American female in a predominantly White southern public university conducting a doctoral research study to understand a social phenomenon racially owned

by White people. The arrangement of my research project was an atypically arranged research project. The research norm generally follows a pattern of Whites studying non-White, or non-White studying non-White. I concluded that that there was likely a misperception among the White instructors that my observing for white privilege was the same as catching White people being racist. I came to see that race remains very unsettling to Whites in contemporary society. I understood in retrospect that the White instructors whom I approached early in the study, although they projected a racial consciousness, were nonetheless intimidated. One instructor included a statement in his syllabus that addressed White racial dominance of voice in the classroom. This behavior in part led me to believe that he might be interested in participating in the study. Another professor regularly taught a class on race, class, and gender. This behavior led me to believe that he might be willing to participate in the study. Another professor was a recognized advocate for change in racial disparities within education. I was influenced by this behavior to think that she would agree to be involved in the study. However, each of these three professors was very pleasant and took time to consider my request to observe their classrooms and interview their students and themselves. In the end, however, for various reasons, they were unable or unwilling to grant me access. The two White male instructors said no to my request remarkably in almost the same way. They each critiqued my research purpose, research questions, and the design of my study with White women in their respective departments. The White women were nationally acclaimed qualitative researchers. The counsel the White women provided the White instructors reinforced what the White instructors had pointed out as fundamental flaws in the study. The White instructors themselves state that they had consulted with these female colleagues. One instructor requested a copy of my prospectus. Another offered an alternative research design for my study. Although the White female instructor whom I contacted about availing her classroom for the study did not tell me that she discussed my study with any of her colleagues, she instead told me during a follow-up call that all

of the sessions of the class were just too sensitive and that her classroom was not available. I perceived that she was relieved that the nature of her class was just too sensitive to accommodate the study. By stark contrast, access to the first higher education classroom with the African American instructor was no problem at all.

In retrospect, it is clear now why the White professors who had been courted for participation in the study had been lost so quickly. These research casualties occurred in part as a consequence of this starkly uncommon research design. Contending with who I was, where I was, and I was contemplating doing, helped me to see the element of intimidation that my study posed for White professors. In retrospect, I came to terms with the fact that this research experience would be more disorienting for the White participants than it would be for me. Thus, I accepted the likelihood of my being perceived as a cultural outsider (Bartunek & Louis, 1996; Guinier, 1997).

Throughout this process of collecting observation data in the two classrooms, I often felt terribly isolated. This was true in part because I elected to be a non-participant observer in the process. In collecting interview data, however, I felt that my cultural outsidership had a very minimal impact on the data collection process. All of those who participated in the interview part of my study presented themselves to me as cordial and as genuine. In fact, one White male who had agreed to be interviewed showed up at the interview to tell me he had another appointment and could not keep our appointment. On another occasion a White woman shared with me in an email how complex her life schedule was. She had agreed to be interviewed but had to cancel when a work related activity preempted our previously scheduled interview. In spite of a host of other commitments, she agreed in her email to reconsider a later time to do the interview. It was my impression that the White participants in the study were in some ways more forthright with me than some of the adult learners of color. Data analysis revealed that several of the African American participants in the study concealed information. In responding to broadly posed interview questions, some of the African American

participants intentionally or inadvertently left out pertinent data about themselves or about their families. As an African American and as a researcher, I sensed during the interviews that it would not be wise to prod for the omitted data. I instead moved to another question and noted the omissions.

According to Bartunek and Louis (1996) “an approach to inquiry that embraces only one perspective is potentially ethnocentric” (p. 14). I believe my African American racialness and my female genderness, along with racially diverse study participants formed a blended cultural context. The blended cultural context, I believe, resulted in scientific inquiry that cannot be pegged neither fully Afrocentric nor Eurocentric.

Summary

This chapter included eight major sections: (1) research design; (2) the sample; (3) data collection; (4) data analysis; (5) reliability; (6) validity; (7) researcher subjectivity; and (8) ethics. The chapter began with a discussion of the research design and the rationale for choosing the design. The next section explored the sample. Here, I discussed how the cases were selected. I provided additional information about the cases and the participants included in the study. In the third major section, data collection was addressed. I identified and discussed the approaches and techniques used to collect and manage data. Data analysis was reviewed next. In this section, I talked about how I sorted and interpreted the data. The section on reliability provided a discussion of the importance of the consistency of data and outcomes. I also identified and briefly discussed strategies to ensure reliability. In the next major section, I talked about how I addressed validity in the study. This section focused on the generalizability of the study and its findings. Next, I looked at researcher subjectivity. I talked about my worldview as it relates to how I perceived the study. In this section, I also identified my own perceived biases and talked about how I dealt with them as the principal researcher. I ended this section with a discussion around ethics. I used this section to identify and dispel aspects of the study that could have been misunderstood as conflicting.

The qualitative methodology was a perfect fit for my study. Early on, I remember being firmly in favor of using quantitative research methods. I remember being set on obtaining numerical data. I was convinced, at the time, that numerical data was convincing and inarguable. However, over the months that ensued, as I became more and more immersed in the literature on the existence and operation of white privilege, and as I engaged in dialogue with my major professor, methodologist, colleagues and family members about it, I began to think differently about how I wanted to gather and analyze data. I came to terms with the fact that a tabulated response was simply not the best outcome for a study on white privilege. I realized that I needed to be able to understand and tell the story of white privilege, and that methods of qualitative research would enable me to do that. Over time, it became clear to me that the story of white privilege would be more compelling than the numbers behind white privilege.

I believe the approaches of qualitative research equipped me a variety of tools to conduct this important study in a meaningful way. The qualitative paradigm enabled me to report the story of white privilege in the higher education classroom with passion, power, and meaning. I found the interview to be the sharpest tool. Interview data confirmed and clarified. It revealed contradictions and insights in the study. I relied primarily on interview data, although other qualitative data collection methods were equally as valuable. I found document analysis to be critical to the study, for it extended me the opportunity to incorporate external, relevant sources of data. The tool of participant observations was also very useful. In retrospect, all of the data sources positioned me to see how all three approaches acted as one powerful tool. For example, even though I sat in the classrooms and saw what everyone else saw in collecting observation data, I realized that the interview data I collected contained significant insights about what was really going on in the classrooms that I missed seeing. Also, the array of documents that I analyzed further situated dynamics of the classroom in a way presented differing dimensions that were unseen in the observations or unstated in the

interviews. Overall, the qualitative approach methods united in a way to buttress the different pieces of my study. I believe that the qualitative paradigm has enabled me to generate a scientifically sound research study. I am extremely pleased with how this methodology worked for me.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS: PAINTING A PORTRAIT OF WHITE PRIVILEGE

The purpose of this study was to understand how adult learners experience white privilege in the higher education classroom. The following are the research questions guiding this study:

1. How does the social position of adult learners affect their experience of white privilege in the classroom?
2. What are the manifestations of white privilege in the classroom?

This chapter will identify and discuss characteristics of the adult learners that emerged from the data to address their experience of white privilege in the higher education classroom. Additionally, this chapter will consider representations that emerged from the data as manifestations of white privilege in the classroom.

Features of Social Position Affecting Classroom Experiences

The social position of the adult learner is multidimensional. Adults encounter life through gender, race, class, religion, physicality, sexual orientation and many other genetic and socially imposed characteristics. Race, class, and gender emerged as features of social position that affected adult learners' experience of white privilege in the classroom.

Racialized Status of Adult Learners

Race emerged as a characteristic of social position that affected how adult learners experienced white privilege in the classroom. Race is used here to refer to the

Table 1

Features of Social Position Affecting White Privilege

Social Position Affecting White Privilege
Racialized Status of Adult Learners
Privileged by White Racialness
Burdened by Non-White Racialness
Class Status of Adult Learners
Source of Power for White Adult Learners
Source of Negotiation for Adult Learners of Color
Gender and Race of Instructors

category to which adult learners have been socially assigned based on the legacy of skin color in the U.S. Racialized is used to denote the social construction of race (Omi & Winant, 1994). White privilege in the study marks the activity of racialized White domination of the public space of the higher education classroom (McIntosh, 2001). The domination results in advantage by creating unequal and favorable outcomes for persons racialized as White. The study found that the racialized status of adult learners translated as burden and privilege. Racialness was privileging or burdensome based on skin color. Interview data revealed that racialized White adult learners ignored their White racialness as though it were invisible in the context of the classroom. Not having to grapple with race in a raced society is a privileged location. Conversely, that same data showed that non-White learners were constantly contending with their non-White racialness. Having to contend with race is a location of burden. The findings suggest that White skin functioned as a racial marker of privilege and non-White skin as a racial marker of burden for adult learners in the higher education classroom.

Privileged by White Racialness

A major finding of this study was that racialized White adult learners emerged largely as un-raced adult learners. The assigned category of Whiteness exempted them from having to contend with race. Interview data revealed that White adult learners did not appear to be conscious of their Whiteness. Laurel summed it up this way

I've never walked into a class and thought, oh this teacher is going to have it hard on me cause I'm White and he or she is Black or this person is Asian and I'm White so they're gonna have it really tough on me. I just don't really think that way. For someone else, maybe an Asian student, they may go into a class and think, oh this teacher is going to think I'm supposed to be smart because Asian people are stereotypically smart in math and science. They may have expectations of me in here. So, I'm sure to some people every time they walk into a classroom, their race is, you know, at the forefront of their mind I have a race but I don't think about it when I walk into a classroom. I just don't think about it. I don't know why not. Cause I don't think about it, so I haven't (laughs) assessed why I don't think about it.

A majority of the White adult learners, three out of five, explicitly reported that the term “race“ connotes people of color. This was an important finding because it suggests how White adult learners process race. If they perceive that race means people of color and they are White, it is likely that they perceive their Whiteness and themselves as not being raced. Jason said that “generally African Americans” come to mind when he hears the word race. He also noted his disdain for the term. He said this about race: “Every time I hear that word, I just cringe, and I just don't like that word I guess it, maybe I don't like it because it points out beliefs people still have, generalizations.” Michael reported that the term “race” was “definitely a Black thing.” Carly said race for her brings to mind “Blacks.” Laurel said she thought of “cultural background [and not] a particular group” when she hears the word race. While I do not suspect Laurel was

disingenuous in her response to that question, her responses to related questions suggest the existence of a contradiction. On one occasion during the interview, I asked Laurel to recall a racial incident in the classroom. She reported an incident between two students. One student was African American, the other was Hispanic. Another time, I asked Laurel to recall any incident of race in any class where she believed race was at the center. This was her response:

Well I took a multicultural counseling class this past summer and race was the topic most days. So that was a very important part of that class. And I took an African American literature class in my undergraduate studies where race was discussed through literature a lot.

While Laurel seemed sincere in saying no one group comes to her mind when she hears the word race, her recounted incidents contradicted her statement. The groups invoked in Laurel's incidents were of the same racial composition. They all were different groups of non-White where White racialness was absent. Thus, the within group racial homogeneity of Laurel's incidences suggest that the term "race" does indeed connote one group: White racial others or people of color. This perception among a majority of the White adult learners in the study of race as connoting people of color may have influenced why these learners remained largely racially absent throughout their accounts of the higher education classroom. It is entirely possible that they do not see themselves as racial beings. Nearly all of these adult learners, four out of five, repeatedly recounted experiences of the higher education classroom noticeably without regard to their own White racialness. Their own White racialness appeared to be invisible, and it remained largely unnamed throughout their interviews. Carly's class was all White with the exception of a visiting international student who was of North African descent. This was how Carly characterized the atmosphere of the classroom:

It was wonderful. Laid back. Fun that was a class that most of us, we knew each other, because we had taken other classes before. And there was just a real

group. I really appreciate the friendships that had developed. And because there were friendships, we could talk in class.

Laurel described her place in the classroom this way:

I was definitely on the more vocal end because I was comfortable in that setting. And it also depended on how I came in to class that night. You know, if I had had a really rough day at school, I may not have asked any questions even though I had them. I may have just copied notes off the overhead and just not even thought about what I was writing, you know, to get through it. Um, if I came in with energy and I had had a really good day, I may have asked more questions and responded to more of the instructor's questions. So my role varied on my mood.

Jason's experience in the classroom, like Laurel and Carly, was minus any attention to his own White racialness. He describes his place in the classroom this way:

pretty much like everybody else . . . in terms of my personality. I think I don't always speak my mind. Number one, because I don't want to get the professor off course, and also . . . I think I'm always concerned about monopolizing time, I like to talk, I like to think, I'm very conceptual, I'll sit around and talk about things all day long and so I watch myself because I don't want to monopolize.

Burdened by non-White racialness

A significant finding among adult learners of color was that as a group, they experienced the classroom as raced adult learners. They provided repeated characterizations of the classroom and accounts of themselves as adult learners in the context of race. They all projected a consciousness of their assigned racial status as an encumbrance to their status as adult learners. Race as an encumbrance or burden is divided into two categories: (1) accommodationist and (2) obstructionist.

Sylvia, Shaka, and Rebecca spoke of accommodation. They projected a perception that because they were not White, they had to accommodate Whiteness in

order to succeed. Sylvia hinted of a cognitive adaptation that she brings to the classroom because of her racialized status. Sylvia appeared to have disciplined herself to adapt to the organization and operation of the classroom by mentally bridling her expectations.

This is what she said about the classroom:

I don't expect a lot of White professors to search for diverse information because I don't think that they feel they have to, to teach, particularly here to me its pretty much the same as you don't expect 90 percent of the class to be anything other than White. That's the environment and you know that when you come. I'm not saying that its right or wrong but that's just what's there and either you are going to use the system to get what you want or you gonna go where you're more satisfied with the system. So I think that I had to get beyond looking for things that were to my comfort. I'm not saying its right or wrong now, just, saying if that's the means to the end . . . you know that up front.

Like Sylvia, Shaka has also found a way to contend with his non-White racialness in the classroom. He intentionally asserts himself to avoid being overshadowed in the classroom. Shaka said this:

I generally make sure I form a relationship with all my instructors. So, that changes my experience a lot. Now I have a lot of friends, folks who don't do that. That definitely influences the type of relationship you have, the quality of it, if they even know you, cause I've been in predominantly White institutions for my higher education degrees you're generally in a class, the majority White American students, teacher is generally a White man and you, they don't know you. You know (laughs) It's hard for them to know who you are unless you seek them out. And so, I'd say my instructors know me because one, I make good grades and two cause if I have a question, I go askwhile I'm in the class, you know, before the test and over the course of the class. . If I didn't do that I think I could be easily overlooked I think it's real easy to get overlooked.

Like Sylvia and Shaka, Rebecca engages a strategy to counter her non-White racialness in the higher education classroom. Rebecca strategically limits her level of verbal participation with her White classmates out of intimidation. Rebecca intentionally restrains her comments for fear of being seen as stirring the race controversy, and she fears not knowing the racial stance of her White classmates. She said this about her adult learner role: “I know I’m not speaking a lot. I’m just basically sitting there observing and taking it all in (laughs).” I asked her why, she said,

I guess, I pick and choose what I say . . . whether or not it’s going to enhance the discussion. If it’s not going to enhance the discussion, then I don’t say anything. I may have comments and lot of times I do have comments, but not beneficial to the discussion.

I asked her if the racial makeup were different would that change the pick and choose pattern of her talking in class. Rebecca’s response was “well, yes some things.” Rebecca then gives the following illustration of how her pick and choose strategy operates in the higher education classroom:

On the bulletin board [an electronic classroom discussion tool] students were talking about vocational teachers versus academic teachers, and how they’re separated. And I finally did say . . . that’s usual, that’s normal to me, seeing a separation between academic teachers and vocational teachers. That is typical. And I said something like, our society is based on divisions. And I left it at that. I didn’t go further . . . Nobody made a comment on my comment, . . . and I didn’t expect them to. I expected them to leave it alone [because] nobody wants to deal with race issues or . . . it could be that . . . you know, I’m in Georgia, North Georgia . . . yeah, I’ve got to remember where I am . . . I don’t know where these folks are coming from . . . but I just wanted to put it out there.

Marcy, Christi, Karen, and Ivonne alluded to their assigned racial status as obstructionist. They presented no strategies or devices to counter the burden of their race.

Instead these adult learners just spoke candidly about how their non-White racialness obstructed their places as adult learners. Marcy suggested her integrity was challenged as a result of her assigned racial status. Marcy recounted an incident in which she was made to feel dishonest by her professor. Marcy attributed the experience to her non-White racialness:

During our class we were talking about . . . the different school systems and how they treat children. And one of the young ladies in my class works in Forsyth County . . . she was talking about how she wants to make a change, how she wants it to become diverse. So I said, define to me what you mean when you say diverse . . . Oh, she said bringing people there to talk to other people . . . African Americans, Hispanics, Asians come out there. I said, that would be fine, but realistically I can't say as an African American that I would be comfortable coming to a place like that. Well the professor says, "What do you mean?" And I said, "What do you mean you don't understand?" Everyone in the class understood what I meant. But, this particular professor looked at me like she knew nothing of what I meant when I said, it is not safe for someone that looks like me to go to Forsyth. She had not a clue what I was talking about. She questioned me the entire time . . . Everyone knows it is the place that Oprah went . . . And I don't know if it is because I was so vocal about it. . . I took it to the fact that because I am a vocal person and I do speak my mind, it was a problem with her that if it came from someone else that it may have been received differently. That was my perception . . . Why would you think that I would make that up? And why would I make that up? That is not even anything that I can make up because it can be verified.

I asked Marcy why she believed race was a factor in that incident. She said, "I think it was because of me . . . [being] African American." Like Marcy, Christi found her non-White racialness interfered with her identity as an adult learner. I asked Christi if she

could relate a racial incident in the class. Christi spoke of an incident in the classroom in which she was made to feel invisible. She attributes that experience to her non-White racialness. She said this to me:

This student . . . She's a White lady. So what she did, she wanted to tell you [interviewer] she was going to do it [interview] for you and she didn't talk to you, she talked to me. She looked at me and she said I will answer your survey. And I told her it's not me, it's my colleague or classmate or whatever, and I was, I didn't like that incident at all because for me, that reminded me of the invisible man, the book invisible man where some people don't see the difference between all these Black people. They are all the same. And for her, I am a person of color and you are a person of color She wouldn't even notice who is who. . . . We are all people of color So maybe she saw me as a Black . . . I'm very sensitive to these things. And I really felt invisible I felt any person, anybody, as any person of color who doesn't exist at all.

Karen reported an incident of being "slighted" by her peers in the group setting of the classroom. Karen implied that her non-White racialness obstructed her ability to equally compete with her White classmates. Karen said this:

I was in the group with three White females, a quiet White female, a middle talking White female and a talkative White female, a Hispanic female, and . . . a White male . . . We were practicing . . . The White male is giving the majority of the comments The White male did not have to force because people automatically listened to him, basically I felt other people looked more primarily to the White male and secondly to the talkative White female, and weren't really looking to other people for a contribution to the group.

Karen explained how she believed race factored into this incident. She said this:

Well, if you listen to what he was saying, this is an intelligent guy. . . . So I would say, yeah, that makes sense, yeah, that makes sense but later on I was

thinking about some of the stuff he was saying. You know, that does not really make sense . . . I did not see that questioning coming from others . . . I just kind of took it that they were accepting what this person was saying without critical thinking . . . Here was this White male. . . just eloquent sounding . . . [they were] just trusting his guidance and judgment over theirs. I don't know of any reason why they would have done that . . . I was annoyed at the group members who did not see me as being as worthy to listen with. The way I feel personally is, no we are not all as intelligent as each other. . . But even if they perceived him as being more intelligent than me in that particular situation, they should not automatically assume that he is right and just turn off their thinking caps and say, okay he should be right. I don't accept that . . . I was annoyed by the assumption that this person is going to be smarter than me . . . Even if they did, you should still listen equally to us.

Ivonne also implicates her non-White racialness as an encumbrance to her being an adult learner. Ivonne spoke of the isolation her non-White racialness carries for her and the obligation it brings. She said this:

I almost feel like I don't belong because there's always just one of me, one Mexican girl . . . When people ask me what I am, I tell them I was born in Mexico, and I am Mexican. It really annoys me when they ask me, "Oh you're Spanish." I say, "no, I'm not Spanish," "But you speak Spanish" "Yes, I speak Spanish." "So that makes you Spanish." No, I am not Spanish. I am not from Spain, I am not a Spaniard. They're like, "Oh," so then I feel like I have to educate them.

Class Status of Adult Learners

Class is a second characteristic of social position that affected how adult learners experienced white privilege in the higher education classroom. Class is used in this study to reference the social background of adult learners. The social class of the adult learners

in the study was based on their disclosed parental education or profession. (See Table 2 and 3). The adult learners in the study ranged from upper middle class to working class. Interview data revealed that social class was overpowered by race for White and for non-White adult learners. However, while class was potentially empowering for White adult learners at the higher end of class, non-White adult learners at the same class location found no advantage.

Source of Power for White Adult Learners.

The study found that a majority of the White racialized adult learners exercised cognitive agency. Agency is used here to refer to personal power. White adult learners recounted their experiences of the higher education classroom with an attitude that was noticeably marked by two manifestations of social power: self-assurance and a sense of entitlement. Interview data suggested that the agency projected by these adult learners was more a factor of their racialized Whiteness than their social class location. The class locations of the White adult learners varied. Some of the adult learners were upper middle class, some were lower middle, and some were working class. The White adult learners who were from upper middle class locations were empowered by and drew on the power of their class. However, while agency or power was consistent among all five White adult learners in the study, they all did not share the same class location. Interview data revealed that the source of the personal power they shared came from their White racialness. Those at the lower end of class could not draw on an upper middle class status, but they could draw on the power from their White racialness. Thus, White racialness was empowering for all of the White adult learners when they either chose not or could not draw on power from their class locations.

In the study, self-assurance permeated the characterizations of White adult learners and manifested as a kind of arrogance about themselves and towards others. This was the first example of their personal power. A sense of entitlement prevailed throughout their interview responses and emerged as a fixed perception that they

Table 2

Demographic Data of Participants in the First Classroom

Name	Gender	Race	State of Birth	Age	Degree Earned	Degree Pursuing	Education of Mother	Education of Father
Ivonne	F	HISP	MXC	25	BS	MA	HS	DNFHS
Marcy	F	AA	SC	25+	MA	SPLST	DNS	DNS
Karen	F	AA	SC	25	BS	MA	PHD	PHD
Laurel	F	W	GA	30	MA	SPLST	TCHR	PRNPL
Kim	F	W	GA	38	BS	MA	ASSC	DCSD
Jason	M	W	ALA	29	BS	MA	MA	PHD
Michael	M	W	GA	27	BS	MA	MA	MA
Shaka	M	AA	ALA	29	MA	PHD	RN	ASSC
Doc	M	AA	NC	42	PHD		DCSD	DNS

- Did not finish High School – DNFHS
- Did not say -- DNS
- Principal – PRNPL
- Deceased – DCSD
- Military – MLTRY

Table 3

Demographic Data of Participants in the Second Classroom

Name	Gender	Race	State of Birth	Age	Degree Earned	Degree Pursuing	Education of Mother	Education of Father
Sylvia	F	AA	GA	45	BSN	MA	TCHR	PRNPL
Rebecca	F	AA	SC	28	MA	PHD	DNS	MLTRY
Christi	F	POC	NAF	30	MA	PHD	RN	JRNLS
Carly	F	W	ILL	36	BS	MA	ASSC	DCSD
Jean	M	W	MI	55	PHD		DCSD	DCSD

- Did not finish High School – DNFHS
- Did not say -- DNS
- Principal – PRNPL
- Deceased – DCSD
- Military – MLTRY

deserved to be treated a certain way or that they were supposed to be able to behave as they chose. This was the second example of their personal power. Jason and Michael drew from both class and race. They were the two White males in the first classroom. Michael's depiction of himself as an adult learner in the classroom reveals a kind of bold confidence. Michael is 27 years old. Both of his parents hold masters' degrees. His mother is a schoolteacher, and his father is retired from IBM. I asked Michael to describe his student teacher interactions. Michael portrayed himself as both powerful and compassionate. He characterized himself as having power or a capacity to act in a way that could result in injury to his instructor. The perception of oneself as a student with power enough to socially damage the instructor is a manifestation of class-based power reinforced by the power of White racialness. This is how Michael described his interactions with the instructor:

I tend to find myself very quiet in this class where in other classes I cut up a lot and make comments and jokes. I'm the class clown a lot. . . . I don't want to act like his class is not important by clowning around. And I get away with it more in other classes and the professors seem to enjoy it and told me that they kind of enjoyed my humor or whatever, but with him I think it would come off as insulting. And I don't want to do that to him because I don't have any desire to insult him or anything like that . . . we really like him. So we don't want to come off as disrespectful.

I asked Michael why he thought his instructor might perceive his clowning as disrespectful. Michael said this:

Well, I think to him, it might come off as what you are telling us is not important or what your position is not important and I don't want to do that to him.

Especially since he is a fairly new professor. I don't know that he gets all the respect that other people get who have been here for a longer tenure. And he's a Black male, I mean, and typically, you know, Black males don't get the respect

that White males get. So I don't want to come off as being disrespectful because he has worked very hard to get where he is. And I don't want to come off as minimizing who he is and what he has worked for . . . as far as I know he's the only Black professor in the department, I might be wrong but as far as I know he is. So I really don't know the dynamics of his relationship with other professors but I'm sure he struggles to make his place.

Like Michael, Jason accrued power from class and race. Jason is 29 years old. His father holds a doctorate and is a retired associate dean of engineering at a southern university. His mother is also retired with a bachelors' degree in chemistry. Jason's self-characterization of his place in the classroom projects self-confidence that borders on arrogance. There is also a presumption of entitlement in his comments that it is only natural for him to be where he is.

I sort of grew up in the University; I'm already very at home. For other people, this is a new place, they have a lot of anxiety . . . anytime you have anxiety in a situation, everything is more difficult . . . whereas if I have a thought, others may be thinking I have a thought, but I'm anxious, it was thoughtless, oh I'm nervous about raising my hand, I don't know how I'm going to look . . . I do not get nervous . . . that gives me an edge in class. I am relaxed, I can articulate myself better because I'm relaxed. Then the professors see, other people see that.

It appears that Jason's classmates were aware of his social location. Jason draws on his higher social class location and his classmates default to the power of that place. Jason said this in characterizing his place in the classroom:

I have been told by my fellow co-hortions, as I call them, cohort people, that they feel, this is several people, that the faculty listens to me more than they listen to other people. I'm conscious of my relationship with the faculty. I don't know if other people make that a priority, I do. Absolutely because I know that's what it takes. My father's a professor, my brother's almost a professor, and I grew up at

the University of Alabama literally in the halls while my dad was teaching class.

And I tell that to people all the time, you've got to play this game.

Carly is 38 years old. She is a middle school teacher, married with children. Carly was the only White female in the study in the second classroom. Her father is deceased, and her mother has an associate degree. Power for Carly is unavailable from an upper class social location. The source of her empowerment is White racialness. Here, Carly describes what her teacher interactions are like. She frames their understanding, willingness, consideration, and support of her situation not as special or preferential treatment, but as nothing more than a display of their virtue and goodwill. The description is marked by a sense of entitlement. Carly said this:

They [teachers] tended to be always open and willing to talk with individual students, and work with individual students. They seemed to understand that most of us came in with the droopy eyes, been working all day, with papers to grade, with family at home, they took that into consideration. And, if they saw the student was motivated and doing what they could, they were always willing to help in any way, and that in itself got me through the higher education program Because this summer I had seven foster children. Well three of my own, plus four foster children, and I was taking a very heavy load. And just having the support of Dr. Mintz who I think the world of, and Dr. Fritz, and I had Dr. Kintz. They were all so wonderful because there were those days I had to take the kids to court, or I had to do something. So I would miss a class, which in the summer is real bad. But, they were great and they understood I've had one African American instructor . . . other than that basically White, Caucasian male and female.

Like Carly, Kim projects a similar sense of entitlement as an adult learner. Kim is 38 years old, a former high school teacher, divorced with two children. Kim is a White female from the first classroom. Kim's father died when she was 11 years old and her

mother is a high school graduate. Like Carly, Kim does not have access to power from an upper class location. However, she is able to access that same power from her White racialness. In describing her place in the classroom, Kim explains that she conducts herself in the classroom the way she does because it's the way she's always done it. The rationale suggests a sense of entitlement.

I would say Kim probably and unfortunately acts like a first-born child

Accustomed to being in charge. . . . My place in the classroom is that I want to think about what we're doing and kind of get it all down pat and line it all up the way I want to do it And that's a character flaw of mine. . . . I try to see it when I'm doing it . . . it's so easy to get into that place . . . because I've done it so much. I have practiced it my whole life . . . just wanting to line everything up, cause that's what I'm used to doing.

Source of negotiation for adult learners of color.

The study found that non-White adult learners drew on a sense of negotiation from their backgrounds. Negotiation is used here to refer to a capacity and resolve to endure. Although negotiation permeated their recountings of the classroom, interview data revealed that there was a difference between these adult learners in how they negotiated the terrain of the higher education classroom. Race could not account for their within group differences because they all shared non-White racialness equally. The within group differences were found to be a factor of their class locations. That is, the ways in which they negotiated the classroom was directly impacted by their class status. Some of the adult learners of color were from upper middle class locations while others were working class. Those who were upper middle class tended to be more aggressive in the way they negotiated while those on the lower end of class were more passive. Adult learners of color at the higher end of class experienced no advantage by having that status in the higher education classroom. They found themselves forced to negotiate race the same as adult learners of color at the lower end of class. Thus, the class location of adult

learners of color was overshadowed by their non-White racialness. The theme of negotiation of race among similarly raced but dissimilarly classed adult learners of color suggest that issues of race are not about class, but are about race.

The majority of adult learners of color, five out of seven, alluded to survival throughout their characterizations of their experiences in the higher education classroom. The adult learners of color who were from upper middle class locations were active negotiators. That is, they negotiated by confrontation and approach. A higher social class location has likely situated these adult learners often and in various capacities with people from different racial affiliations. They could therefore draw on the nature and frequency of racial experiences afforded them by their class to help them survive in the higher education classroom. For Karen and Shaka, one-on-one contact is familiar to them. Karen has had two non-White professors in her higher education experience. Karen's mother holds a doctorate in education and her father holds a doctorate in business. Karen is the African American female in the first class. In discussing her classroom experiences, Karen talks about how she interacts with her instructors. She prefers directly approaching the instructor and she engages logic. She said this:

I'm more likely to interact with professors outside of class than I am in . . .

I don't really interact that much I might see my professor once a semester . . . after class or during office hours . . . If I ask a question, I might get the short answer in class, a short succinct answer. If I ask it after class, they are more likely to elaborate and I find that more helpful to me as a student . . . I find that they give me more information if I am talking one on one than if we are in a classroom.

Shaka is a 29-year-old upper middle class African American male. Shaka's mother is a retired associate chief nurse of psychiatry with a major hospital. His father is a former military air traffic controller. He has an associate degree. Shaka was one of three student facilitators invited by Doc to meet with and avail himself as a resource to

the adult learners enrolled in Doc's class. Shaka agreed to participate in the study not as a member of Doc's class but as an adult learner affiliated with Doc's class. Shaka and the two other White male facilitators completed in an earlier semester the same group project that Doc's class worked on during the semester. The three facilitators were present each night of class. Like Karen, Shaka negotiates the terrain of the classroom by asserting himself. In describing his place in the higher education classroom, Shaka said this:

I'm generally an active listener. And I feel a responsibility to speak up on issues . . . granted you have to pick and choose your battles, but if it's anything, if there is some knowledge being espoused that I don't agree with or I think is just not true, I just can't sit on that.

Shaka adds how he has been groomed by his background to endure the terrain of the classroom:

See I have a real foundation. I grew up in Tuskegee, Alabama where everybody was Black from the mayor to not just the people who clean or do the things we consider more menial. I've not just seen Black men in prison; I've seen the mayor, the city council, and all my instructors, and the preachers. I've had all these models. I've been told my whole life that I was great and wonderful This started when I was able to comprehend who I was. By the time I got up here, even though everybody's foundation can get shook some, I could generally take it and bring it back. What I'm doing here all of my academic accomplishments, they don't validate me. I was validated when I was born. God validated me. My family validated me. I'm a child of God. So this is stuff I'm doing to meet whatever goals I have. It doesn't make me who I am When people have that understanding, when the professors know, it's not like I'm being disrespectful, but I don't want you to ever get confused and think that whether or

not I pass this class or get an A or B that it's going to take away from who I am as a person.

I asked Shaka if he thought such an affirmation was requisite for African Americans coming to a historically White university. This was his response: "I think it's helpful. I think you can make it without that, but I think you'll be a little bit more bruised up."

Like Karen and Shaka, Sylvia comes from an upper middle class social location. Sylvia was in the second classroom. Both of Sylvia's parents are college graduates. Her father is a school principal and her mother is a language arts teacher. Sylvia's only brother is a physician, and Sylvia is an operating room nurse. Although she shares the higher class location with Shaka and Karen, Sylvia's sense of negotiation in the context of the classroom is less aggressive. It borders on a stance of no locus of control in which one's behavior is learned from a culture of disenfranchisement and powerlessness. However, interview data suggests that Sylvia's sense of negotiation deviates from that of Shaka and Karen because of class and age. As a 45-year old, Sylvia is constrained by historical context of the decades of which she came of age in the segregated South. Sylvia describes her place in the classroom in a very disciplined and accepting way. For, example, the adult learners in Sylvia's class were asked to individually design a puppet, then get into small groups and develop a group puppet presentation. The puppet activity was designed to reinforce a learning module they were studying on multiple intelligences. The instructor brought several packages of new socks and other materials for the adult learners to design their puppets. All of the socks were white. I asked Sylvia how she experienced that activity. This was her response:

I saw it as something that every student was asked to do. Go over and pick up a sock and do the best artistic work you could do on it, and do the skit I guess if I had had the opportunity to choose, knowing me, I would have made a decision at that point based on my own race. But, I guess like everything else in life,

sometimes you don't have a choice. This is what you have and this is what you have to do.

The adult learners of color at the lower class location negotiated the terrain of the classroom differently from the adult learners of color who were from a higher social location. Adult learners of color at the lower end of class operated from a stance of no locus of control. That is, they tended to project a kind of passive resolve about how to survive disenfranchisement. Marcy was in the first classroom. She mentioned only her mother, and concealed the educational background of her mother and father. Marcy declined to tell her age. Marcy has a master's degree in clinical psychology and is a former employee of the federal government. She is presently pursuing a masters degree. Marcy speaks about surviving the classroom from a stance of acceptance of no locus of control. This is what she said:

Unless you go to an African American institution, which is what I did initially. But once you get out of that . . . There are only going to be a few of you in certain areas. That's just it . . . I try to encourage as many people as I can to apply [at this university] and try to give them tips . . . They have to want to do it and then when you come, are you going to be okay with the fact that you could be the only one? It is always the fact that you could be the only one there. Are you going to be okay?

I then asked Marcy, "and are you?" "Yes," she replied quickly, "I'm an only child. Being by myself, I am used to that." Rebecca named her mother and noted that her father was retired from the military. Like Marcy, Rebecca concealed the educational background of her parents. Rebecca was in the second classroom. Rebecca projects mental toughness as a way to endure the classroom. In describing her place in the classroom, she speaks from the stance of a learned sense about limited control. Rebecca said this:

I just try to do things that are right I have a very strong value system and I know that I am different because of my race and because I am Black. You know, that's one thing my mom always says, Rebecca, you know you already have two strikes against you. You're Black and you're a woman. You're going to always have to work twice as hard. I know this already. I'm always going to have to work twice as hard to prove that I am capable and able to do things.

Gender and Race of Instructors

Gender was a characteristic of social position that affected how adult learners experienced white privilege in the higher education classroom. In the study, White adult learners who were enrolled in the class with the African American male instructor found him intimidating and non-White adult learners in the study in that class did not. The data suggested that it was the intersection of the instructor's male gender and his African American racialness that produced the intimidation for White adult learners enrolled in his class. The intimidation experienced by the White adult learners because of the presence of the African American male instructor was an interruption to the normally privileged location of the classroom for them. By comparison, the majority of the adult learners in the study enrolled in the class with the White male instructor did not experience him as intimidating. Analysis produced no reasons for students to react in an intimidating way towards Doc, the African American male instructor in the first classroom. Doc is a medium brown skin toned African American male. He is a youthful looking 42-year old with a small to medium stature. Doc stands approximately five feet ten inches tall. Observation data revealed that Jean, the White male instructor, was the more physically towering of the two instructors. Jean was tall and stout. Based on my observation data, there were no apparent reasons that would explain why the White students would be intimidated by Doc and not by Jean. However, it was interview data that revealed intimidation as an issue for the White adult learners in the study in Doc's class.

Doc is usually noticeably dressed for class. His hair is always neatly cut in a tight fade. The fade is a haircut in which the hair is cut shorter around the base and sides of the head than the hair at the top of the head. The haircut becomes a tight fade when the hair at the base and sides is cut extremely low. He usually wears solid color button down the front designer dress shirts with color-coordinated ties, dark dress pants, and leather shoes. Doc has a deep but not harsh sounding voice. Doc dressed for class as he did because of who he was and because of where he was. At 42 years old, he was fully aware of the dynamics his presence at a historically White institution created. Doc knew that his African Americanness and his maleness would likely be a constant point of scrutiny and comparison to media based black male stereotypes. He also knew that in his classroom, his predominantly White students would likely not accord him the benefit of the doubt were he to come to class looking any other way. Doc was subconsciously forced to dress for class as he did. The White adult learners who participated in the study who were enrolled in Doc's class were complimentary of him in their descriptions of their interactions with him. However, they also collectively chose expressions of alarm to describe those interactions. All four of the White racialized adult learners enrolled in Doc's class used terminology that intimated trepidation in discussing their interactions with him. Michael expresses regard, and he uses the word intimidation:

We had him last summer for a class, and he comes off as very intimidating at first. But we've had social interactions with him outside of class including a recent retreat we kinda got to see the softer side of him and he's real nice and laid back and he cares about us He's still kinda of intimidating and I think that's good in a certain respect.

In her characterization of her interactions with Doc, Laurel expresses respect, and she uses the word fear:

It was a mixture of formal and informal. I mean I don't think anybody a student gets too informal with Doc because you know not to cross a certain line, but it

didn't seem extremely formal. And again it's a little awkward. It's a little bit different than for other people because I know him in a different way I don't have any fear about communicating with him or asking him a question or asking him for help.

In describing his interactions with Doc, Jason expresses admiration, and he uses the word afraid:

Oh very excellent. I really like Doc I would describe my experiences with him as great. I'm not afraid to go to his office and just chat with him. I feel like he respects my opinion and he certainly has had a very positive effect on me as a teacher.

When I asked Kim to describe her interactions with Doc, she too is complimentary of him, and she uses the word commanding: "He's the nicest man. I know him outside of class, but when he's in the class, I find him to be very commanding. He's friendly. He's approachable, but he's commanding." I ask Kim to explain what she means by "commanding." This was her response:

He's authoritative. He's respectful. He's knowledgeable. To me all of these things create what I would call a whole package of commanding. Not dictatorial, not that kind of commanding, but commanding as in speaking and behaving in a way that captures attention.

Karen and Marcy were the two African American females enrolled in Doc's class who participated in the study. Their descriptions of their own interactions with Doc confirmed the factor of his intimidation. However, by those same descriptions, they excluded themselves from among those who found him intimidating. Karen said, "Some people are maybe intimidated by him." Karen's comment suggests that she is not among those people intimidated by the instructor. Marcy said: "I think a lot of people were intimidated by him I have heard them say that he intimidates them." Like Karen, Marcy distances herself from among those intimidated by the instructor. Marcy added

this comment: “I don’t see why they would be intimidated by him, but some of them thought that they were.”

When I asked Doc to characterize his interactions with adult learners in his class, not surprisingly, he indicated that he was aware of his race and his gender as an intimidating combination for some of his White adult learners. This is what he said: “Being a Black professor, male, at a predominately White institution with a predominately White female class of students, it’s obvious it’s intimidating for some.” Doc also displayed an understanding of the rationale behind the intimidation that his race and gender present. He said this:

They [White adult learners] are having to contend with the fact that irregardless of their previous notions of Black men being only good at athletics or entertainment and being bad, poor fathers or absent fathers, here is a Black male who is very educated. Who has made some major accomplishments and achievements in his life that is not traditional for Black men. So, if nothing else it presents them with something different than what they are used to. It challenges the negative images that they have, the stereotypes they have had about Black men.

Doc offered further amplification of why intimidation was not experienced by non-White adult learners in the class. He said this: “For the Black women, what it did in this class, is that it confirms for them, it affirms their notions for the Black men in their families and the Black men that they have interacted with.”

The other instructor participating in the study was Jean. Jean is a 56 year-old White male. Jean was a soft spoken but portly man. Coupled with his stocky build, he stood about 6 feet 3 inches tall. Jean had coarse mixed gray and dark brown hair. Most times, he wore it cut short but full. Jean wore buttoned down cotton shirts, sometimes under knit sweaters. Some nights he wore light plaid shirts with sleeveless vests over them. When he wore long sleeve shirts, most times the cuffs were unbuttoned and folded

back. Jean usually wore the tan khaki slacks and pecan brown leather loafers. Each night in class, Jean would slip out of his loafers and walk around in his sock feet. Jean dressed for class as he did because of who he was and where he was. As a White male at a predominantly White institution with a predominantly White male instructor base, Jean had the option of dressing up or down. As a White male, he would be judged by a different standard.

The four adult learners from Jean's class participating in the study were all females. Two were African American, another was from North Africa, and one was White. Interview data revealed that the majority of the adult learners enrolled in Jean's class who participated in the study, three out of four, described their interactions with him absent any suggestion of fear or intimidation of him. Only one student talked about fear. Sylvia said, "I came into the class not as fearful as I had the previous semester." Sylvia was one of the African American females in Jean's class. She clarified her fear as an apprehension about having been away from the formal classroom for so long. This was what she said:

I was less apprehensive I think my first semester last spring, having been out of the formal classroom for so long, I was apprehensive, not really sure that I should start this and then starting it in the computer age. When I left there was no computer. I was very nervous about what being a student again would entail and meeting the requirements of the class The last time I was in a classroom having to make a grade to graduate was 1978.

Interview data revealed that the adult learners in Jean's class who participated in the study had only a reverence for him as their instructor. They did not find him intimidating as the White adult learners in Doc's class found him intimidating. Although Sylvia had expressed intimidation of the process of returning to school that included Jean, in discussing her student teacher interactions, she was complimentary of him. She said this about Jean:

I was more at ease I guess with Jean this semester because I had had two classes with him last semester and I came into the class not as fearful as I had the previous semester because I knew his style of teaching. He was really interested in you understanding the work and not just making it difficult for you to understand I felt really at ease from the very first night of this semester. When he asked a question, I could give the answer that I honestly wanted to give instead of the answer that I thought he would want to hear because he lets you know he is interested in what you have to say. He is not really interested in you repeating back what he said to you.

Rebecca said this about her interactions with Jean:

It is a very good professional relationship . . . speaking to him through my reflection papers and meeting with him just popping into his office One thing about being a fulltime student is that I see the professor on a different level than those who are doing this part time. I have, to me, a better relationship because I can pop into his office and get quick, immediate feedback He's been very useful and helpful as far as my teaching my own class.

Christi was the Fulbright scholar working on a doctorate at the University of Tunisia.

She was extremely complimentary of Jean as her instructor. She said this:

I met Jean last semester and I took one of his classes. He has been the first person I met in the states because he came with my supervisor to meet me at the airport. So I am a friend of his family like himself and his wife. I know his son. So I am a friend and a student at the same time. So, I had a very positive, very positive impression. I really wish all Americans are like Jean. He has been very nice to me and very helpful The social side is always important to him and which I also think is very important. So that's why maybe why I enjoy his classes. I like the fact that he considers his students as human beings I always feel safe in there. I don't feel threatened or anything.

Carly was the White female. She, too, spoke highly of Jean with no suggestion of intimidation. Carly said this about Jean:

Jean has just been wonderful. He was wonderful in the fact that we both loved books. That was one thing. We would talk about different books that really concerned or related to the subjects that we were talking about. And he has a little grandchild. So we would talk about developmental books for children. And I shared some things with him that I had learned though foster care because we had to go through so much training. And particularly about attachment disorder. I learned a ton, personally experiencing attachment in a child and what it can do. He was aware of what was happening in my situation, and would just check on me and see how I was doing And then he also took me aside personally. I'd say several times to give me references and support options and things.

Manifestations of White Privilege in the Classroom

White privilege refers to assumptions, practices, or behaviors that discriminate in favor of racialized White groups over non-White groups in the classroom. Finding manifestations of white privilege in the classroom was guided by literature-based characterizations of white privilege as White racialness dominating the organization of public space. Applying this lens to the data, the study found two manifestations of white privilege in the higher education classroom.

Table 4

Manifestations of White Privilege
Ignoring White Racialness as Race
Constant Representations of Whiteness
Classroom Discourse
Subject Content of Courses
Instructional Materials
Classroom Public Space

The first manifestation was a pervasive ignoring of white racialness. This finding was based upon data from interviews. The data revealed an assumption among all of the participants, White and non-White alike, that “White” did not constitute race. An assumption of White as not constituting race is a manifestation of white privilege that is not visually or physically discernable. It is a manifestation indicative of the psychological dimension of white privilege.

The second manifestation of white privilege was constant representations of Whiteness dominating the educational process of the higher education classroom. This finding was manifested through interviews, observations, and analysis of documents, which included course syllabi, required texts, recommended class readings, instructional support media, class enrollment and university enrollment statistics, and in the behavior and dialogue observed in the classroom. Constant representations of Whiteness were illustrated in the dominant practices that organized the classroom. The representations are divided into four categories: (1) classroom discourse; (2) subject content; (3) instructional materials; and (4) classroom public space. The constant representations of Whiteness are manifestations of white privilege that are observable and physical. They are reflective of the material dimensions of white privilege.

Ignoring White Racialness as Race

The first manifestation of white privilege in the classroom found in this study was a rejection of “White” as race. Interview data indicated an assumption among all adult learners that White did not count as race. This manifestation of white privilege was psychological. This assumption of whiteness was not a tangible part of the classroom environment but was an intrinsic state of being that operated in the classroom. This manifestation of white privilege was located within the cognition of the adult learners who were in the classroom. This intrinsic assumption of whiteness translates to a manifestation of white privilege based upon the holder. When the holder of the assumption of Whiteness as not race has racial membership with White racialness, the

dominance of the system of Whiteness norms the assumption. That is, that assumption is mainstreamed and becomes typical, through the structural power of Whiteness to dominate society. The assumption of White as not race gets repositioned outside and above racial borders. This event occurs in the social consciousness of those who are white. Because White adult learners espouse this assumption, and because they are racially White and socially dominant, the assumption they hold about Whiteness prevails. Moreover, the assumption is “privileging” because of what it does for White racialness. If White is not perceived as race, it is rejected as race. Rejected as race means it is accepted as something other than race. Accepted as un-raced, Whiteness is allowed to perceive itself and is in turn perceived by its racialized others not as a socially constructed category of race but as a neutral, natural, and defining category. In a raced society, relegation to un-racialness is a privileged location.

An important finding of the study was that based on interview data, non-White adult learners held the same assumption of race as White racialized adult learners held. This was a very significant finding, for it suggests that non-White adult learners are complicit with racialized White adult learners in perpetuating white privilege. In the study, adult learners were asked to recount a racial incident in the classroom. Neither the racialized White nor the non-White adult learners provided racial incidents in which the racial composition of the participants was White, only. While none of the participants said, “White did not constitute race,” some of the adult participants made comments that strongly implied a belief that White did not constitute race. Ivonne, a Hispanic female, was asked if she could think of a racial incident in the higher education classroom to which she responded not with an incident but with an apology that insinuated that White did not count as race. Ivonne said this: “I haven’t really seen that and I think that’s just based on the fact that in the school of social work it’s predominately White females. I’m sorry I couldn’t help you out.” Like Ivonne, Carly doesn’t specifically say White does not comprise race but she hints that that race did not include Caucasian. Carly, a White

female, had just described two people in her class in response to a question I asked her. I followed up on her description asking her now “to genderize” and “to racialize” them for me. This was her response: “Genderize, well, they were both male and female . . . Now racialize? I don’t know that I really can. I don’t think we had a large mix in that class. It tended to be mostly Caucasian . . . males and females mostly in that class.” Christi, a North African female, was asked a question about the person she believed assumed the most authority in the class. Christi’s response to that question implied that race excluded Whites. This is what she said: “The lady and the man, both White, but here if you talk about race, there is no Black people in this class They are all White.”

The most compelling evidence of participants’ assumptions that White did not constitute race was seen in the racial incidents in the classroom that they reported. All study participants were asked to recall, recount, or think of a racial incident in the classroom where they believed (1) race was a factor, (2) race functioned or operated, or (3) race was central to the occurrence of the incident. Racial incidents were analyzed for (1) racialized groups represented, and (2) the order of racialized groups included in the incident.

The study found the racial composition of the people in the racial incidents reported by the participants fell into three categories: (1) all of the people were non-White (2) the people were non-White and unnamed White, and (3) the people were Black and White. Adult learners of color in the study reported racial incidents that were Black and White. Moreover, in all of the reported incidents by White and non-White adult learners in the study, White racialness always followed its racial other. The most salient finding here was the absence of a reported racial incident by any of the participants in which the racial composition was White, only. This finding suggests that white privilege is perpetuated by both White and non-White adult learners in the higher education classroom. These findings also suggest the existence of a perception that while White can be part of the composition of a “racial incident,” it is the White racial other

that “races” the incident. This perception would support the notion that White is perceived as something other than race.

Only one of the three White females in the study reported a racial incident comprised of White racialized others, only. Laurel’s incident totally excluded Whites. She said this: “I can think of an incident between two students where a Hispanic student was told by an African American student to go back to his country.” Laurel later revealed that this incident occurred not in the higher education classroom but at the middle school where she is a teacher. Two of the White females reported racial incidents comprised of White racial others where White was present but unnamed. Carly was asked to think of a time when race functioned in the classroom. This is what she said: “One time, probably in my statistics class, there was a person who was, I believe Asian . . . and would continuously argue with the teacher [because] . . . the teacher did not do it right, the answer was not right . . . There was a group of them and I would say mostly Asian, Korean, Japanese.” Carly mentions a teacher in her racial incident. The teacher is noticeably un-raced as she recounts the incident. After Carly recounts her incident, I ask her why she believes race functions in this incident. Carly says, “because the professor was a White woman and most of the people that were arguing were Asian males.” White racialness goes unnamed in the telling of this incident by Carly. The White racialness of the instructor is named only after Carly revisits the incident to address my question of how race functions here. Not mentioning White racialness in the initial recounting of the incident, then mentioning White racialness only as background information for purposes of clarification suggests that it is Asian, Korean, and Japanese racialness that marks this incident as an incident of race. Thus, while White is racial, it is not race. It is implied that Whiteness cannot mark an incident as an incident of race. White is not raced in the same way as its racial others. Kim provided an incident very similar in its construction to Carly’s incident. I asked Kim if she could recall an incident in the class that centered on race. She then provided this incident:

The class I should really think about in that is I was in an Ed Psych class that had a very large majority of Asians. And I remember at times, that that was just a language barrier. I don't think it had to do with race. I'm thinking of somebody trying to talk to the instructor and not being understood . . . I never felt as I listened to those interactions that it had to do with race. I felt it had to do with language . . . I'm sure it was a struggle for them, trying to communicate, but the instructor was very respectful to them, and, I felt, tried to do all that he could to see that they understood what was going on.

Like Carly, Kim provides a racial incident that marks the White racial other while ignoring the White racialness of the instructor. Again, White is present but unnamed. The White racialness of the instructor goes repeatedly unmarked in the telling of the incident. As I did with Carly, I waited until Kim had finished reporting her racial incident to give her an opportunity to mark Whiteness. She did not. As I did with Carly, I interjected a follow-up question to mark the race of the instructor: "What was the racial status of the instructor?" Kim replied, "Caucasian."

Four of the adult learners of color, Christi, Shaka, Doc, and Karen, reported incidents of Black and White. They named both Black and White in their reported incidents. Christy reported this racial incident:

We were in this class in the Greco Center and you were asking the students to answer your interview. So I think nobody was volunteering to do it. And there was this student who stayed, she's a White female young female student. She stayed and she was talking to the teacher, and we were waiting for the professor to leave to go back to campus. And then you asked her, no, and then she felt that, I don't know for what, for which reason, she felt that she needed to answer your survey. So, she is White. So what she did, she wanted to tell you she was going to do it for you and she didn't talk to you, she talked to me. She looked at me and she said I will answer your survey. And I told her it's not me. It's my colleague

or classmate or whatever, and I didn't like that incident at all because for me, that reminded me of the invisible man. The book, Invisible Man, where some people don't see the difference between all these Black people. They are all the same. And for her, I am a person of color and you are a person of color.

Shaka's incident of race in the classroom also names Black and White:

Well, September 11th that's probably the most recent thing. It came up in one of my classes and we were talking about America, how we are perceived globally and why people could hate this country so much. Acknowledging that the bombing and terrorists attacks were bad, but you know, just trying to see where the terrorist might be coming from I think that adult learners of color more quickly, like, we put things in context easier, I think. No, not easier, but we acknowledge that people are being oppressed from the country that performed the terrorist attacks on us and that America had a role in that oppression. As adult learners of color we can identify and see that relationship a lot easier than other people. I mean, like White Americans for instance. Now not all, for instance. Like on Black entertainment television, the dialogue with scholars and leaders in our community were quite different from mainstream scholars . . . They were trying to show the relationship of globalized oppression to oppression right here in America and the negative consequences of that.

Sylvia, Rebecca, and Marcy provide a Black and White incident where White is present but goes unnamed. Sylvia recounted this racial incident:

The only thing that comes to mind is a couple of nights in the diversity class, when race was talked about, openly and frankly, we were discussing some of the everyday things that happen things that are offensive to a race of people that others don't see because you're not of that race. We were talking about being a Black person and in a store, just in a supermarket with your shopping cart. And you start down an aisle and another person has left their shopping cart and when

they notice that you're coming down the aisle they run back to their cart like you're going to go over and get something out of their bag or their cart and how that is seen particularly by me as offensive . . . I certainly know that I am not going to go over to this ladies basket and take something out of her purse. But, because when she looks up and sees that I am Black and I'm coming down the aisle, she suddenly feels that here comes the Black lady, I'd better get my purse close to me. The members of that class, some of them, started to deny that that was actually, that could actually be happening. And then as we talked about it, I think that they stopped denying it.

Rebecca reported an incident of Black and White. The specific racialness of the instructor in the incident goes unnamed. Whiteness is named only in a general way. She said this:

One class, this was during my masters program, the class was called Technology and Culture, how technology has affected culture. I was the only Black female. In that particular class, we read seven or eight different books. And this one book was called More Work for Mother . . . Well, when the professor was talking about the book, he was like, I have gotten a lot of positive responses and everybody particularly enjoyed this book and usually have given their books to their mothers. And when I read that book, I was like, what in the world? I said this is a great book for White women but for Black women, this is terrible book.

The two White male adult learners and the White male instructor in the study reported racial incidents comprised of Black and White. Michael and Jason named Whiteness in their reported incidents. Michael reported this incident. Black initiates the incident:

Well we do have a bit of a problem with race in our cohort in that some people, well not some people, three of the Black females whenever there comes a group project they always work on it together and they always sit 1-2-3 in a row and that

makes the rest of us White feel a little bit like they're segregating themselves and it bothers us.

Jason recounted this racial incident; again Black initiates the incident although White is named:

Well, that multicultural class The one that jumps out at me . . . Doc came in and read An anecdote, an account of something that happened . . . Where an African American female was walking downtown somewhere on her way to a club or to meet somebody and it was fairly late and she walked by the entrance of a dance club and there was a White female in a crowd of people and this White female was visibly drunk.

Unlike Michael and Jason, Jean acknowledged race but did not name race. Jean is the White male instructor in the study. Jean invokes Black and White but marks neither. This is how he reported a racial incident: "Well, I'm thinking of the conversation that you [referring to me the African American researcher] and I had driving back from class." My non-White racialness and Jean's Whiteness formed the racial components of this incident, but are never named.

Constant Representations of Whiteness

The second manifestation of white privilege revealed in the study was constant representations of Whiteness dominating the process of the classroom. The educational process is a complex transaction of teaching and learning (Brookfield, 1988). The transaction of the classroom is the exchange that occurs between and among the adult learners, the teacher, and the subject. This all-important transaction is how teaching and learning occurs in the classroom. The study found that White racialness dominated the educational process of the classroom. The educational process is divided into four categories and was analyzed for domination of racial composition: (1) classroom discourse was dominated by White adult learner voices, (2) subject content was authored predominantly by people racialized as White; (3) instructional resources were

predominantly White oriented; and (4) classroom public space favored White adult learners.

The orientation of the classroom was found to be racially slanted. That is, White racialness dominating and organizing the process of the classroom functioned as an advantage for White adult learners because these practices repeatedly affirmed, acknowledged, and celebrated White adult learners to the near exclusion of non-White adult learners. Interviews, observations, and document analysis were the three forms of data that accounted for the findings. White domination of the education process of the classroom is a manifestation of the material and psychological dimension of white privilege. The four categories of the educational process are operationalized through the audible and the tactile-visual. The audible refers to the discourse or voice in the classroom. Discourse forms include argument, sarcasm, humor, critique, clarification, description, question, summation and various other forms of verbal exchange. Tactile-visual refers to the spatial terrain of the classroom and all viewable and tangible resources used to support and deliver instruction. The more common forms of tactile-visual resources include VHS cassettes, on-line tools, textbooks, handouts, power-point presentations, pictures and graphics, transparencies, reading lists, specific instructional support materials, and physical classroom space.

Classroom discourse

White domination of classroom discourse was the first manifestation of white privilege under constant representations of Whiteness. Discourse is used here to represent voice. There were two classrooms with two different instructors. I asked participants in the study to identify the person they believed talked the most in class. Based on interview data, the dominant voice in both classes was revealed as racially White (See Tables 5 and 6). Several of the adult learners referenced the instructor as the person who talked the most, but they also identified an adult learner who talked the most. This finding of the dominant voice in the classroom is based on adult learners identified

as having talked the most. Seven of the eight adult participants in Doc’s class including Doc reported that a White female talked the most in his class. Three out of the five participants in Jean’s class, including Jean, reported a White male talked the most in his class. As shown in Table 4, 87.5 percent of the respondents in Doc’s class said a White adult learner talked the most. However, 100 percent of the respondents in the study in Jean’s class said a White adult learner talked the most in that class (See Table 5).

An unanticipated finding of the study was that White racial domination of voice in the classroom is a factor of the historically White college and university. By design, these institutions generate massive “predominantly” and “White only” communities of students, faculty, and staff. The classrooms of HWCUs are dominated by Whites because the university maintains its legacy of attracting and allowing entrance of mostly or all

Table 5

Most Vocal Student in Doc’s Class

Reported by	Talked most	Reported by	Talked most
1. Michael	wf	1. Marcy	wf
2. Kim	wf	2. Shaka	wm
3. Jason	wf	3. Karen	wf
4. Laurel	wf	4. Ivonne	aaf
		5. Instructor	wf

Table 6

Most Vocal Student in Jean’s Class

Reported by	Talked most
1. Carly	wf
2. Rebecca	wm
3. Sylvia	wm
4. Christi	wf
5. Jean	wm

White populations. Based on an analysis of contemporary institutional enrollment statistics, the study found that the Angle University maintains its legacy of generating a predominantly White population. In 2001, student enrollment was 32,317. Of that number, 28,296 or 87.5 per cent were racialized White students. Black students comprised 1,832 or 5.6 percent of the total student population in 2001. The Hispanic student population was 469. Asians comprised 1,175 of the student population. There were 54 Native Americans enrolled. Students who identified as mixed race 491 or 1.51 percent of the total student population. The total number of faculty at the institution in 2001 was 1,170. White faculty comprised 88.5 of that total. The number of full-time employees in 2001 was 10,058. Of that number, White full-time employees comprised 8,184 or 81.3 percent (Information Digest, 2002).

Subject-content of courses

White domination of subject-content of courses was the second manifestation of white privilege under constant representations of Whiteness. Subject content includes (1) the nature of the subject of the class; (2) the required texts of the class; and (3) the suggested readings of the class. The syllabi of both classes were analyzed for racial authorship of the subject content. The study found that the subject matter of both classes was theory. White authored the theories studied in both Jean and Doc's classes. According to Doc's syllabus, the class would "examine group theory and dynamics." Jean's syllabus noted that the "class will examine a range of learning theories using a standard framework to make comparisons among theories." Jean's class focused on learning theories. Doc's class focused on psychological theories.

Further examination of the two syllabi revealed that the required textbooks used in the two classes were White authored. There was one required textbook in Doc's class. Jean's class was structured around a single textbook as well. However, adult learners in Jean's class were not required to purchase the text, but the text was the primary source of readings for the class. Jean noted the following on his syllabus:

To date we have not found an acceptable textbook that emphasized leaning in a vocational setting. As a result, we will be using a small but helpful book and collection of readings and research papers as our literature for the course. The reading collection will be made available to you through the professor. As other material becomes available a copy will be provided for you. Of course your research will lead you to other resources that have not been included here. Please provide me with a copy of new resources. I welcome your input.

The authorship of suggested readings on both syllabi were also examined. The study found that people racialized as White authored the suggested readings in both classes. Doc listed five readings under a heading of “Suggested Additional References.” All of the authors were White. Jean’s syllabus listed suggested readings as “References” with the following notation: “These references are taken from a variety of sources. You will not be expected to read every one. However, you may find this list of resources handy, as you examine each . . . concept.” There were more than 30 reference items on Jean’s syllabus. The authors of the references were White.

Another unanticipated finding of this study was that White domination of subject content was a factor of canonical education. For generations, certain subjects have constituted what have become more or less established texts in higher education. White men have primary authorship of the canon because of the socio-cultural history surrounding the origin of the canon. The texts of the canon include but are not limited to selected theories, literature, history, philosophies, epistemologies, paradigms, formulas, and laws. Most of these texts were written, conceived, and coined between the 15th and 20th century. Darwinism, Eugenics, Black African slavery and segregation in the U.S. were among the structures that reinforced White racial domination of society, which effectively denied people of color participation and acceptance in the mainstream construction of these foundational texts (Bernardi, 1996; Bowser & Hunt, 1996; Delgado & Stefani, 2000; Myrdal, 1944; Tannenbaum, 1946). The classrooms at HWCUs

routinely practice canon maintenance in which racial minority voices are excluded (Delgado, 1995; hooks, 1992). As formally accepted knowledge and formally required knowledge, the texts of the canon influence the organization of the classroom by regulating what teachers must teach and what students must know. Over the centuries, these types of classes have come to be perceived as objective and racially neutral even though race is embedded in them through the worldview of their authors. Canonical education perpetuates white privilege by muting the Whiteness of the authors.

The interview data showed that more than half of the adult learners in the study tended to link racial incidents to racially titled classes. The prevalence of racial incidents reported by participants in the context of racially titled classes and not in the context of a canonical class suggests that these classes have, perhaps, managed to psychologically shut racial discourse out as relevant in them. Relegating race to racially titled classes removes the threat or exposure of Whiteness in common classes. This practice perpetuates white privilege by preserving white racial domination in these classes. Carly was asked to think of an incident in the classroom that centered on race. She said, “I guess the most would be my ESOL classes where we studied a lot of the Hispanic cultures and would interface with Hispanic families that had come over here.” Doc was asked to describe a classroom incident where race was a factor. He too referenced a racially titled class. He prefaces a recounted incident of race with this comment: “Two of the other courses that I have taught since I’ve been here have been the introduction of theory class.” Sylvia was asked to recount a classroom incident where race was a factor, like Doc she too referenced a racially titled class in relating that incident. She said this: “The only thing that really comes to mind is the couple of the nights in the diversity class when race was talked about and openly and frankly about race.” Rebecca’s racial incident was also situated in the context of a racially titled course. She began the telling of her racial incident with this statement: “One class, this was during my masters program. The class was called Technology and Culture, how technology has affected

culture.” Jason and Laurel also linked racially titled classes to their recounted incidences of race. Jason situated his racial incident in this context: “Well, that multicultural class.” Laurel said this in recounting a racial incident: “ Well, I took a multicultural counseling class . . . and I took an African American literature class in my undergraduate.”

Instructional resources

The third manifestation of white privilege under constant representations of Whiteness was the favoring of Whiteness in instructional resources. Instructional resources are classroom-designated items and materials that enhance, reinforce, and magnify the community and instruction of the classroom. Instructional resources were analyzed for their racial composition and orientation. The three forms of data used in the study revealed that the instructional resources of the classroom favored White racialness. The study identified three types of instructional resources in the classrooms that either favored Whiteness or were dominated by Whiteness: (1) videocassettes; (2) class activity materials; and (3) power point presentations.

On page three of Doc’s syllabus, beside letter “D” is an entry that reads: “Twelve Angry Men group discussion (50 points).” At the fifth class meeting, Doc’s class watched the classic American film, 12 Angry Men. The black and White version was shown. There was only one setting in the film. All of the action and events of the film occurred in the jury room. Everyone that appeared on screen in the film was White. All 12 of the jurors were racialized White men. The film was set up for viewing in the classroom. There was no regular class that night. Doc was away at a conference and was not present in class. The adult learners watched the film for the first hour of class, then went into their lab session at their regularly scheduled time. During the previous class session, Doc assigned groups of adult learners to focus on specific aspects of the film that were related to psychological theory. The adult learners were also informed at that time that they would be called upon to report their observations the following week of class.

On page five of Jean's syllabus, he has entered the following notation: "Class #4: Topic: Key Learning Concepts & Current Brain Research." During the fourth meeting, Jean's class watched 45 minutes of a video documentary on the activity of the human brain. The title of the video was Private Universe. The video explored major functions and malfunctions of the brain, how environment impacts brain development in premature babies, medical innovations, and contemporary theory and scientific research on the human brain. The video's format included a narrator and an interviewer. The video's narrator was unseen, but the voice was female. The people who were interviewed in the documentary were asked to talk about specific aspects of the brain. Again the interviewer was unseen as well. The people who were interviewed were introduced with captions highlighting their titles and their institutional affiliation. They represented elite institutions such as Harvard Medical School and prominent institutions outside of the U.S. as well. They were portrayed as experts in the field of human brain activity and research. They were also referenced by the narrator with such titles as leading, renowned, head of or founder of. All of the subjects in the video documentary were White.

For several sessions, the adult learners in Jean's class studied the theory of multiple intelligences. In teaching this module, Jean gave a lecture supported by a Power Point presentation and he introduced a three dimensional prototype of a brain to inspire discussion among the adult learners about multiple intelligences. As a follow-up activity to this module, Jean had adult learners get into groups. He brought a bag of materials for this activity. The materials for the activity included several packages of new cotton socks, a glue gun, and several packs of red, yellow, and brown yarn, multi colored and sized buttons, and magic markers. He instructed the members of the class to get a sock and design a hand puppet with the materials he brought for them to use. Then, as a group, they were to develop a puppet project to present to the class. The task of the groups at both sites was to select one of the multiple intelligences they had studied and

using their puppets and their collective imaginations put together a puppet presentation. The groups were to present their project at the next class meeting before their classmates. Each group was given class time to create their puppets and to work on their presentation. At the next class meeting the groups were each given about 10 minutes to make their presentations. All of the socks purchased by the instructor that were used in group presentations by the adult learners were white socks.

Jean integrated two forms of computer technology in the delivery of instruction in his class. He used an online course management software program called WebCT, and he used Power Point presentations almost weekly to deliver instruction. Jean provided adult learners with a hardcopy of his syllabus and he placed his syllabus on WebCT. The first page of the hard copy of Jean's syllabus has a picture of a little boy and a Tony the Tiger look alike straddling the trunk of a fallen tree. The tree trunk lies over a water brook to form a gangplank. The tree trunk allows the little boy and the tiger to cross over the brook to the other side. The little boy is White. The tiger's coat is orange with black stripes but tiger's face, chest, hands, and feet are white. The online syllabus has a different first page. In the center of the page is the title of the course. In a one-inch right and left margin are small repeat images of White men. On another page of Jeans' online syllabus, he has a picture of himself under a caption that reads, "About Me, Your Professor." The photograph reveals that Jean is White.

Jean included graphics in his Power Point presentations to the class. The graphics were a combination of cartoon, computerized icons, and photographs. The cartoon and computerized icons mostly provided comic relief to the discussion. A few of the icons used in the Power Point slides were representative of people of color. However, the photographs were the dominant images used in the slides. The photographs were the images of the authors of the theories that were being studied. The theories were all White authored. The photographs were dominated by images of racialized White men.

Classroom Public Space.

The fourth manifestation of white privilege in the study under constant representations of Whiteness was White oriented classroom public space. In the study, classroom public space refers to the alternative class meeting sites. This public space was examined for its racial composition. Based on observation data, public space was predominantly representative of White racialness. Jean arranged for the adult learners at the two sites to come together for two of their class meetings, the midpoint and final class of the semester. The class decided by consensus where and when those meetings would occur. The study found that both the public spaces selected for the midpoint and final class meeting were dominated by Whiteness.

One of the adult learners in the class who is a middle school teacher volunteered his classroom as the midpoint meeting place. All of the adult learners from both sites that Jean taught made the trip to Forrest High School. The school was located deep in the suburbs. It was nestled behind winding roads and manicured residential properties. The school's mantel greeted us as we drove up the entrance driveway. The school was a tall, modish brick structure that stood on several acres of heavily wooded flat land. The building was surrounded by wide sidewalks, an enormous designated parking area, and a winding enter and exit driveway for cars and buses. The school grounds were immaculate. Several trees had been planted along the driveway. Some of the trees were still anchored by landscaped wire braces. At first sight the school looked to be no more than five years old. It was after 4:00 p.m. when we arrived. The school day had already ended. Just inside the main entrance, Jean proceeded to find someone in charge to tell them who we were and to help us find the classroom. There were pockets of students still at the school. I saw one student standing near a side door. The upper half of the door had glass panels and the lower portion of the door had a steel frame. The students stood by the door staring out the window. The door faced the front entrance of the school. The student may have been a car rider waiting to be picked up. He had his

backpack strapped on his back and his hands slipped in his pants pockets. Another group of four or five students was standing around just inside the main entrance talking and laughing together. Two school custodians were cleaning the floors. One custodian was driving a machine that resembled a small tractor. It had a saddle seat and a tiny circular steering column. The machine made a loud roaring sound as it polished wide sections of the floor. The driver looked down at the floor as she drove the machine. Another custodian was pushing a long handled broom along the corridor. She walked along one side. One of the female custodians was White the other was not. A long line of students walked from a side corridor towards two closed doors that read "Gymnasium." The students that I saw were racially White. A couple of the students were not White. Jean returned a few minutes later with the school principal. The principal greeted us and pointed us in the direction of the classroom. He was a fairly young looking White male. The school was a predominantly White middle school in a predominantly White residential area.

The final class meeting like the midpoint had been decided by a consensus among the adult learners in both sections of Jean's class. Jean's class members interacted with each other using the bulleting board. A couple of adult learners posted messages recommending restaurants for the rest of the class to consider. One student wrote the following:

Loco's or Mellow Mushroom? Would anyone be interested in meeting at the Mellow Mushroom for the last class? I ate there last night and inquired about groups. The waitress told me they are generally slow on Mondays and could accommodate a group of 22. She advised to call ahead to speak with a manager if we are interested. They serve pizzas, salads, and subs.

This was another posting on the bulletin board:

I decided to go ahead and call Loco's . . . Loco's does not have a separate room. If we are for certain that we will be there that night, the manager will reserve the

outside patio for us. It has an awning so we can sit out there in any weather unless it is too cold. I doubt that it will be cold at the end of April. The restaurant is not too crowded on Monday and at 5:00 o'clock. They can do separate checks for each person, so that we do not have a logistical nightmare with one large bill for all 23 of us. The manager could not think of anywhere else in Winder. Matthew's is an option . . . According to the manager, the patio is on Main Street and is the only place where you can look out at the courthouse and drink a beer at the same time.

Once these two options were posted, other adult learners in the class responded. There were numerous postings on the bulletin board about the restaurant. There were a total of 12 comments posted in response to this activity. Most of the comments reflected an interest in the directions. In the end, the class decided to meet at Loco's Deli & Pub in Wall. An analysis of the official website of Loco's revealed that the restaurant was established in 1988 by two friends, James O. Loftin and Hughes W. Lowrance. Loco's owners are White males and the restaurant is predominantly a White patron restaurant. Wall is a predominantly White populated jurisdiction just outside of Wall. Based on an analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the population of Wall in 2001 was estimated at 48,946. The Black or African American population comprised 4,483 or 9.1 percent. The White population was estimated at 39,149 or 84.8 percent.

Summary

Overall, this chapter responds to the two research questions guiding the study: (1) How does the social position of adult learners affect their experience of white privilege in the higher education classroom; and (2) What are the manifestations of white privilege in the higher education classroom.

Based on interview data, the study found that race, class, and gender were the features of social position that affected how adult learners experienced white privilege in the classroom. In response to the second question, the study found two manifestations of

white privilege. The first manifestation was an assumption among the adult learners in the study that White racialness did not constitute race. The second manifestation of white privilege found in the study was constant representations of White racialness dominating the process of the class. The study found that four critical aspects of the classroom were dominated by White racialness: (1) the discourse in the classroom; (2) the subject content of the courses; (3) instructional materials; and (4) classroom public space. The domination of Whiteness in the classroom was revealed by data from interviews, observations, and document analysis.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS: THE FACE OF WHITE PRIVILEGE

This chapter begins with a summary of the findings of the study. It then identifies and discusses the major conclusions that are based on those findings. The next section examines the implications of the study for practice and future research. Finally, this chapter ends with a concluding note.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to understand how adult learners experienced white privilege in the higher education classroom. Of particular concern were the features of adult learners' social position that affected their experience of white privilege in the higher education classroom and the manifestations of white privilege in that same context. The following two research questions guided this study: (1) How does the social position of adult learners affect their experience of white privilege in the classroom; and (2) What are the manifestations of white privilege in the classroom.

In this qualitative study, three forms of data were used. The primary data source was the semi-structured interview. Data were also collected using observations and document analysis. Data were collected over the four-month period of the spring 2002 semester. The sample consisted of adult learners enrolled in graduate programs at the university. All of the adult learners in the study were 25 years of age or older. There were two classrooms observed. Both classes were graduate level courses. All of the study participants were working towards at least a master's degree. The instructor of the first class was an African American male who chose the pseudonym Doc. Doc also agreed to be interviewed in the study. The sample consisted of nine adult learners from

Doc's class. There were two White females and two White males enrolled in this class who agreed to participate in the study. There were two African American females and one Hispanic female enrolled in the same class who also agreed to participate in the study. There was only one African American male adult learner in the study. He was not enrolled in Doc's class, but was a student facilitator for this class. He had been invited by Doc to assume that role. As one of three student facilitators in Doc's class, the African American male student agreed to participate in the study not as a student in the class but as a graduate student enrolled in the gerontology program at the university. There were a total of 25 adult learners enrolled in Doc's class.

The instructor in the second class was a 56 year-old White male who chose the pseudonym Jean. Jean agreed to be interviewed in the study. The sample in Jean's class consisted of four adult learners. All of the participants from Jean's class who agreed to participate were females. There were two African American females and one White female who agreed to participate in the study. Another female, who was a person of color, also agreed to participate in the study. She was from North Africa and was auditing the class as a visiting Fulbright scholar. There were a total of 22 adult learners in the class.

In answering the first research question, the study found three features of social position that affected the adult learner's experience of white privilege. Race was the first feature of social position that affected how adult learners experienced white privilege in the classroom. The study found that racial assignments created different experiences for White and non-White adult learners in the classroom. White adult learners in the study largely ignored their race in discussing their experiences in the classroom. They did not appear to be conscious of their White racialness. They did not incorporate their Whiteness into their accounts of the classroom. Only one White student referenced his Whiteness in the context of his being an adult learner. In discussing race in the classroom, a majority of the White adult learners reported that they thought about Black

people or people of color when the word race was mentioned. For White adult learners, race always means people of color; thus race does not translate as White and means something other than race (Bowser & Hunt, 1996). This perception among White adult learners in the classroom directly influenced why their White racialness remained invisible in their recounted classroom experiences. White adult learners did not think of themselves as raced. This was an important finding, for it suggests that White adult learners construct the meaning of White in opposition to Black (hooks, 1992; Nyak, 1997). Overall, data analysis revealed that White adult learners experienced the classroom as un-raced adult learners, and that they were privileged by race.

A second finding relative to race was also revealed. Analysis showed that all of the adult learners of color were conscious of race in the classroom. These adult learners recounted their experiences of the classroom in the context of race. They projected a sense that their assigned race was an encumbrance for them in the classroom. The study found that adult learners of color contended with their racialness in the classroom, and that that they did so in different ways. Some appeared to compensate for their non-White racialness with strategies they used in the classroom while others named their race as obstructionist for them in the classroom. Their recounted classroom experiences implied that their integrity, identity, and esteem were hampered in the classroom as a consequence of their race. Overall, analysis revealed that adult learners of color experienced the classroom as raced-adult learners. That is, they were first raced then they were adult learners. This is an important finding for it suggests that people of color, African Americans in particular, can never escape the legacy of their Blackness (Jordan, 1968; Myrdal, 1944; Tannenbaum; 1946). Adult learners of color were burdened by race in the classroom.

Class was a second characteristic of social position that affected adult learners' experience of white privilege in the classroom. In the study, class is used to reference the social background of adult learners and was based on their disclosed parental education

or profession. An analysis of interview data revealed that all of the White adult learners talked about their classroom experiences in the context of agency or personal power. Interview data suggested that the social location of all of the adult learners intersected with their racial status to provide them with different experiences in the classroom. Analysis further suggested that their experiences were marked by self-assurance and by a sense of entitlement. An analysis of the self-assurance and entitlement projected by the White adult learners was conducted in the context of their class locations. This analysis of their social class location and their projected empowerment revealed that class was only one source of empowerment for White adult learners. Analysis indicated that some of the White adult learners were upper middle class while others were lower middle class, yet all of the White adult learners projected a similar sense of power. Analysis revealed that class location was empowering only to those White adult learners who could claim that status. Those who could not claim power from their social class locations compensated by claiming power from their White racialness. Thus, the White adult learners who were at the higher end of class were empowered both by class and race, while those at the lower end were empowered by race only. The study found that White racialness was the more dominant source of power, for it was available to all White adult learners.

An analysis of interview data showed that adult learners of color projected a sense of negotiation in their recountings of the classroom. A majority of the adult learners of color expressed a distinct sentiment of survival and perseverance in their recounted experiences of the classroom. An analysis of the perseverance and survival sentiment projected by adult learners of color was conducted in the context of their social class locations. The study found that all of the adult learners of color in the study contended with race regardless of their upper middle class or lower middle class locations. Because they were drawn to negotiate the exact same issue as adult learners in the classroom, those adult learners of color who could claim an upper class location were accorded no

advantage over adult learners of color at the lower end of class. In the study, class was found to be an immaterial factor for adult learners of color. Data analysis, however, did indicate a distinct difference in how these adult learners negotiated the classroom. The approaches and worldview of the adult learners of color varied based on their social class locations and this influenced how they negotiated the terrain of the classroom. Data analysis showed that those on the higher end were more assertive and dialogic. Asserting themselves and engaging in dialogue were social mechanisms that were familiar to them as a consequence of their family's middle class interactions. Those adult learners of color who could not claim an upper class location tended to speak more obligingly and more passively about their classroom experiences. An accommodating and passive nature is a pattern of social interaction common among and familiar to keep this from family units at the lower end of class. This finding of class providing no benefit to upper middle class adult learners is very significant for two reasons. First, it suggests that the issue of race and its accompanying constraints function regardless of class. Secondly, the finding points out that race is a more overpowering presence than class.

Gender was a third feature of social position that impacted the adult learners' experience of white privilege in the classroom. Interview data showed that all of the White adult learners in the study who were enrolled in the class with the African American instructor used terms that suggested their fear of him. An analysis of interview data revealed that the White racialness of these adult learners structured social experiences for them that did not endorse accepting a Black male as an authority figure. By contrast, adult learners of color in that same class were fairly explicit in their interviews that they did not find him intimidating. Interview data further revealed that adult learners of color were aware of the instructor as intimidating to others in the classroom. The study found that the African American instructor himself was aware that he was intimidating to his White adult learners. In interview data, Doc pointed out that it was the intersection of his maleness and African American racialness that was

intimidating to White adult learners at the same time it was affirming to adult learners of color in the classroom.

A particularly interesting finding around gender in this study was the notion of intimidation. Data analysis revealed that intimidation was an issue only among White adult learners and their African American male instructor and was not an issue among White and non-White adult learners and their White male instructor. Interview data showed that the majority of the adult learners in the study who were enrolled in the White instructor's class did not report a fear of him. Only one student mentioned the word fear. However, the data showed that the student attributed her fear to her having been away from school since the mid-1970s. Her fear was not for the White instructor but was around the idea of returning to formal school. Data analysis revealed that the intersection of the instructor's male gender with his African American racialness was disorienting to his White adult learners and was an interruption to the dominance of Whiteness in the higher education classroom. That is, the White adult learners were daunted or intimidated by the experience of having to acknowledge an African American male in a position of intellect, power, and prestige as a higher education classroom professor.

In response to the second question, the study found two manifestations of white privilege in the classroom. The first manifestation of white privilege was an assumption among adult learners in the study that White racialness did not constitute race. When they recounted incidences of race, none of the adult learners in the study, including the adult learners of color, provided an incident in which the racial status of the persons in the incident was all White or Whites only. The racial status of individuals included in the racial incidents reported by the adult learners in the study was reported as (1) comprised of people of color; (2) comprised of people of color and unnamed White; or (3) comprised of Black and White. The consistent omission of an all White or Whites only racial incident suggested that there was an assumption among the adult learners in the study that White did not constitute race. The absence of a White only racial incident

from any of the participants, including adult learners of color, represents a manifestation of white privilege. That White did not constitute race was an assumption among the adult learners in this study and an example of the psychological dimension of white privilege. This assumption is a psychological manifestation of white privilege because it exists within the psyche of the adult. This psychological manifestation of white privilege was present in the classroom through the person of the adult but was unseen because it resided concealed and undisturbed inside the perspective of the adult. This assumption held by the adult learners in the study was a manifestation of white privilege because to assume White is not race or that it does not or cannot constitute race is to displace Whiteness above or outside the borders of racialness. To cognitively displace White as race is to reject it as race. To reject White as race suggests that White must be something other than race. Data analysis further supported the participants' perception that White was something other than race. When the racial incidents reported by the participants were analyzed, the study found that the participants in the study did not always name the Whiteness of the individuals in the incidents even when the individuals in the racial incident were White. Moreover, analysis revealed that when White was present and was named in the reported incidents, White always followed its racial others. White was never mentioned first in any of the racial incidents reported in the study. Analysis of data suggested that while White can be part of a racial incident, White cannot itself "race" the incident. The first-ness of the White racial other marks the incident as a racial incident. The omission of White from that first place location in the incidents suggests a perception that White is not capable of racing an incident. To perceive White as something other than race in a raced society is to privilege Whiteness above other racial groups. Dismissing White as race elevates it as racially neutral and objective and positions White as superior. Adult learners of color participated with White adult learners in perpetuating white privilege.

The second manifestation of white privilege in the classroom was constant representations of Whiteness dominating the transaction of the classroom. This finding was revealed through data collected in interviews, observations, and document analysis. Analysis of data revealed that Whiteness dominated the classroom by dominating the transaction of the classroom. The domination of White racialness produces white privilege by affirming and advancing Whiteness. The transaction is the exchange among the teacher, the adult learners, and the subject. The transaction includes the various teaching approaches used to deliver the instruction of the classroom. There were four categories of the education transaction process identified: (1) the discourse was dominated by Whiteness; (2) the subject content was dominated by Whiteness; (3) the instructional resources were all dominated by Whiteness. Instructional resources included videocassettes, socks, and power point presentations; and (4) the classroom public space was dominated by Whiteness. These representations of White domination were material displays of white privilege.

The first manifestation was the discourse of the classroom. Discourse refers to voice in the classroom. Based on interview and observation data, adult learners racialized as Whites talked the most in both of the classrooms observed. What all of the adult learners in the class heard, how it was said, and by whom it was said was dominated by White racialness. This domination of the audible aspect of the higher education classroom was filtered through a White worldview and imposed on everyone in the class. Data analysis showed that White domination of the discourse appeared normal in the context of the Whiteness of the classroom.

The subject content was the second manifestation. The subject content refers to the subject of the course studied in the classroom. It also includes the required and recommended readings of the course. Document analysis revealed that theory was the subject studied in both classes. Jean's class studied educational theories and Doc's class studied psychological theory. An analysis of the syllabi and texts used in the two

courses, as well as other documents revealed that the theories studied were White authored. The required texts and recommended reading in both classes were also found to be White authored. Data analysis revealed that the subject content was dominated by Whiteness but the Whiteness of the subject content was unnamed and unacknowledged.

The third manifestation was the instructional resources. Instructional resources were the items and materials brought into the classroom by the instructors that functioned to reinforce instruction and encourage the community of the classroom. Observation data and document analysis revealed that the instructional resources were White dominated or predominantly White oriented. Instructional resources included videocassettes, socks, and power point graphics. Videocassettes were one form of instructional resources. In both classes, instructors selected videos to supplement the instruction of the class. The actors in both videos were dominated by White racialness, that is, all of the actors in the videos were White. A second form of instructional resources was socks. The White instructor bought several packages of brand new socks for adult learners to design puppets in a class activity. All of the socks were white. All of the puppets made were white puppets. This class activity was dominated by Whiteness. Power point graphics was a third form of instructional resource observed in the class that was dominated by White racialness. The White instructor included graphics to accent his power point slides. The graphics were either computerized icons or photographs. Overall, the images or graphics were dominated by White racialness. The facial and body coloring of the computerized icons had a White likeness. The photographs were small snapshots of White men. Data analysis revealed that Whiteness was seen but unnamed in the instructional resources of the classroom.

Classroom public space was the fourth manifestation of white privilege. Classroom public space refers to the alternate public spaces that were occupied by the class members as a class. There were two different meeting sites observed for one of the classrooms in the study. On one occasion, both sections of Jean's class met at a high

school. Observation data revealed that the school was a predominantly White high school located in a predominantly White community. Another time, both sections of Jean's class met at an out of town restaurant. Document analysis indicated that the restaurant was a predominantly White establishment and the town was a predominantly White jurisdiction.

Conclusions and Discussions

Based on the findings of the study, three major conclusions were reached. The first conclusion was that (1) white privilege is a major factor in the dynamics of classrooms; (2) the Historically White College and University (HWCU) assumes a major responsibility for white privilege in the higher education classroom; and (3) non-White adult learners are complicit with White adult learners in perpetuating white privilege. In this section, I will review the major conclusions of the study and address the stance of the literature on those conclusions.

White Privilege in Classrooms

The first major conclusion of the study revealed that white privilege was present in fundamental structures of the classroom. The voice in the classroom, the required and recommended readings, the supplemental instructional material, and alternative classroom space were classroom structures central to the teaching learning transaction that were dominated by people racialized as White. This domination of the education process created a racially asymmetrical environment in which Whiteness was constantly affirmed and acknowledged in the classroom. McIntosh (2001) characterizes white privilege in terms of White racial domination. The consequence and purpose of White racial domination is the advancement of the sustained belief in the supremacy of Whiteness (Harris, 1995; Wildman, 1996). Analysis of the findings of the study revealed that the classrooms were sites of White supremacy. Analysis of findings indicated that invisibility was a distinctive aspect of the existence of white privilege in the classroom. The face of white privilege was clearly marked by invisibility. White privilege took on

the attribute of invisibility based on its umbilical relationship to Whiteness. In the study, white privilege and Whiteness co-existed to the extent that their boundaries were indivisible and unseen. The proliferation of Whiteness in the classroom resulted in white privilege. Thus, the system of Whiteness and white privilege, though separate structures, worked toward the same goal of promoting, advancing and celebrating the superiority of Whiteness in the classroom. White privilege results from Whiteness (McIntosh, 2001; Rodriguez & Villaverde, 1997; Wildman, 1996). Bernardi (1996) posits that the consequence of White domination is a yield of advantage for Whites and disenfranchisement for non-Whites. Whiteness and white privilege naturally dovetail. Bernardi characterizes the function of Whiteness as the “persistence of hierarchies that in the United States have systematically privileged those who count as White as generally European American at the expense of those who do not count as White generally African Americans” (p. 104).

How white privilege existed in the classroom was striking. White privilege was characterized by contrasting binary attributes. First, in concert with its invisibility, white privilege was marked by a capacity to exist in the classroom simultaneously as ubiquitous and as absent. It was present in the perspectives of the adult learners, the discourse, the subjects studied, instructional resources, as well as the physical space of the classroom. All of these structures formed the education process of the classroom. At the same time white privilege was virtually everywhere, it was deemed as absent in the classroom because its presence was never marked. Keating (1995) found that Whiteness possessed a “pervasive non-presence.” McIntosh (2001) acknowledges that white privilege was “elusive.” White privilege was nowhere in the classroom because it was able to escape detection from those who received its benefits and escape recognition by those situated on the other side of its privilege. The most commonly referenced feature of white privilege is its invisibility (Frankenberg, 1993; hooks, 1992; Keating 1995; Lopez, 1996; McIntosh, 2001; Wildman, 1996). Neither the White adult learners nor the

adult learners of color in the study articulated the term white privilege and linked it to any aspect of the operation of the classroom. Only one student actually used the term. However, she used it only to reference topics covered in a psychology course she had taken as an undergraduate.

Analysis of the findings of this study revealed that White adult learners largely missed seeing white privilege because of their colorblind racial stance. The White adult learners consistently excluded their own White racialness from their recounted experiences of the classroom. Assuming a colorblind stance results in a posture in which race, in general, is deliberately ignored. Ignoring race effectively positions one to miss seeing white privilege. In the study, white privilege was invisible, in part, among the White adult learners because they overlooked race.

The adult learners of color, on the other hand, saw race but missed seeing white privilege. The findings suggest that they were unfamiliar with contemporary conceptualizations of white privilege. These adult learners did not know that the genesis of their racial experiences of oppression had now been situated in the context of racial privilege and given a name. Adult learners of color in the study revealed their unfamiliarity with white privilege, as such, through their vocabulary. They talked about their experiences of the classroom in the context of race using a fairly traditional lexicon of oppression. Whiteness studies is a recent genre in the academy, and white privilege is a recent phenomenon in higher education (Giroux, 1999; Rodriguez & Villaverde, 2000; Wildman, 1996). Thus, while these adult learners knew the consequence of white privilege for themselves as racial disenfranchisement and oppression, they were unprepared to recognize it as such because they were unfamiliar with recent scholarship of race in the academy around White race privilege.

Analysis of the findings suggests that white privilege is invisible not because it is sporadic, but because it is pervasive. That is, its domination of the classroom excused any reason to mark it, for marking it would have been illogical, a statement of the

obvious. The Whiteness of the classroom appeared much like an enormous elephant planted in the middle of the room that everyone knew was there but acted as though it were not there. Thus, the element of logic contributes to why White racial domination of the classroom and society goes on frequently unnamed and unmarked. Unfortunately, not marking white privilege counts as missing it. Invisibility is recognized as the most distinctive feature of white privilege because white privilege is so frequently missed (Frankenberg, 1993; Keating, 1995; Maher & Tetreault, 1997; Wildman, 1996).

The second conflicting binary feature of white privilege was its ability to abide in the classroom as normal at the same time it was camouflaged. In the study, manifestations of white privilege looked normal because they did not look unusual or out of the ordinary. Among White and non-White adult learners in the study, no one reported or marked the domination of Whiteness in the classroom as peculiar or as odd. In both classes, the human subjects in the videos shown in class were all White. Everybody who appeared on camera was White. No one in the study pointed that out as striking. In Jean's class, no one noticed the white socks that were used to design puppets as peculiar. White socks are commonly found in the grocery store, drug store, corner store, as well as the mall. No one made a remark that noted anything strange about the all-white puppet sock group activity. The domination of voice in the classroom by White males and White females was another manifestation of white privilege. Again, no one noted the White domination of voice as odd. The logic was that the majority of the adult learners in the class were all White. An analysis of interview data also revealed that the domination of Whiteness of the subject content was not reported by participants to be unusual. Neither Doc nor Jean presented the subject content of theories as Black theory or as White theory. The theories were written in the text and talked about in the classroom as racially and otherwise generic theories, discussed simply as "educational theory" and as "psychological theory." In disseminating the instruction of the classroom as racially neutral and objective knowledge, the instructional delivery process cloaked

the Whiteness of the theories and acted as a “normal” disguise for white privilege. All of the cited events appeared to be very normal because they are typical of what we see and hear in the classroom and more importantly it is predominantly what we see and hear in the larger society. However, these seemingly normal, ordinary events and classroom approaches were actually manifestations of white privilege that were camouflaged. In the classroom, White racial domination was an on going, un named activity that operated behind innocuous structures, such as the socks, theories, and others, that doubled as disguises for Whiteness to dominate so white privilege could operate. White dominance permits White racialness to usurp the normalcy of the covering structures and affix that appearance of normalcy to its practices, assumptions, beliefs and traditions. Thus, the exterior coverings of normality to the critical events of the classroom were mere disguises that protected the activity of White racial domination, or white privilege.

The literature reviewed in the study supported the conclusion that white privilege operated in the classroom as a fundamental structure. Several studies emphasized the activity of Whiteness in marking white privilege (Banning, 2000; Barlas, 1997; Barlas, et al., 2000; Barnett, 2000; Colin & Preciphs, 1991; Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 1998; Keating, 1995; Maher & Tetreault, 1997; Nayak, 1997; Shore, 1997; Shore, 2000). Although white privilege was not consistently named as such in the literature, white privilege is the consequence of White racial domination. For example, Johnson-Bailey and Cervero (1998) marked the presence of Whiteness as a structure of power that functioned to shape the dynamics of the classroom. The operation of Whiteness in a capacity of dominance produces white privilege whether it is named or ignored.

The literature reviewed in this study also supported the conclusion that white privilege was invisible and possessed conflicting features (Barnett, 2000; Keating, 1995; Maher & Tetreault, 1997; Nayak, 1997; Shore, 1997; Shore, 2000). Shore (1997) reported that much of the instructional support literature used in adult education practice in Australia reinforces among others “the absent presence of Whiteness and an invisible

norm” (p. 414). Likewise, Keating (1995) characterized the invisibility of Whiteness in a description that appears almost nonsensical. She described Whiteness as a “pseudo-universal category that hides its specific values, epistemology, and other attributes under the guise of a non-racialized supposedly colorless human nature.” However ludicrous this description may appear, it nonetheless accurately captures the invisibility and conflicting nature of Whiteness/white privilege. Finally, Nayak (1997) contextualized the oxymoronic nature of Whiteness from a racial perspective. She identified Whiteness as an “elusive, transparent norm for Whites” and added that Whiteness is “vividly identified” by Blacks. Nayak’s findings illustrate how the conflicting features of White privilege concurrently operate differently for the two groups.

The Historically White College and University: Enabler of White Privilege

The second major conclusion of the study identified the historically White college and university as an important and unnamed enabler of white privilege. The study was conducted in two higher education classrooms in the context of a HWCU. The pedagogical practices and tools and teacher selection of instructional resources were allowed at the institution; thus the institution is seen as condoning and enabling to white privilege. An analysis of documents revealed that the Angle University, as a HWCU, maintains white privilege in the classroom through a process of systemic preservation of itself.

The study found that the HWCU safeguards white privilege by maintaining historically White traditions endemic to the preservation of the institution. One of those traditions is a practice of attracting mostly White and all-White populations. Higher education began in the United States as a White-only social enterprise with the founding of Harvard in 1636. The Angle University was established in the late 1700's. In the twenty-first century, the Angle University’s centuries old practice of easily admitting White students and hiring predominantly White faculty and staff continues. Document analysis of enrollment statistics for 2000 indicated student enrollment was 32,317. Of

that number, White students comprised 28,296 or 87.5 percent. In Jean's class White adult learners made up 91 per cent of the students. In Doc's class White adult learners comprised 64 per cent of the students. The total number of full-time faculty at the institution in 2001 was 1,170. White faculty comprised 88.5 of that total. In 2001, full time employees totaled 10,058. White full-time employees comprised 8,184 out of a total of 10,058. This tradition is endemic to a self-preservation process to ensure the vigor and vitality of the institution. Regrettably, this tradition, also works to ensure the vigor and vitality of white privilege in the higher education classroom. Since the racial desegregation of the Angle University more than 40 years ago, the African American population at the university in 2001 was only six percent. That is, out of a total enrollment of 32,317, Black students were numbered at 1,832 or six percent.

The study also found that the institution's participation in canon maintenance was sustaining to the operation of white privilege in the classroom. The canon of higher education is comprised of selected texts of theories, laws, philosophies, formulas, principles, and literature. Over the centuries, these selected texts have functioned to prescribe what is taught in the classroom and determine what is knowledge worth knowing. The texts of the canon are authored by people racialized as White. The Whiteness of the authors of the canon is a factor of sociocultural and historical events of early European society and American society (Colin & Preciphs, 1991; Jordan, 1968; Myrdal, 1944; Omi & Winant, 1994; Roediger, 1994; Tannenbaum 1946). Those events included social Darwinism, early British aversion to blackness, and Black slavery, de jure and de facto segregation in the United States. According to Colin and Preciphs (1991, p. 61), "social Darwinism, the eugenics movement, and the Teutonic origins theory are the intellectual antecedents of the social cultural racism that exists today." Document analysis further indicated that the texts of the classes observed in the study, education theory and psychological theory, were categories of canonical texts. Not surprisingly, all of the authors of the required and recommended texts used in both classes were White.

Traditional texts of the canon silence the voices of racial others by dominating textual voices and effectively keeping the formal knowledge of the higher education classroom predominantly White (Delgado, 1995; hooks, 1992).

The literature on Whiteness and white privilege did not support directly the conclusion reached in this study naming the historically White college and university (HWCU) as an enabler that sustains white privilege in the classroom. In that respect, the HWCU as a major enabler presents a different perspective on the existence of white privilege. However, the literature did address the operation of white privilege at the system level (Colin & Preciphs, 1991; Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 1998; Shore, 1997; Shore, 2000). Shore (1997) for example, looked at operational structures of adult community education in Australia. She sought to explore how the White male ideal entrenched in the western canon safeguarded the White mythological norm embedded in adult education. Shore examined the categories of service that comprised community adult education. She found that some of the categories were inherently designed to normalize Whiteness in adult education at the level of the practice. Shore (2000) also examined inquiry processes used in community adult education in Australian. She critiqued the espoused social justice components of Australian policies for adult education from a Whiteness and postcolonial theory perspective. Shore posited from this examination that the policymaking structures were organized by Whiteness and that the Whiteness of those structures were unseen by the committee. Thus, the practices in community adult education were pervasive and allowed to persist unchallenged. Again, Shore explored system level structures to understand how they correlated to classroom or practice level manifestations of white privilege. Additionally, Colin and Preciphs (1991) broached the concept of white privilege in the classroom from the perspective of systemic racism. They pointed out that the perceptual patterns of adult education perpetuate a racially hostile classroom for adult learners of color. Colin and Preciphs indict the literature and research base of the field as operating to shape and inform racially negative

perceptual patterns among adult educators in the classroom. In this way, the literature and research base of the field are situated at a level commensurate with the system.

Overall, there is general support in the literature for this conclusion from the perspective that system level structures act in a major way to fuel and sustain the operation of white privilege at the level of practice.

Finally, the conclusion that the HWCU is a system level structure that perpetuates white privilege in the classroom revealed a second dimension of system level perpetuation of white privilege. The study found that the HWCU additionally perpetuates white privilege at the system level through racial referencing of colleges and universities. Analysis revealed that the historically Black college and university (HBCU) is systematically “raced” at the same time the historically White college and university goes racially unmarked. In fact, unlike the HWCU, the HBCU is defined as such in the White House Initiative on HBCUs as “those institutions of post secondary education that were originally founded or whose antecedents were originally founded for the purpose of providing education opportunities for individuals of the Negro or colored race, and which continue to have as one of the primary purposes the provision of post secondary opportunities for Black Americans.” Further analysis of documents revealed that there is no White House initiative on HWCUs. There was support in the literature for the practice of “racing” at the level of the individual. Several studies acknowledged that Whites are often perceived as “un-raced” while people of color are perceived as “raced, Bowser & Hunt; Frankenberg, 1993; Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2000; Keating, 1995; Wildman, 1996). However, there was no support in the literature for “racing” that occurs at the system level. This finding therefore presents a different perspective from that found in the literature.

Adult Learners of Color as Supporters of White Privilege

The third major conclusion of the study revealed that adult learners of color were complicit with White adult learners in perpetuating white privilege in the higher education classroom. Adult learners of color in the study did not differ significantly from White adult learners in their reported incidences of race. The similarity of racial incidences between the two groups indicated that adult learners of color possess some of the same perceptions of race that White adult learners possess, and are therefore complicit with White adult learners in perpetuating white privilege. This conclusion was not supported in the literature reviewed in the study and therefore adds a new component to the literature.

This conclusion posits that adult learners of color are complicit with White adult learners in perpetuating white privilege in the classroom. This conclusion was based on analysis of reported incidences of race. First, the analysis revealed that none of the adult learners of color, or the White adult learners, reported a racial incident in the classroom in which the racial composition of the participants in the incident was “Whites only.” The absence of a “White only” racial component in their reported incidences suggests that adult learners of color similarly perceived, along with White adult learners, that “White” did not count as race. Thus, a “Whites only” racial incident in which all of the participants in the incident were White was not reported. A further analysis of racial incidents reported by the adult learners in the study provided additional support for this conclusion. Analysis revealed that adult learners of color, along with White adult learners, reported racial incidents in which they similarly situated “White” in the incident. That is, when adult learners in the study included and named White as a participant in the racial incidents, White was consistently named last. The last placement of White suggested that adult learners of color, along with White adult learners, did not perceive White as fully constituting race. That is, “White” was assumed as capable of participating in a racial incident, but “White” was incapable of “racing” the incident.

Thus, the last placement of White was a purposeful and not random act. There was no support in the literature reviewed for this conclusion. The perspective introduced by this conclusion adds to the literature base because it challenges conventional treatments of white privilege in the literature as an exclusively White owned enterprise. A majority of the studies in the field of adult education approach white privilege in the context of people racialized as White (Barlas, 1997; Barlas, et al. 2000; Shore, 1997; Shore, 2000). Whites are routinely situated in Whiteness and white privilege literature as recipients of the benefits of white privilege and culpable for the existence of white privilege. For example, Barlas (1997) conducted a study to examine a process for changing the consciousness of people about white privilege. Although, White and non-White people participated in the study, Barlas notes that her study “is focused specifically on the White group experience” (p. 20). Likewise, Barlas et al. (2000, p. 26) describes the nature of their study this way, “Using cooperative inquiry as a self-directed learning strategy, people of European American descent learn to unlearn White supremacist consciousness” (p. 26). While a number of these studies included both White and non-White people in their treatment of white privilege, people of color were almost always situated as the victims of the consequences of white privilege (Colin & Preciphs, 1991; Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 1998; Keating, 1995; Maher & Tetreault, 1997; Shore, 1997; Shore, 2000). The perspective introduced in this conclusion of the study presents a shift in the role of adult learners of color from victims of white privilege to co-conspirators of it.

Implications of the Study

This study points out that challenging white privilege in the classroom is a daunting task. Because white privilege is so embedded and so invisible, the task of challenging it must not be taken lightly. Therefore challenging white privilege must first begin with detection and not be assumed as a task for the individual educator. The conclusions of the study suggest that detection must be a fully embraced effort. At HWCUs, departments, schools, faculty, staff and students must collaborate on multiple

levels to form working partnerships dedicated to identifying manifestation of white privilege. Because white privilege is so difficult to see, those who would challenge it must be mindful that seeing it and looking for it will untimely yield different results. Those who would challenge it must look for it because it is there. Seeing it comes as a result of looking for it. I think institutions should consider regionally consorting with other HWCUs to support the detection of white privilege within its practices and traditions.

Secondly, although detecting white privilege is the first step in challenging white privilege, there is yet another first step to detecting white privilege. Those who would engage in efforts to detect it at the level of the classroom would be wise to first engage the unfamiliar practice of attending to race. Race has been a historically neglected domain in adult education literature. This study suggests that Whiteness is a correct starting point in attending to race. Starting at the point of White racialness should engage a model that would yield a perspective transformation, (Barlas, 1997; Barlas, et al. 2000) particularly about Whiteness. Those who would commit to detecting white privilege as a means of challenging white privilege must be anchored in sound racial doctrine. The study found that misguided racial knowledge is enabling to the operation of white privilege. Classroom professors must specifically name White as race. They must also acknowledge Whiteness as a present and organizing societal structure that is reproduced in the classroom. Marking White racialness in these ways by professors makes White accountable, and it begins the process of dispelling the pervasive myth of White as something other than race.

Another implication of the study was that organized activities designed to contend with race and white privilege must not exclude, preclude, or default to adult learners of color. That is, assumptions must not be made about the racial cognizance or competency of adult learners based on their assigned racial status. White adult learners, in particular, must refrain from the flawed but routine practice of resorting to and relying on the

attending non-White individual at the table to provide the perspective of all non-White. Efforts to challenge white privilege will risk failure if they organize teams, committees, or groups that engage a model that operates in this way. One of the findings of this study indicated that adult learners of color hold some of the same misguided notions of race that White adult learners hold. I think this study demonstrates that such a caveat is necessary and should under gird efforts to displace white privilege in the classroom and elsewhere. Adult learners of color, African Americans in particular, still do not comprise a homogenous group.

Lastly, I believe the findings of this study warrant further scholarship on the role of the HWCU in the matter of white privilege. Although many HWCUs are engaged in racial renovation, they are nonetheless caught in a kind of push-pull syndrome where they stimulate the existence of white privilege at the same time they attempt to suppress racial oppression produced by the privilege they stimulate. I believe HWCUs must shift from focusing on Black to interrogating White. They must begin to interrogate how White racialness operates at the administrative level to influence how the academics of the institutions are carried out in the classroom. This task might be achieved by establishing a white privilege component within the organizational structure of the HWCU. A white privilege component, unlike a diversity or multicultural component, would compel the HWCU to address the proliferation of Whiteness in the context of the institution. Shifting the gaze to Whiteness will position the HWCU to notice manifestations of white privilege and mark the structures that enable it. I believe the HWCU can bring about measurable racial equity to its campuses and to society by stepping up to challenge itself.

Concluding Remarks

Who am I and why did I conduct this study? Was this just another race study by an angry Black woman venting about injustice? What is the point and whose interests are served by this research anyway? As I conclude my research, I find myself still asking

questions. I have chosen to conclude this study by addressing these questions because I know that as a person of color, my Blackness will always precede me and whatever I might accomplish.

When I was about five years old, my mother had taken my two older sisters and me shopping at the Kress five and dime store downtown. My mother says she was carrying me in her arms when I suddenly began to choke on a piece of peppermint candy. As I was coughing, she says she hurried me over to the water fountain in the store. There were two fountains. One was dirty and dried up with a big sign above it that read COLORED. The water fountain right next to it was clean and working. There was a big sign above it that read WHITES ONLY. She says within the few seconds of my coughing and her tending to me, before she could literally turn around, a settled-aged refined White lady just appeared and gave her a cup of water from the White fountain for me to drink. This incident happened during the late 1950s in the Deep South at the time of de jure segregation and Black codes. Since that time, I have spent a good part of my adult life looking for that lady to tell her thank-you. Although I was a child, the images of that incident, the distinctions of COLORED and WHITES ONLY were indelibly painted in my mind.

When I think of this story, I am reminded of what it really meant for me to have conducted this study on white privilege. Like the White lady in my story who resisted the racialized status quo by daring to cross the color line at the water fountain nearly half a century ago, I confront that same color line nearly half a century later. Having lived through segregation in the United States and post segregationist American society, I have much more than a vicarious, passing interest in white privilege. In spite of my cultural proximity to the system of Whiteness, I have somehow managed to escape experiences of blatant White racism, although I daily feel the anguish of being situated on the other side of white privilege. I speak as one both wearied and haggard by the color line dilemma. Yet, I am personally and professionally committed to the dismantlement of White

privilege for those like me who similarly have known and continually contend with the arrogance and the frustration of race privilege in a democratic society.

Finally, I am proud to have stayed the course of this study in spite of the elitist resistance I faced within the academy. I believe that the findings of my study have the potential to foster civil dialogue that will lead to racial resolution on some level.

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APPENDIX A
CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM

I _____ agree to participate in the research, “*Power Dynamics Among Adults in the Graduate classroom.*,” conducted by Linda E. Logan, Department of Adult Education, (706) 542-4011, the University of Georgia under the direction of Dr. Ronald M. Cervero, Department Head, Adult Education (706) 542-2221. I understand that this participation is entirely voluntary; I can withdraw my consent at any time without penalty and have the results of the participation, to the extent that it can be identified as mine, returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The following points have been explained to me to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study:

- (1) The reason for the research is to understand power dynamics among adult learners in the graduate classroom.. (2) This data is significant because there is a gap in the knowledge regarding how power structures impact the development and learning of the adult in the classroom. (3) This research will contribute to the knowledge base on adult learning. (4) I will benefit from this study in the opportunity it affords me to discuss and reflect on my classroom experiences, and in the additional opportunity to contribute to potential theory that may be generated from this study. (5) The procedures are as follows: I will be expected to meet with the researcher at a mutually agreed upon day, time, and location to sign the consent form and then to answer semi-structured questions pertaining to the above stated research for approximately 1 hour to 1 ½ hours. I understand and agree that the interviews will be audio-taped and securely filed by the researcher until June 2003. Audiotapes will be stored in folder marked confidential in filing cabinet of researcher until June 2003.
- (6) The discomforts or stresses that may occur during this research are recalling unpleasant classroom experiences or discussing the issue of race.
- (7) No risks are foreseen.
- (8) The results of this participation will be confidential, and will not be released in any individually identifiable form without my prior consent, unless otherwise required by law. I will be assigned a pseudonym for my protection.
- (9) I reserve the right to review/edit the audio-tape(s) of this study, to know who will have access to the tape(s), and to know the educational uses of the audio-tape(s).
- (10) The researcher will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project and can be reached.

Signature of Researcher/Date

Signature of Participant/Date

PLEASE SIGN BOTH COPIES OF THIS FORM. KEEP ONE AND RETURN THE OTHER TO THE RESEARCHER.

For questions or problems about your rights please call or write: Human Subjects Office, 606A Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30601-7411 (706) 542-3199.

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview Guide

PARTICIPANT HISTORY

1. Tell me a little about you—who you are?
2. And why are you pursuing this degree?
3. What is the educational background of your family?

GENERAL CLASSROOM EXPERIENCES

4. Describe your place in the classroom
5. How would you describe the overall classroom atmosphere?
6. Describe the class in terms of who talks most.
7. Who is not speaking and why is that?
8. Who is listened to the most?
9. Who assumes the most authority?
10. Describe your personal interactions with the teacher.

RACE EXPERIENCES IN THE CLASSROOM

11. Discuss a classroom incident where you believe race was a factor.
12. What was your participation in the incident?
13. How did you feel about your participation in the incident?
14. Can you think of a time when race functioned in the classroom?
15. Can recall any other incidents from other classes that centered on race?
16. Do you have any questions for me or any comments that you would like to add?