

FACING THE DISAGREEABLE MIRROR: A CRITICAL COUNTER-NARRATIVE
EXPLORING HOW WHITE COLLEGE STUDENTS MAKE MEANING OF AND EVADE
DISRUPTING RACISM IN THEIR ENVIRONMENTS

by

MELVIN A. WHITEHEAD

(Under the Direction of Darris R. Means)

ABSTRACT

While racist aggressions are not new on U.S. college campuses, there is evidence that the frequency of such acts has increased dramatically in recent years—a trend that threatens to exacerbate Students’ of Color previously documented experiences with racist campus environments. Current research about Students’ of Color racialized experiences in higher education largely confine their focus to the campus environment without considering how it is affected by broader socio-political contexts, do not examine whiteness and their white peers as a root cause behind their racial marginalization, and do not explore the role of white racialized emotions as a part of white college students’ racial framing and meaning-making. The purpose of this grounded theory study was to understand: 1) white college students’ processes for making meaning of race and racism (in their on- and off-campus environments and within broader U.S. socio-political contexts), 2) how these processes connected to their emotional responses to issues of race and racism, and 3) how these processes served to continually (re)construct whiteness and/or disrupt racism in their environments. This study was informed by Cabrera, Franklin, and Watson’s (2017) critical analysis of whiteness in higher education. Data were collected over two

phases through anonymously submitted participant diaries and analyzed using the constant comparison method (Charmaz, 2014). Findings from the study generated theory concerning how white undergraduate students make meaning of and evade issues of race and racism in their environments, which consists of nine interrelated components: 1) *triggering events*, 2) *prior racial frames and contexts*; 3) *meaning-making strategies*; 4) *evasion strategies*, 5) *constructing racial climates*, 6) *emotional responses*, 7) *emotional coping strategies*, 8) *evasive actions*, and 9) *actions towards racial justice*. The theory generated from this study is presented as a composite counter-narrative (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) that draws upon Students' of Color experiences with racism and the racial climate on their campus to highlight how whiteness also functions as a pathology that perpetuates cultural trauma (Thompson & Watson, 2016). Findings from the study challenge, confirm, and extend the literature concerning white college students' racial frames, emotions, and behavior and produced several implications for practice and research.

INDEX WORDS: campus climate, college students, counterstory, critical whiteness studies, grounded theory, higher education, racial climate, racism

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MS, University of Michigan, 2010

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my mother and late-father—Carolyn Dawson Whitehead and James “Ted” Henry Whitehead, Jr. You both had big dreams for your only child and made many sacrifices so that I could have access to educational opportunities that were denied to you. This work is a result of your dreams, your labor, and your love and I do not take anything you did for granted.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“What was really at work here was white rage. With so much attention focused on the flames, everyone had ignored the logs, the kindling. In some ways, it is easy to see why. White rage is not about visible violence, but rather it works its way through the courts, the legislatures, and a range of government bureaucracies. It wreaks havoc subtly, almost imperceptibly. Too imperceptibly, certainly, for a nation consistently drawn to the spectacular—to what it can see.”

—Carol Anderson, *“White Rage”* (2016)

Early one morning in January 2018, I read a news story that ultimately led me to pursue the present study. It was a story that gave me a glimpse of the white rage Anderson (2016) describes in the above quotation; it told of how one institution was drawn to the spectacularity of its expression and not the capacity for this kindling to wreck future havoc. The story was about a first-year student at the University of Alabama who had been expelled for posting two videos on social media of her racist rants. In her first video, the student had said: “I love how I act like I love Black people, because I fucking hate niggers.” After this first video was soundly condemned by others for its racist content, the student had posted a second video that same evening in which she had exclaimed:

You know what? Nigger, nigger, nigger! I don't care if it's Martin Luther King Day. I'm in the South now, bitch. So everyone can fuck off! I'm from New Jersey, so I can say ‘nigger’ as much as I want.

On the day after the videos were posted, the University of Alabama announced that the student had been expelled. On the day after her expulsion, the student apologized in a newspaper interview and said the following regarding her actions: “I feel horrible. I feel so, so bad and I am so sorry. There's no excuse. I did something really bad.”

Two aspects of this story struck me as particularly interesting. First was what I perceived to be the bold rage underlying the student's comments. She seemed to be so full of rage and this rage fueled her espoused hatred for Black people. I wondered: Why was she so angry? What caused her anger? Through subsequently reading several other news articles about this story, it seemed to me that these questions about context and internal processes were left unasked and unexplored.

The second aspect of this story that struck me was the quick pace of both the student's expulsion and her apology—both of which happened in a matter of days. Similar to how many colleges and universities have responded to students' public displays of overt racism and other forms of bigotry, the University of Alabama quickly sought to distance itself from this student and her comments and asserted that her videos were inconsistent with the institution's values. But what was to happen *after* her expulsion? Who was to say that the student would not continue to hold onto her rage and racist hate and—through her words and actions—hurt other Black people in the future? In the report I read, no one from the university had expressed any interest in these questions about the student's long-term development nor her propensity for future racist actions. Furthermore, it seemed unlikely that the student had any deeply transformative experience in the short time between her posting the videos and her subsequent apology. Did she truly understand the gravity of her actions, or did her expression of remorse simply reflect an understanding that

she had gotten caught doing something that transgressed widely accepted, race-evasive norms? What did this student *really* learn as a result of what happened?

Problem Statement

While racist aggressions like this one are not a new phenomenon on U.S. college campuses, there is evidence suggesting that their frequency has increased dramatically in recent years. According to data available from the U.S. Department of Education (n.d.), the number of reported hate crimes between 2015 and 2016 increased by 25%—the largest increase of such crimes since 2009. Most of these hate crimes were racially motivated. A report by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) also indicated that white supremacist groups have been increasingly targeting college campuses across the country with white nationalist propaganda (2018). In their report, the ADL counted 292 instances of fliers, stickers, banners, and posters spreading white nationalist messages on U.S. college campuses during the 2017-2018 academic year—77% more than those they counted during the previous academic year (Anti-Defamation League, 2018).

These disturbing trends extend beyond campus contexts. According to data collected by the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (2017), the number of hate crimes reported by U.S. law enforcement officials across the country in 2016 reached 6,121—a five-year high; the majority of these crimes (48%) were also motivated by racial bias. Taken together, these patterns suggest that white nationalist extremism and explicit racism have moved from the margins of U.S. society towards the center, and that their expression on U.S. college campuses has become less socially unacceptable.

This recent resurgence in overt racist speech and actions on U.S. college campuses exacerbates Students' of Color previously documented experiences with racist campus environments. Over 20 years' worth of empirical research has repeatedly indicated that college

Students of Color—especially Black college students—experience race-based harassment, discrimination, and hostility at higher rates than their white peers; perceive their campuses more negatively than their white peers; endure microaggressions; feel pressured to conform to race-based stereotypes; and believe their institutions are not doing enough to address or respond to racism (Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000; George Mwangi, Thelamour, Ezeofor, & Carpenter, 2018; Kanter, Williams, Kuczynski, Manbeck, Debreaux, & Rosen, 2017; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007; Suarez-Balcazar, Orellana-Damacela, Portillo, Rowan, & Andrews-Guillen, 2003).

Notwithstanding the significant contributions these studies and others have made to the field of higher education concerning Students' of Color various experiences with marginalization, what is often missing from their analyses—as Harper (2012) argued—is attention to the root cause of these marginalizing experiences: racism. Cabrera (2014a) extended Harper's (2012) analysis even further to call for an empirical focus on whiteness and plainly stated: “if Students of Color are experiencing hostile campus racial climates, many of their white peers are creating this marginalization” (p. 769). Indeed, some scholars have argued it is impossible to understand racism without understanding whiteness (Applebaum, 2016; Dyer, 1997) and that whiteness normalizes white supremacy (Cabrera, 2018)—a structure that is deeply embedded within higher education (Patton, 2016). To address Students' of Color marginalization on their campuses, the present study examined whiteness intimately through the everyday experiences of white college students.

Empirical studies have suggested that white college students—particularly white college men—feel angry and apathetic towards issues of race and racism (Bonilla-Silva & Foreman, 2000; Cabrera, 2014a; Picca & Feagin, 2007). Their anger, in particular, has been in response to

the perceived threats to their social standing posed by race-conscious policies, such as affirmative action (Cabrera, 2014a, 2014c; Picca & Feagin, 2007; Smith, Senter, & Strachan, 2013). White students have Students' of Color experiences with racism as isolated incidents or as non-rationally motivated and have asserted that Students of Color are overly-sensitive and look for racism where none exists (Cabrera, 2014b, 2014c; Kanter, Williams, Kuczynski, Manbeck, Debreaux, & Rosen, 2017). Moreover, white college students deny the persistence of racism while simultaneously engaging in racist performances within presumed all-white settings, such as telling racist jokes and making racist comments (Cabrera, 2014b; Picca & Feagin, 2007).

Taken together, the recent rise of explicit racist hate on and off U.S. college campuses, white college students' feelings of racial anger and apathy, and Students' of Color well-documented experiences of marginalization should be deeply troubling for educators and leaders in higher education. This study on white college students and their understanding of race and racism sought to inform efforts for reducing racist aggressions targeting Students of Color and moving higher education towards achieving one of its most commonly asserted goals: preparing students for meaningful civic engagement (Association for American Colleges and Universities, n.d.). Findings from several studies have found that direct meaningful interpersonal interactions with racial diversity are positively linked to students' cognitive development and increases in civic engagement (Bowman, 2010, 2011). Furthermore, empirical studies have repeatedly demonstrated that—for Black and Latina/o/x students, in particular—negative experiences with and perceptions of the racial climate on their campuses are linked to poor psychological and academic adjustment, feelings of alienation and detachment from the institution, lower social satisfaction, delayed graduation, and withdrawal from college (Cabrera & Nora, 1994; Fischer, 2007, 2010; Hurtado, Carter, & Spuler, 1996; Nora & Cabrera, 1996). Some studies suggest that

white students are also negatively affected by poor perceptions of the racial climates on their campuses through a diminished sense of belonging, diminished psychosocial well-being, decreased academic persistence, diminished commitment to academic goals and the institution, and lower grade point averages (Cabrera, Nora, Terenzini, Pascarella, & Hagedorn, 1999; Gillard, 1996; Nora & Cabrera, 1996). Because interpersonal interactions with racial diversity and the racial campus climate matter in significant ways for students' academic and personal success, it is vital for educators and leaders in higher education to reexamine how we are engaging white students around matters concerning race and racism, particularly in an era marked by a resurgence in explicit racist hate.

This study also sought to inform educational practices concerning race and racism by examining interplays between campus contexts and broader socio-political contexts. Empirical studies about racial campus climates largely confine their focus to the campus environment without considering how it is affected by broader racial climates and white supremacy (Cabrera, Watson, & Franklin, 2016; George Mwangi et al., 2018). Furthermore, most of the empirical studies about white college students' racial thoughts, feelings, and attitudes draw upon data collected prior to the 2016 U.S. Presidential election cycle—a pivotal point in the national rise of racist hate crimes (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2016).

Research Goals

This grounded theory study was informed by a transformative paradigmatic lens (Mertens, 2005) and driven by three overarching goals. The primary goal guiding this study was to inform practices that can reduce racist aggressions targeting college Students of Color at historically white institutions. Such an effort necessitates a transformation in white college students' racial framing, feelings, and behavior. Towards that end, this study sought to inform

practices for constructively engaging white college students with matters of race and racism—particularly white college students who are apathetic and/or antagonistic towards these issues. Specifically, I had hoped to inform pedagogical practices useful for prompting white college students to reflect on the saliency of race in their lives and their responses to racial issues—topics that the literature indicates many white people do not think about, avoid thinking about, or perceive as irrelevant to them (Cabrera, 2018; Hagerman, 2018). It is my hope that the implications for practice that came out of this study are effective for engaging white college students in such reflection, supporting their development towards critical consciousness (Freire, 2000) about race, and leading white college students towards what Freire (2000) called *praxis*—action based on reflective thinking about the world.

Second, this study sought to upend dominant narratives about contemporary race relations in the U.S. and on U.S. college campuses. These dominant narratives are shaped by race-evasive ideologies that minimize racism as a salient factor shaping People of Color’s lives, explain race-related phenomena as natural occurrences, and frame racism as something perpetrated only by a few fringe outliers whose actions are incompatible with mainstream white America’s non-racist values (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Thompson & Watson, 2016). Likewise, U.S. college campuses are often purported to be bastions of liberalism where racist acts are framed and addressed as the work of a few perpetrators—not as something endemic (Cabrera, 2018). Towards this end, I present the findings from this study as a composite counter-narrative—a method that “exposes, analyzes, and challenges” master narratives rooted in white racial privilege (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 32).

Finally, given that whiteness upholds white supremacy in ways that are normative and invisible, another goal of this study was not only to render whiteness more visible and explicit

(an objective of critical whiteness scholars; Applebaum, 2016), but also to make it “strange” (Dyer, 1997, p. 10). In other words, this study sought to disrupt white supremacy by depicting the constructions of race and racism that whiteness renders normal as *abnormal*—particularly when placed in the realm of the spirit. The present study took up this effort by theorizing whiteness as a pathology—an under-examined area in contemporary critical whiteness scholarship (Thompson & Watson, 2016).

Research Purpose and Questions

In alignment with the above goals, the purpose of this grounded theory study was to explore and generate theory concerning the processes underlying white college students' meaning-making in relation to issues of race and racism, with particular attention to how these processes are shaped by racial emotions and interplays between campus contexts and broader socio-political contexts. In its efforts to generate theory, the study sought to refine and/or extend existing theories and frameworks concerning dominant white racial framing—namely Feagin's (2013) *white racial frame* and Bonilla-Silva's (2018) *colorblind racism*. This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are white undergraduate students' processes of making meaning of race and racism—in their immediate on- and off-campus environments and within broader U.S. socio-political contexts?
2. How do these processes connect to white students' emotional responses to issues of race and racism?
3. How do these processes serve to continuously (re)construct whiteness and/or disrupt racism?

Capitalization Practices and Terminology

The capitalization practices and terminology used within this manuscript are intentional. Understanding the meaning behind their use is vital for understanding my transformative paradigmatic lens (Mertens, 2005), as well as how I envision and situate the study.

Capitalization Practices

In this manuscript, I capitalize the names of racially and ethnically minoritized groups (e.g., “Black” or “Students of Color”) to denote power and legitimacy (Journal of College Student Development, 2017). Conversely, I do not capitalize “white” given that white people's power and legitimacy is hegemonic and has, for centuries, served to structure and normalize white supremacy (Feagin, 2013). These capitalization practices serve to disrupt dominant narratives about power and legitimacy and stem from my transformative paradigmatic lens.

White Supremacy, White Privilege, and Whiteness

White supremacy, whiteness, and white privilege are terms that are often used—and conflated—in discourse about racial justice. *White supremacy* has been described as an ideological structure of white racial/racist domination (hooks, 1989; Leonardo, 2004) that consists of a “continual pattern of widespread, everyday practices and policies” (Applebaum, 2016, p. 4). *White privilege* refers to an institutional set of unearned advantages that are conferred systematically to those whose skin color “resemble[s] the people who dominate the powerful positions in our institutions” (Kendall, 2002, p. 1; McIntosh, 1989).

Whiteness has been variously defined as embodied racial power (Bonilla-Silva, 2003), a racial discourse that normalizes white supremacy (Leonardo, 2009), a “racial location of structural power” and standpoint from which white people view themselves and society (Frankenberg, 1991, p. 1), an unmarked set of cultural practices (ibid, p. 1), a set of property

rights that white people seek to protect (Harris, 1993), an “ongoing and unfinished history” that is lived as background experience (Ahmed, 2007, p.150), and an epistemology of ignorance (Mills, 2007). In this manuscript, I embrace all of these functions of whiteness as manifestations of a pathology that perpetuates cultural trauma (Thompson & Waston, 2016).

Racism, Racial Prejudice, and Racist Aggressions

Other terms that are often conflated in racial justice discourse include *racism* and *prejudice*. My use of racial *prejudice* refers to an individual's personal attitudes (often derived from stereotypes) towards people of a specific racial/ethnic group. *Racism*, on the other hand, is a race-based form institutionalized oppression. As such, racism is pervasive, hierarchical, and restrictive (Adams, Blumenfeld, Castaneda, Hackman, Peters, & Zúñiga, 2013), while racial prejudice is not. My use of the term *racist aggressions* refers to interpersonal acts of racism that are perpetuated by white individuals against People of Color—whether People of Color are present to experience them or not. These include (but are not limited to) acts of racial discrimination, racial stereotyping, the use of racist slurs, and even more subtle insults—the latter of which have traditionally been referred to as *microaggressions* (Solórzano & Yosso, 2000). My use of the term *racist aggressions* serves to acknowledge that painful impact *all* these acts have on People of Color, whether they be explicit or subtle.

Minoritized

Instead of using *minority* to refer to People of Color, I use the term *minoritized* to emphasize the socially constructed nature of representation and underrepresentation and the saliency of social contexts in relation to minority status (Harper, 2012). People of Color are not born into minority status but may be *minoritized* in specific contexts through “marginalizing and oppressive processes” (Casado-Perez, 2018, p. 1) that are sustained by whiteness (Harper, 2012).

Significance of the Study

Findings from this study generated knowledge and theory concerning: 1) how white undergraduate students make meaning of and evade race and racism, 2) how these processes are shaped by affective responses to these issues and racial contexts that extend beyond campus, and 3) how these processes serve to either (re)construct whiteness or disrupt racism. This study provides a needed update to white (and white college students') racial framing, given that most of the related empirical literature draws upon data collected over a decade ago and prior to the most recent national resurgence of racist hate.

This study also offers a novel contribution to the critical whiteness literature in higher education through its use of a critical counter-narrative that places spirit at the center and foregrounds the voices and experiences of People of Color. The use of counter-narratives in critical whiteness research is uncommon, as they are traditionally used in empirical works about People of Color—not white people. Its use in the present study is a departure from how counter-narratives are traditionally told, yet is consistent with Solórzano and Yosso's (2002) stated purpose for the method and serves to frame whiteness as a pathology that perpetuates cultural trauma (Thompson & Watson, 2016). I contend that such depictions are needed to facilitate our individual and collective healing from the trauma and terror (hooks, 1992) of whiteness.

Finally, findings from this study yielded several implications that will be useful for college educators and practitioners as they engage white college students with racial issues and the racism in their environments. Such engagement is necessary for reducing racist aggressions targeting Students of Color at historically white institutions. Specifically, findings inform curricular and co-curricular programming about race and racism in the U.S.; institutional

responses to high profile racist aggressions and hate crimes on campus; and pedagogical practices for engaging white students with the topics of race and racism in the classroom.

Dissertation Summary

This chapter outlined the motivations, goals, purpose, and questions that drove the present study, and the problems it sought to address. The present study sought to address the racist campus environments experienced by Students of Color at historically white institutions by exploring the racial meaning-making of those who are largely responsible for perpetuating these campus environments—their white peers (Cabrera, 2018). In chapter two, I summarize and critique the literature concerning white racial learning, framing, ideologies, attitudes, engagement, emotions, and behavior with a particular focus on white college students. I also identify the questions that remained unexplored in the literature to situate the present study. In chapter three, I describe the study's methodology, which includes a discussion of the transformative paradigm (Mertens, 2005) that guided the study, its grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014) approach, the theoretical framework that informed the study, data collection and analysis procedures, how I evaluated the study, and my researcher positionality. Chapter three also expounds upon my understanding of whiteness as a pathology that perpetuates cultural trauma and my use of a critical counter-narrative (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) to render this aspect of whiteness explicit. Chapter four outlines the study's findings—the theory generated from this study—which are presented as a critical counter-narrative. Chapter five concludes this dissertation with a discussion of how the findings from this study confirm, challenge, and extend the literature and their implications for practice and research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

“But what on earth is whiteness that one should desire it?”

—*W. E. B. DuBois, “The Souls of White Folk” (1920)*

Given the purpose of this study, I originally sought to situate it within the empirical literature about white college students' racial ideologies and emotions. As I began reading, I quickly learned that these constructs are largely shaped outside of—and prior to entering—college contexts. I also learned that white college students' racial ideologies and emotions are intertwined with their patterns of interracial engagement and other racialized behaviors.

Accordingly, two major strands of literature inform this study: 1) the racial learning, frameworks, and emotions among white people in the United States, broadly; and 2) the racial engagement, ideologies, and emotions of white U.S. college students, in particular. The first strand of literature I discuss serves as a backdrop for understanding the second strand.

White Racial Learning, Frameworks, and Emotions

The literature concerning how white people in the United States think and feel about race can be organized into three groups: 1) their racial learning, 2) their racial frameworks, and 3) their racial emotions.

White Racial Learning

Given the vital role that families play in shaping racial ideologies and that the family context is where individuals first learn about race and racism (Hagerman, 2018; Vittrup, 2018), this study draws upon literature addressing white children's racial learning. The bulk of the

empirical literature about racial socialization published over the past two decades largely focuses on Children of Color and the messages they receive about race from their parents and guardians (e.g., Brown & Lesane-Brown, 2006; Chang, Feldman, & Easley, 2017; Hrapczynski & Leslie, 2018; Stone & Dolbin-MacNab, 2017; Wilson, Mbilishaka, & Lewis, 2018). Implicit in these characterizations of racial socialization is a process that is understood to be *passive*—as something that happens *to* children. Although born from research on white adults rather than white children, Bonilla-Silva's (2018) description of racial socialization also reinforced its conceptualization as a passive process. Building upon Bourdieu's (1984) notion of the habitus as socially-acquired tendencies shaping an individual's worldview, Bonilla-Silva (2018) articulated the notion of a *white habitus*—an uninterrupted process of racial socialization that shapes white people's racial tastes, perceptions, and feelings, and views on racial matters. This process, Bonilla-Silva (2018) argued, is facilitated through white people's high levels of spatial and social segregation and serves to promote white solidarity and negative views about People of Color. Such patterns have been evident across both working-class and affluent white people (Gest, 2016; Hagerman, 2018).

Contrary to how Bonilla-Silva (2018) and others have characterized racial socialization implicitly as a passive process, more recent empirical research suggests that children engage in *active* processes of *comprehensive racial learning* in which they “negotiate, interpret, and make meaning of the various and conflicting messages they receive about race, [and] ultimately form their own understandings of how race works” (Winkler, 2012, p. 7). Illustrating this process, findings from Hagerman's (2018) ethnographic study of 35 white affluent families suggested that white affluent children learn about race and racism through interactions in their various local environments, including within their families, schools, peer groups, neighborhoods, and contexts

connected to extracurricular activities. Moreover, the interactions that formed the children's racial learning in this study were shaped by the social surroundings their parents had constructed for them through their parents' choices of what they believed “to be best for their children” or “what their children deserved” (Hagerman, 2018, p. 73). These included choices of where to live, what schools their children would attend, and in which extracurricular activities their children would participate (Hagerman, 2018).

Confirming Bonilla-Silva's (2018) notion of the white habitus linking segregated white environments with cultivating white racial solidarity and negative views of People of Color, Hagerman (2018) found that white children in the study who grew up in very segregated white environments were primarily concerned about protecting their sense of moral superiority over others and defending themselves from accusations of racism (from which they believed they were immune). Conversely, the white children in Hagerman's (2018) study who grew up in more racially diverse neighborhoods believed they were susceptible to racism and feared talking about race because they did not want to make a Peer of Color “feel bad” (p. 169). Making a Peer of Color feel bad, they believed, would in turn make them feel bad by establishing that they were, in fact, racist. To a limited extent, findings from this study confirmed prior literature linking white people's residence in racially and ethnically diverse neighborhoods with more racially progressive views, weaker investments in whiteness, and stronger emotional connections to People of Color (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Gest, 2016).

Although the empirical literature about white children's processes of racial learning remains undeveloped and lacks attention to how white poor, working-class, and middle-class children develop their ideas about race and racism, findings from Hagerman's (2018) study suggested that white affluent children's racial learning is largely shaped by the structures of their

racial context that is created for them by their parents/guardians (e.g., where to live or go to school). White children's parents and guardians make these decisions based on their own racial ideologies. In the next section, I describe prevalent racial ideologies among white U.S. adults.

White Racial Frameworks

Several empirical and non-empirical works have described how white people think and feel about racial matters (e.g., Anderson, 2016; Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Bonilla-Silva & Foreman, 2000; DiAngelo, 2018; Ioanide, 2015; Picca, 2010; Picca & Feagin, 2007), though few have articulated an overarching framework for how they do so. Two notable exceptions have been Bonilla-Silva's (2018) *colorblind racism* and Feagin's (2013) *white racial frame*.

Colorblind racism. Bonilla-Silva (2018) described colorblind racism as an ideology that “explains contemporary racial inequality as the outcome of nonracial dynamics” (p. 2) and argued that it shapes how most white people in the United States think, talk, and feel about race. Describing race relations since the end of de jure segregation in the U.S., several authors have asserted that racism now operates more covertly and under the pretense that all forms of racial oppression have been eliminated through the availability of equal opportunity for all (Anderson, 2016; Ioanide, 2015). Put another way, racism in the post-Civil Rights era is largely conceptualized as exceptional, rather than endemic. Bonilla-Silva's (2018) colorblind framework, therefore, describes how a dominant racial order—one that reinforces white racial privilege—is maintained through how many white people think about and discuss racial matters, despite this colorblind pretense.

Bonilla-Silva (2018) identified four frames of colorblind racism: abstract liberalism, naturalization, cultural racism, and the minimization of racism. *Abstract liberalism*—which constitutes the ideology's foundation—supports the idea that “force should not be used to achieve

social policy” (Bonilla-Silva, 2018, p. 56) and emphasizes individualism and choice in explaining racial matters. Through *naturalization*, white people explain racial phenomena (e.g., their preferences for white friends and partners) as natural occurrences, thereby absolving themselves of any responsibility for maintaining the dominant racial order. *Cultural racism* draws upon racial stereotypes to explain racial inequalities. The *minimization of racism* frame presumes racial discrimination as a minor (or non-existent) factor shaping People of Color's lives (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). Bonilla-Silva (2018) found that each of these frames, in turn, is expressed through white people's semantic choices that serve to avoid racial discussions altogether and/or protect their image.

Bonilla-Silva (2018) provided a useful lens for understanding how white people generally—through embracing a colorblind ideology of race—maintain a dominant racial order that reinforces white racial privilege. Bonilla-Silva's (2018) findings were based on an analysis of two sets of interview data from the late 1990's. One set of interview data was collected from convenience samples of white college students from three different regions in the U.S., while the other came from a study of Black and white adults in Detroit. Bonilla-Silva (2018) did not describe how the data were collected and analyzed, by whom, and for what original purpose, and the data upon which the work is based are now over two decades old—all of which raise concerns about the trustworthiness of the findings and their usefulness for understanding contemporary white racial attitudes. Although Bonilla-Silva (2018) recently argued that subsequent studies have confirmed the persistence of the colorblind frames, I argue that it is possible that new racial matters—that may be more salient than those shaping the original interview questions in the study—may exist and may provide keener insight into how white people think and talk about race today.

Feagin's (2013) white racial frame. Situating the *white racial frame* within a U.S. context, Feagin (2013) defined it as an overarching worldview used by white Americans (and other groups seeking to conform to white norms) that “encompasses important racial ideas, terms, images, emotions, and interpretations” that “rationalize and structure racial interactions, inequalities, and other racial patterns” (p. 3) across social settings. In short, Feagin's (2013) premise is that many white individuals have used the white racial frame over centuries to make sense of a racialized society. Feagin's (2013) white racial frame is comprised of the following interwoven dimensions: “(1) racial stereotypes (a beliefs aspect); (2) racial narratives and interpretations (integrating cognitive aspects); (3) racial images (a visual aspect) and language accents (an auditory aspect); (4) racialized emotions (a "feelings" aspect); and (5) inclinations to discriminatory action” (pp. 10-11). Feagin's (2013) white racial frame is one of the few frameworks to acknowledge racial emotions as part of dominant white racial framing—a domain that the present study sought to explore as part of white racial meaning-making.

Drawing upon extensive empirical and historical evidence, Feagin (2013) argued that anti-blackness constitutes a subframe that is central to how white people think about race. Although Feagin (2013) described the salience of Native American, Latina/o/x, and Asian peoples within dominant white racial framing, Feagin clearly demonstrated through this evidence that, over centuries, white people's racial framing has kept “[a] strong obsessive focus on Black Americans as the dominant issue, problem, or reference point” (p. 99). This anti-Black subframe, Feagin (2013) argued, is deeply embedded within white people's consciousness and has served as a vehicle for institutionalizing racism. Furthermore, Feagin (2013) argued that it is fomented and propagated through anti-Black stereotypes that are linked to animalistic imagery, criminality, and gender (Feagin, 2010). In turn, these stereotypes and images provoke strong emotional

responses—such as fear and anxiety—from white people and lead them to render People of Color (particularly Black people) as a racialized other. Over time, Feagin (2013) argued that this racialized othering facilitates white people's racist thoughts and actions and erodes their feelings of empathy towards Black people (and People of Color, generally).

Speaking to the salience of racialized emotions that comprise the white racial frame, Feagin (2013) argued that many white people's behavior and interactions are largely shaped by deep and powerful negative emotions towards People of Color. These emotions included racial hatred, racial arrogance, a sense of racial superiority, greed, and other emotions of gratification, desire for dominance, fear, and anxiety. Among white people who embrace anti-racist framing, Feagin (2013) argued that positive emotions such as empathy, compassion, and hope were salient. Several of these emotions are confirmed in the literature concerning white people's racial emotions, which I discuss more fully in the following section.

Racial Emotions

The bulk of the U.S. racial analysis literature focuses on the cognitive dimensions of a racialized worldview (Cabrera, 2014) and privilege reason in explaining racial attitudes (Ioanide, 2015). Less prevalent in the literature is an analysis of how racial frames are facilitated through racial emotions. Ioanide (2015) argued that—in racial matters—emotions often trump reason in ways that prevent and/or inhibit people's ability to engage with knowledge. In a case study analysis of four contemporary expressions of racial discrimination and violence, Ioanide (2015) found that emotions function like economies in how they circulate, accumulate, and are exchanged, and are subsequently given social currency, cultural legibility, and political power. These dominant emotional economies, Ioanide (2015) argued, ultimately serve to inhibit people's

willingness to challenge their beliefs about race due to their own embodied experiences of various emotions. Most prominent among white people's racialized emotions is fear.

White fear. Ioanide (2015) drew upon a socio-political history of the U.S. since the civil rights era to illustrate how perceived losses in white racial dominance and power motivated politicians' efforts to depoliticize and criminalize racial struggle and racialize crime. These politicians witnessed the rise of the emotional economies of fear and insecurity among white people—triggered by counterinsurgent groups' struggles for racial justice during the 1960's and 1970's—and further exacerbated these fears through equating militant protests with criminality and demonizing poor and working-class Black and Latina/o/x people as hyper-violent, crack-addicted, and (in the case of Immigrants of Color) “illegal aliens” stealing public resources (Ioanide, 2015). These emotional economies of fear were circulated and legitimized through media portrayals linking Black and Latina/o/x people to cultural pathology and immorality (Ioanide, 2015). In white suburbia, these hegemonic emotional economies coalesced with perceptions of Black and Brown criminality and served to instill fear of crime and property losses that many white people attributed to the presence of Black and Latina/o/x people in the neighborhoods in which they lived (Ioanide, 2015). These fears led many white people to seek protection in the form of increased policing and prisons (Ioanide, 2015). Through this analysis, Ioanide (2015) showed how an ideological fantasy of law and order has offered white people the emotional rewards of safety and security to assuage their racial fears.

White rage. Sometimes white fear manifests as anger and hostility, amounting to *white rage* (Spanierman & Cabrera, 2015). White rage is marked by “racial resentment, frustration about a perceived climate of political correctness, and annoyance with what is perceived to be People of Color whining about racial injustice” (Spanierman & Cabrera, 2015, p. 14). Echoing

findings from Gest's (2016) study, Kimmel (2013) argued that white rage is also comprised of an *aggrieved entitlement*, which Kimmel defined as white men's sense that “[white men], the rightful heirs of America's bounty, have had what is rightfully [theirs] taken away [from them] by government bureaucrats and given to... undeserving minorities, immigrants, women, gays, and their ilk” (p. 32). It is through this aggrieved entitlement that white rage is related to the concept of *reverse racism*, or white people's perceived sense racial victimization.

White shame and guilt. Spanierman and Cabrera (2015) define white guilt as “remorse, self-reproach, or a sense of responsibility for individual or collective wrongdoing” (p. 16) regarding racism. Unlike white fear and white rage, white guilt—as Spanierman and Cabrera (2015) argued—is primarily expressed among white people who acknowledge the existence of systemic racism and white privilege. Findings from empirical studies about white racial justice ally development has suggested that white guilt functions as a motivator for social action against racial injustice (Iyer, Leach, & Pedersen, 2004; Linder, 2015).

Four significant points emerge from the literature about white people's racial learning, frameworks, and emotions. First, anti-blackness figures prominently in white people's racial attitudes and ways of thinking about (and making sense of) race (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; DiAngelo, 2018; Feagin, 2013; Gest, 2016; Hagerman, 2018; Ioanide, 2015). Second, fear is a dominant emotion comprising white people's feelings about race and racial issues (Feagin, 2013; Ioanide, 2015; Spanierman & Cabrera, 2015). Furthermore, racialized fear undergirds other racialized emotions among white individuals—such as rage (Spanierman & Cabrera, 2015).

Finally, a process of developing racial frames emerges from the literature. That is, from the literature, one can surmise the following: white racial learning begins in childhood and takes place through children's interactions in various racial contexts (Hagerman, 2018; White, Knight,

Jensen, & Gonzales, 2018). White children engage in active processes of interpretation and racial meaning-making and, some evidence suggests, their racial ideologies may become increasingly defined and polarized as they enter adolescence (Hagerman, 2018). As adults, white people largely embrace complex racial frames imbued with emotions, ideologies, perceptions, images, language accents, and actions that reinforce white racial dominance (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Feagin, 2013). Fear frequently undergirds these racial frames (Feagin, 2013; Picca & Feagin, 2007; Spanierman & Cabrera, 2015). Many of the themes discussed in this strand of the literature are also present in studies concerning the racial engagement, ideologies, and emotions of white U.S. college students. I address this population in the following section.

Racial Engagement, Ideologies, and Emotions Among White College Students

In the opening chapter of *White Men on Campus*, Cabrera (2018) argued that the bulk of racial analysis literature in higher education focuses on the marginalizing experiences of racially and ethnically minoritized students, but lacked a sufficient account of how these experiences are shaped by whiteness. While it is crucial to foreground college Students' of Color experiences with marginalization in higher education, it is equally important to examine the root ideologies, attitudes, and experiences that lead to that marginalization (Cabrera, 2018)—all of which stem from whiteness. If we were to take up Cabrera and colleagues' (2016) definition of whiteness as an epistemology of ignorance or invisibility that normalizes white supremacy, it can explain why white U.S. college students have generally expressed ignorance of racism on campus and have reported more favorable and friendly perceptions of their campus environments than their Peers of Color (Rankin & Reason, 2005; Smith, Senter, & Strachan, 2013). In the sections that follow, I synthesize the literature exploring how whiteness shapes white college students': 1) racialized

patterns of engagement with their peers on campus; 2) attitudes, ideologies, and emotions about racial groups and racial issues; and 3) racialized behaviors.

White College Students' Patterns of Racial Engagement

Bonilla-Silva's (2018) description of the balkanizing and inculcating effects of the *white habitus* is consistent with empirical studies documenting patterns of interactions among white college students. These studies have repeatedly shown that white college students largely: 1) come from predominantly white neighborhoods and high schools, 2) come to college with homogeneously white friendship networks, 3) maintain these predominantly white networks throughout their time in college, and 4) demonstrate lower levels of cross-racial interactions and interracial friendships than Students of Color (Bowman & Park, 2015a; Byrd, 2014; Cabrera, 2011; Chesler, Peet, & Sevig, 2003; Park, 2014; Park & Kim, 2013; Smith et al., 2013). Some literature even suggests that white college students are *uncomfortable* in racially diverse environments (broadly) and interactions with People of Color (specifically), and seek to avoid both (Cabrera, 2018; Picca & Feagin, 2007; Smith et al., 2013). White students' high levels of intra-racial engagement and low levels of inter-racial engagement are facilitated through: low levels of structural diversity on campus (which subsequently limit proximity to Students of Color), white students' preferences for same-race peers, and the friendship balancing effect of social networks (e.g., if person A is close friends with person B and person C, then B and C are likely to become friends; Bowman & Park, 2015a). However, white college students who attended racially diverse colleges and universities, as well as those who previously attended racially and ethnically diverse high schools, have reported higher levels of cross-racial interactions and higher rates of predisposition for engaging diversity while in college than other white students (Bowman & Park, 2015a).

White college students' patterns of racial segregation are compounded by their disproportionately high participation in Greek-letter organizations (GLOs; Park & Kim, 2013; Sidanius, Van Laar, Levin, & Sinclair, 2004). Findings from one study indicated that participation in these organizations is linked to lower levels of cross-racial engagement and interracial friendships (Park & Kim, 2013; Sidanius, Van Laar, Levin, & Sinclair, 2004). Park and Kim (2013) even argued that GLOs effectively function as ethnic clubs for white students, given that they are predominantly white and encourage members to largely interact with each other to the exclusion of the broader campus community. Indeed, white college students' general preferences for socializing within predominantly white environments (and their tendencies to do so) are a result of hegemonic whiteness and have far-reaching effects on how they largely think and feel about race. It is to this strand of the literature that I turn next.

White College Students' Racial Attitudes, Ideologies, and Emotions

Dozens of researchers have documented the educational and developmental benefits of continuous interracial interactions, which include challenging our own thinking, prompting us to consider different perspectives, decreasing racial prejudice, and fostering comfort with people of races different from our own (Antonio, Chang, Hakuta, Kenny, Levin, & Milem, 2004; Engberg, 2007; Engberg & Hurtado, 2011; Gottfredson, Panter, Daye, Allen, & Wightman, 2009; Hurtado, 2005; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005). Conversely, continuous interactions within racially homogeneous environments can have deleterious effects. Perhaps as a result of primarily engaging within a *white habitus* (Bonilla-Silva, 2018)—with the comfort that it offers white people and its isolation from People of Color—many white college students, particularly white college men, are underprepared for meaningful engagement with race (Chesler et al., 2003). Instead, they have largely developed racial ideologies that are built on *sincere fictions*

(Feagin & O'Brien, 2003), devoid of connections to tangible empirical realities, marked by racial resentment and racial prejudice, and rooted in anger and fear (Byrd, 2014; Cabrera, 2014a, 2018; Chesler et al., 2003; Picca & Feagin, 2007; Smith et al., 2013).

Racial resentment and prejudice among white college students. Results from Byrd's (2014) longitudinal study of over 3,000 students from 28 colleges found that white students, on average, came to college with negative views of Black and Latina/o/x people and strong levels of racial resentment (in this study, operationalized as blaming People of Color for “not doing better”, p. 272). While white students' levels of racial prejudice and racial resentment decreased slightly during college, neither disappeared completely and levels of racial prejudice were similar to those at college entrance (Byrd, 2014).

Results from additional quantitative studies suggest that white students' levels of racial prejudice, racial resentment, and symbolic racism are significantly and positively correlated with: 1) the degree of closeness/identification white students feel towards their own racial group, 2) previous enrollment at a predominantly white high school, 3) participation in historically white GLOs, 4) a major field of study outside of the social/human services (only among white women), and 5) conservative political ideology (Byrd, 2014; Sidanius et al., 2004; Smith et al., 2013). The first three correlations reflect the influence of the white habitus, while the correlation to conservative political ideology is consistent with the *abstract liberalism* frame of Bonilla-Silva's (2018) colorblind racism. That is, the mantras of choice and individualism that comprise this frame are consistent with conservative political views.

Other studies have examined gender differences in racial attitudes and ideologies and have found that white college men exhibit higher levels of racial resentment and hierarchy-enhancing racial ideologies than Students of Color and white women (findings concerning the

statistical significance of the differences between white men and white women are mixed, however; Cabrera, 2011; Smith et al., 2013). Cabrera (2011) explained the higher levels of hierarchy-enhancing racial ideologies among white men as the result of *hyperprivilege*—the confluence of white privilege and male privilege that effectively supports a racist and sexist status quo. That white men largely benefit the most from this status quo may explain why—when compared to Women and Men of Color and white women—the white men in this study were the most impervious to changes in their racial ideologies during their first year of college (Cabrera, 2011). Moreover, findings from Cabrera's (2018) study also suggest that many white college men continue to experience little to no changes in their racial views beyond their first year.

Taken together, findings from this body of primarily quantitative studies examining racial prejudice and racial resentment among white college students at a bird's eye view suggest that the white habitus within which many white students are socialized (both prior to and during college) significantly shapes their racial ideologies in ways that reinforce white supremacy—particularly among white men. In the next section, I synthesize a body of qualitative studies that provides a more substantive exploration into these ideologies.

Racial ideologies among white college men. A significant portion of the empirical work on white college students' racial beliefs and emotions has been conducted by Nolan Cabrera (2011, 2012, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2018). Cabrera's research here centers white college men because, as the preceding section illustrated, they “have the lowest levels of support for multiculturalism and racial equality ... and hold disproportionate societal power to both recreate and challenge the existing racial structure” (Cabrera, 2014b, p. 4). Cabrera's (2012, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c) research in this area has revealed two typologies of white college men: those who are working through whiteness and those who normalize whiteness. In Cabrera's (2012) sole

study focusing on the former (n=15; approximately one-third of all participants), participants were characterized by a systematic understanding of racism, auto-criticism of racial bias and white privilege, and support for race-conscious policies. The participants who were working through whiteness exhibited a racial awareness that was facilitated through cross-racial interactions, multicultural educational opportunities, and feelings of empathy that stemmed from their experiences within other minoritized identities (Cabrera, 2012).

Cabrera's (2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2018) research focusing on white college men who normalize whiteness provides even more insight into white college students' racial ideologies. Cabrera (2011, 2014c) found that this typology of participants generally subscribed to ideological frames similar to those comprising Bonilla-Silva's (2018) colorblind racism: whiteness as normal, minimizing racism, viewing U.S. meritocracy as a solution for racial inequality, and opposing race-conscious policies. These participants minimized racism through viewing it either as a relic of the past or as something expressed only by extremist groups (Cabrera, 2011). Effectively, both constructions of racism served to absolve these participants of any responsibility for the perpetuation of racism. In either case, these participants denied structural racism as a barrier to racial equality and subscribed to interpersonal (as opposed to systematic) definitions of racism (Cabrera, 2011, 2014c). Additionally, many participants adopted the discourse of *reverse racism* and believed that white people—and white men, in particular—were the newest victims of racial discrimination and multiculturalism (Cabrera, 2014c).

An elaboration of white college men's beliefs in their victimization appears in Cabrera's (2018) work. White college men in this study largely perceived People of Color as the instigators of racial division on campus. This perception was supported by the existence of campus cultural

centers and racial/ethnic student organizations and their perception of self-segregation among Students of Color—all of which participants pointed to as examples of racism (Cabrera, 2018). In an indication of how white college students' conceptualization of racialized spaces are shaped by whiteness, studies suggest that white college students—particularly white college men and white students who are members of historically white GLOs—tend to oppose racial/ethnic student organizations oriented towards Students of Color and view them as racially divisive, while viewing their own predominantly white spaces as acceptable and devoid of race (Cabrera, 2018; Sidanius et al., 2004). Thus, white spaces continued to be normalized, while intra-racial spaces among Communities of Color were viewed as aberrant. Underlying the rhetoric about race and space among the participants in Cabrera's (2018) study was the belief that all campus spaces should be open to everyone (namely, white people)—a belief that reflects the exclusion these white college men felt from spaces they perceived to be for Students of Color (Cabrera, 2018). What was conspicuously missing from these participants' analyses was a discussion of how a culture of whiteness often serves to exclude Students of Color in various ways on college campuses (Gusa, 2010).

When probed to explain how white people were victimized, participants generally could not point to strong tangible evidence; their claims were largely based on feelings and hunches (Cabrera, 2018). In an indication of the strength of their *sincere fictions* about race, (i.e., the “fictional representations used to either defend or hide important social realities”; Feagin & O'Brien, 2003, p. 10), the participants in Cabrera's (2018) study staunchly held onto their beliefs about white victimization and framed their emotions as objective facts—even when their own lack of supporting evidence became apparent to them. This finding is consistent with Ioanide's (2015) argument that emotions often trump reason in racial matters. Accordingly, Cabrera

(2014a) noted that understanding what white people *feel* about race is a critical component of analyzing whiteness. It is to this strand of the literature that I turn next.

Racialized emotions among white college students. The bulk of scholarly works within this strand of the literature also consists of Cabrera's work concerning white college men; the racial ideologies and emotions of white college women and non-binary genders has been underexplored. Linder's (2015) study of six white college women who self-identified as anti-racist feminists discussed racial emotions primarily within the context of identity development and learning about white racial privilege. Participants in this study reported working through a variety of defensive reactions and emotions on their developmental pathways to anti-racist feminism that included fear, guilt and shame (Linder, 2015). More specifically, participants reported initial feelings of guilt and shame just for *being* white and, therefore, associated with a legacy of racial oppression; fear of being labelled a racist by others; and anger in response to the implication that they benefitted from white racial privilege (Linder, 2015).

Among the white college men within Cabrera's (2011) *normalizing whiteness* typology, racial emotions largely consist of anger, apathy, fear, and anxiety (Cabrera, 2014a, 2018). In Cabrera's (2014a) analysis, anger was dominant among participants who attended a racially diverse (35% white student body) and highly academically competitive institution (with an acceptance rate of 20% of applicants), while apathy was more common among participants attending a predominantly white, non-academically competitive institution (with an acceptance rate of 80% of applicants). Central to the anger expressed by participants attending the racially diverse, academically competitive institution was the threat they perceived to their social standings posed by race-conscious policies—specifically affirmative action and race-conscious scholarships (Cabrera, 2018). In another illustration of the strength of white college students'

sincere fictions about race, many defined affirmative action programs as “quota systems” (even though the use of quotas in affirmative action was struck down in the late 1970's) and claimed that their institution had to admit a specified number of Students of Color (even though the institution *had not* practiced affirmative action in more than a decade prior to the study; Cabrera 2014a, 2018). Moreover, many participants at the academically competitive institution continued to insist they were victimized by their institution's affirmative action policy and that the institution used racial quotas, even after the interviewer mentioned that no such policy existed at the institution and after probes into their personal experiences with racial quotas revealed no basis for their beliefs (Cabrera, 2018).

Apathy was the dominant emotion among participants attending the predominantly white, non-academically selective institution (which did practice affirmative action) in Cabrera's (2014a) study. These participants tended to see race as a nuisance and were largely able to insulate themselves from racial issues, which they largely understood as having no connection to them (Cabrera, 2014a). Even though this institution *did* practice affirmative action, the lack of significant numbers of Students of Color on their campus meant that this set of participants largely did not feel threatened by this policy.

Findings from Cabrera's (2018) and Picca and Feagin's (2007) works also suggest that white college students experience fear and anxiety in relation to racial issues. These emotions were generally connected to concerns about anticipated experiences (e.g., expressing their views on race and racism in class or interacting with People of Color) and racial stereotypes about People of Color (Cabrera, 2018, Picca & Feagin, 2007). Supporting this latter point, scholars have argued that racial stereotypes drive emotional responses and that both are deeply intertwined and embedded in white individuals' racial consciousness (Picca & Feagin, 2007;

Trepagnier, 2010). For example, in their analysis of the racial diaries of 626 white college students, Picca and Feagin (2007) found that one of the most common events described by participants involved white men actively seeking to protect white women from the Black men they encountered in public spaces. Picca and Feagin (2007) argued that this popular fear is historically rooted in stereotypes about Black men sexually assaulting white women.

A common theme underlying white college students' feelings of racial anger, apathy, fear, and anxiety is their lack of connection to tangible realities. For example, white college men have reported that even though they had never had a negative experience with a Person of Color, they still felt apprehensive about cross-racial interactions (Cabrera, 2018). Similarly, white college men have expressed racial anger in response to race-conscious policies that did not exist (Cabrera, 2014a, 2018). Even white college men's apathy reflects the insulating effect of the white habitus that largely allows them to be disconnected from the realities of continued systemic racism (Cabrera, 2014a). Picca and Feagin (2007) argued that white people learn these racial emotions (particularly fear) from other white people, and that they “use, refurbish, play with, amend, and pass along” (p. 12) racial stereotypes within and throughout their kinship networks over time. This process happens dynamically through a series of racialized performances, which I discuss next.

Racialized Behaviors Among White College Students

Within the context of racial events involving white people, Picca and Feagin (2007) define *racial performances* as socially situated events that “involve the activity of a white person at a particular place and time, and attempt to communicate racial views and images to others” (p. 4). These performances are goal-oriented in that they either seek to relate to others' performances or influence others' actions within a particular social setting (Picca & Feagin, 2007). For

example, a white person may make a point to act politely to a Person of Color to prove they are not racist, or use code words and other non-verbal language within all-white spaces to signal that a Person of Color is approaching and racial jokes and commentaries should cease. The empirical studies within this strand of the literature detail how white people have two faces to their racial views, commentaries, and actions: in the presence of People of Color (the frontstage), they largely present themselves as colorblind and innocent of racism; in the presence of only those who are presumed to be white (the backstage), they reveal their racist ideologies through racist jokes and comments (Cabrera, 2014b; Picca & Feagin, 2007). This dramaturgical framing highlights the various dimensions of white people's everyday racist behavior and its embeddedness within a broader system of white supremacy (Picca & Feagin, 2007). In the frontstage—which was generally uncomfortable for the white participants in Picca and Feagin's (2007) study—white people's racial performances tended to signal tolerance, appropriate People of Color's characteristics, avoid mentions of racial characteristics and/or People of Color altogether, defend white people against perceived racial wrongdoing, defend white privilege, and engage in direct racial confrontations.

Within the backstage, white participants' racist jokes, commentaries, and actions were enabled by the perceived safety, comfort, and normality of all-white spaces (Cabrera, 2014b; Picca & Feagin, 2007)—a product of hegemonic whiteness. Even though these racist jokes and comments were only uttered in the absence of People of Color, the participants—including those who witnessed them without uttering them—framed them as nonracist (Cabrera, 2014b, Picca & Feagin, 2007). Consistent with Bonilla-Silva's (2018) minimization of racism frame, the white college men in Cabrera's (2014b) study rationalized their racist jokes by claiming that People of Color were too racially sensitive and would misconstrue their jokes as racist. White people's

racist jokes serve the purposes of relieving stress and tension, cultivating white solidarity, testing the waters on a topic, decreasing individual accountability for racism, and generally allowing them to experience pleasure through expressing views and emotions that break social taboos and are normally repressed (Picca & Feagin, 2007). Although many white participants in Picca and Feagin's (2007) study felt uncomfortable with the racist jokes and comments in the backstage, they largely did not confront or challenge the individuals making them (often their peers or family members) out of fear of the social consequences of doing so.

Summary and Critique of the Literature

The scholarly literature about the racial engagement, ideologies, and emotions of white U.S. college students suggests that white college students largely come from racially segregated residential and high school environments. Due to the lack of racial consciousness their socialization within predominantly white environments begets, white college students generally observe little to no evidence of racism and enter college with high levels of racial prejudice and racial resentment. During college, white college students generally maintain predominantly white social networks and continue to perceive little to no examples of racism—with the notable exceptions of affirmative action policies (whether practiced by the institution or not), racial/ethnic-based student organizations, and any other race-conscious policy or practice. Among white college men, evidence suggests that these observations serve to support and crystallize colorblind racial ideologies that minimize the salience of continued racism, reify meritocratic notions of equal opportunity and hard work as solutions to racial inequality, and normalize whiteness. Undergirding these racial ideologies are anger, apathy, fear, anxiety, and guilt, which are both deeply intertwined with racial stereotypes and learned dynamically through the continuous racialized social performances of other white people. In short, these studies

suggest that whiteness—vis-a-vis the white habitus—largely shapes how white college students engage with their peers, how they think and feel about race and racism, and their racialized behaviors.

What is under-theorized within the literature is the role of broader socio-political contexts in shaping white college students' racial ideologies, feelings, and behaviors. Although some of the studies cited in this chapter connect findings to an overarching system of white supremacy, the focus of their analyses is generally confined to campus contexts. An analysis that considers broader socio-political contexts is warranted by findings from other studies indicating that Black and Latina/o/x college students' marginalizing experiences on campus have been shaped by contextual forces beyond their institutions (George Mwangi et al., 2018; Mendez & Cabrera, 2015). I also argue that *more recent* research exploring this interplay between campus and socio-political contexts is necessary and timely; data from the studies cited in this chapter were collected nearly a decade ago (or earlier) and there have been indications of recent surges in racist aggressions and white nationalist visibility on college campuses and spikes in racially-motivated hate crimes nationally (Anti-Defamation League, 2018; U.S. Department of Education, n.d.; U.S. Department of Justice, 2017).

Finally, the connection between white college students' racial emotions and their overall racial frame remains under-studied, particularly concerning differences by gender. Studies suggest that white men exhibit higher levels of racial resentment, are more impervious to changes in racial ideologies, and engage in racist social performances to higher degrees than white women (Cabrera, 2011, 2018; Picca & Feagin, 2007). Cabrera's (2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2018) extensive work on white college students' racial attitudes exclusively focuses on white men and—to the limited extent that it engages racial emotions—it generally does not connect

racial emotions to an overall racial frame. Picca and Feagin's (2007) study remains the only recently published work that makes this connection. However, the racial diaries collected for Picca and Feagin's (2007) study did not clearly distinguish between the racialized social performances of white students and non-students.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

“High in the tower, where I sit above the loud complaining of the human sea, I know many souls that toss and whirl and pass, but none there are that intrigue me more than the souls of white folk. Of them I am singularly clairvoyant. I see in and through them. I view them from unusual points of vantage. Not as a foreigner do I come, for I am native, not foreign, bone of their thought and flesh of their language. Mine is not the knowledge of the traveler or the colonial composite of dear memories, words and wonder. Nor yet is my knowledge that which servants have of masters, or mass of class, or capitalist of artisan. Rather I see these souls undressed and from the back and side. I see the working of their entrails.”

—W. E. B. DuBois, *“The Souls of White Folk”* (1920)

This chapter introduces the methodology I used for the present study. Originally, this study sought to explore the processes underlying white college students’ *affective responses* to issues of race and racism—an understudied component of white racial framing (Cabrera, 2014b). However, over the course of collecting and analyzing data, I quickly realized that participants’ emotional responses were a part of much broader processes of making sense of race and racism and/or evading the salience of these issues—processes from which participants’ emotional responses could not be disentangled. Moreover, these processes revealed how participants continued to reconstruct whiteness across various contexts and evade issues of race and racism. Accordingly, the research questions shifted to:

1. What are white undergraduate students' processes of making meaning of and evading race and racism—in their immediate on- and off-campus environments and within broader U.S. socio-political contexts?
2. How are these processes connected to their emotional responses?
3. How do these processes serve to continually (re)construct whiteness and/or disrupt racism in their environments?

I explored these questions through a transformative paradigm (Mertens, 2005) and critical whiteness lens—the latter of which was heavily informed by Cabrera, Franklin, and Watson's (2017) critical analysis of whiteness in higher education. Given the study's empirical focus on processes and its purpose for generating theory, I used a grounded theory approach to answer my research questions. This study also sought to disrupt dominant narratives about race and racism in the U.S. (broadly) and in U.S. higher education (in particular). To upend these narratives, I developed a counter-narrative (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) to present the study's findings.

Research Paradigm

Given the research goals' square focus on developing theory and promoting power-conscious action, I situated the study within a transformative paradigm (Mertens, 2005), which foregrounds the lives and experiences of marginalized groups, examines the root causes of inequities, and emphasizes connections between research and political/social action. This paradigm emerged as a challenge to (and critique of) constructive and post-positivist paradigms, which—many feminists, People of Color, indigenous peoples, and people with disabilities argued—did not address issues of power and justice, nor consider how knowledge is socially situated (Mertens, 2005). The axiological assumptions underlying research within the transformative paradigm stress human rights and social justice as starting points for guiding

research. Ontologically, research within this paradigm acknowledges the social, cultural, political, and economic influences on how realities are constructed and emphasizes the necessity of critiquing perceptions of reality for their role in perpetuating oppressive structures and policies (Mertens, 2005). Epistemologically, research within this paradigm contends with the power dynamics inherent in how knowledge is legitimized and frequently draws upon the lives of minoritized people as the starting points for knowledge construction (Mertens, 2005).

The current study was an appropriate match for a transformative paradigm due to the study's purpose and goals. As I described in the preceding chapter, several studies have suggested that white college students' racial frameworks, emotions, and behaviors have been marked by racial resentment and prejudice, have contributed to Students' of Color marginalizing experiences, and have otherwise served to reinforce a racist climate of exclusion for Students of Color (vis-a-vis hegemonic whiteness). Consistent with the aims of research studies within the transformative paradigm, the present study sought to disrupt these patterns by rendering more visible the processes at their root and, subsequently, informing practices that can reduce racist aggressions targeting Students of Color. Additionally (and consistent with the epistemological assumptions of the transformative paradigm), this study uses a counter-narrative to center the lives of People of Color to theorize how whiteness functions as a pathology.

Grounded Theory Methodology

This study used a grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2014), which is appropriate when the researcher wants to understand *why* or *how* something occurs (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Charmaz's (2014) description of grounded theory is characterized by concurrent data collection and analysis, an analytic focus on actions and processes, comparative analytic methods, and the development of new inductive conceptual categories that are grounded in data. Given its roots in

symbolic interactionism and pragmatism, this methodology was particularly well-suited for the study's empirical focus on processes and was useful for answering my research questions. Additionally, grounded theory is well-suited for exploring new areas of inquiry (Charmaz, 2014) and, in line with the goals of the study, led to the development of new theory about white college students' racial meaning-making and evasion that was derived inductively and grounded in the data.

Finally, Charmaz (2014) argued that grounded theory is also well-suited for critical inquiry towards social justice goals and can even serve to enhance them. By merging grounded theory and social justice, Charmaz (2014) argued that researchers can contextualize subjective and collective experiences within broader structures, thereby enhancing an understanding of how these structures work. In the field of education, Malagon, Perez Huber, and Velez (2009) advocated for the use of grounded theory in conjunction with critical race theory research in order to build theory from the lives of People of Color. In an effort to inform practices for dismantling white supremacy on college campuses, Haynes (2017) used grounded theory to explore connections between white faculty members' racial consciousness and their behaviors in the classroom. In the context of the current study, grounded theory allowed me to contextualize white participants' individual and collective affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses to race and racism to elucidate—in part—how whiteness is (re)constructed across various contexts.

Theoretical Framework

This study was informed by the scholarly literature in critical whiteness studies (CWS). Although the uses of literature reviews and theoretical frameworks in grounded theory studies have been contested by researchers favoring more purely inductive methods that are unclouded (in their views) by both, their uses in this study served as points of reflection and multiple lenses

through which I interpreted the data. Thornburg (2012) called this approach *informed grounded theory*, because the literature and theoretical frameworks serve to inform the research process.

Critical Whiteness Studies

CWS is a field that seeks to “reveal the invisible structures that produce and reproduce white supremacy and privilege” (Applebaum, 2016, p. 1). Although many scholars have asserted that CWS is an offshoot of critical race theory, other scholars have traced its origins to earlier Black thinkers, such as W. E. B. Du Bois, James Baldwin, and Franz Fanon who were among the first to name whiteness as being central to the problem of racism (Applebaum, 2016; Cabrera et al., 2017). The use of CWS is still emerging within higher education and student affairs research. Nonetheless, Cabrera and colleagues (2017) identified several mutually reinforcing core theoretical components of whiteness as it relates to higher education: “1) whiteness as colorblindness, 2) whiteness as epistemologies of ignorance, 3) whiteness as ontological expansiveness, 4) whiteness as property, and 5) whiteness as assumed racial comfort (or “racial safety”)” (p. 20).

Whiteness as colorblindness refers to Bonilla-Silva's (2018) ideological framework discussed in the preceding chapter; it is an ideology that reifies evading race and framing racial inequality in terms that minimize or ignore racism. *Whiteness as epistemologies of ignorance* refers to a “willful aversion to the human suffering caused by systemic racism” (Cabrera et al., 2017, p. 21). Medina (2013) described a more expansive concept—an active process of *meta-ignorance*. Meta-ignorance entails not only *not knowing* about systemic racial injustice, but *needing not to know*. Ultimately, these epistemologies of ignorance serve to protect white people from a sense of guilt over their complicity in perpetuating systemic racism, foster a sense of

white innocence (Gotanda, 2004), and allow systemic racism to go uninterrogated (Applebaum, 2016; Cabrera et al., 2017).

Whiteness as ontological expansiveness refers to white people's tendency to “act and think as if all spaces—whether geographical, psychical, linguistic, economic, spiritual, bodily, or otherwise—are or should be available to them to move in and out of as they wish” (Sullivan, 2006, p. 10). In higher education, the literature indicates that white college men's entitlement to various forms of space they perceive to be marked for Students of Color—which often elicits anger—largely shapes how they define racism (i.e., as something that targets white people).

Whiteness as property frames whiteness as a valuable asset that white people—over centuries—have sought to protect legally (Harris, 1993). One way in which this has manifested has been through excluding various racial and ethnic groups from receiving any of the privileges associated with whiteness (Cabrera et al., 2017). Previous studies have repeatedly shown that white college students are opposed to race-based affirmative action (or any race-conscious policy or practice). Cabrera and colleagues (2017) argued that white opposition to these programs serve as a mechanism for excluding Students of Color from benefits associated with whiteness.

Finally, *whiteness as racial comfort* refers to another form of entitlement expressed by many white people: the entitlement of avoiding any discomfort when discussing or facing racial matters. DiAngelo (2018) referred to this as *white fragility*. However, this entitlement to racial comfort often obscures two points: 1) white people's linguistic violence often harms People of Color and white people either ignore or minimize that harm, and 2) what white people conceptualize as racial safety is actually freedom from the discomfort associated with being challenged in their racial comments and behaviors (Leonardo & Porter, 2010). Indeed, such challenges are often interpreted to be attacks (e.g., Accapadi, 2007). As it relates to higher

education, the literature indicates that white college students use many practices to secure racial comfort, including avoiding conversations about race and even avoiding interactions with People of Color altogether. Just as with maintaining epistemologies of ignorance, these forms of avoidance in the pursuit of racial comfort serve to protect white individuals' positive self-images and perceptions of themselves as being innocent of perpetuating racism.

Data Collection

Given my positionality as a Black man (which I discuss at the end of this chapter), empirical literature suggesting that white students perceive People of Color as overly-sensitive to racial issues, and concerns that white participants may—in an effort to “not seem racist”—refrain from providing honest responses to me about their racial feelings (Cabrera, 2016), I used data collection methods that eliminated direct contact between me and the participants. In the following paragraphs, I describe my data collection—drawing heavily upon the methodology used in Picca & Feagin's (2007) study examining racial attitudes among white college students—that allowed me to collect rich, qualitative data in pursuit of my research questions. However, my methods departed from Picca and Feagin (2007) in that data collection was shaped by concurrent data analysis and involved more targeted means for eliciting data. Also unlike Picca and Feagin (2007), I maintained participants' anonymity. Although participants could still search for and find me online, their anonymity and my lack of contact with them served to minimize participants' concerns about offending the researcher and elicit honest, frank responses.

For this study, I used the participant diary method (Bolger, Davis, & Rafaeli, 2003) to collect solicited diaries from participants over an extended period. This method used an event-based design (Bolger et al., 2003), which prompted participants to write diary entries detailing their reactions to specific “triggering events” (p. 591). In this study, triggering events were

defined as events and interactions that dealt with race. This method allowed participants to reflect on events, interactions, thoughts, and emotions related to race and racism; provided me with insight into their racial worlds; encouraged self-reflection towards a critical consciousness; and allowed me to explore cognitive, affective, and behavioral processes as they unfolded.

Research Site

I used convenience and purposive sampling (Patton, 2015) to identify two faculty members at two different institutions (Northeast University and Southeast University; pseudonyms). These faculty members integrated participation in this study into their courses. I sought instructors who taught undergraduate courses in the humanities or social sciences at residential four-year institutions during the Fall 2019 semester. I selected these disciplines because I believed my data collection methods (journaling) could be more easily integrated into these courses than those in other disciplines. I limited the study to residential four-year institutions due to concerns about collecting data sufficiently rich for answering my research questions. Most two-year institutions are commuter campuses and nearly two-thirds of community college students live at home with their families (Mullin, 2012). These patterns suggest that students attending two-year institutions spend less time on campus than their peers attending four-year institutions. Therefore, I believed limiting this study to residential four-year institutions would provide richer data pertaining to the interplays between campus environments and participants' racial meaning-making and evasion.

My focus on undergraduate students was warranted by the study's efforts to refine and extend existing theories and frameworks concerning white college students' racial frames, which, to date, has primarily focused on white undergraduate students. Additionally, studies in the student development literature suggests that more stark changes in epistemological development

in response to controversial issues occur during one's undergraduate years, as opposed to during one's graduate years (King & Kitchener, 2004). For this reason, I believed a focus on undergraduates was more likely to yield richer data that could address my research questions.

The present study only draws upon data collected from students in an introductory psychology class from one of the institutions: Southeast University (SU). The instructor for this course, Sue (pseudonym), self-identified as a white cisgender woman and had been teaching at SU for over 20 years. The racial and ethnic demographics among enrolled students at SU have remained steady over the past five years. During the Fall 2019 semester, the racial/ethnic breakdown of the student body was as follows: 8% Black, 67% white, 10% Asian, 0.1% Native American/Alaskan Native, 0.1% Pacific Islander/Hawaiian, 4% multiracial, 5% Hispanic, with the remaining comprised of those not reporting. SU is in a locale approximately 70 miles away from a major metropolitan area. As of 2016, SU's surrounding county had approximately 200,000 residents and its racial/ethnic demographics were reported as follows: 66% white, 20% Black, 8% Hispanic, and the remaining racial/ethnic groups each comprising less than 4% of the total population.

Like many historically white colleges and universities in the U.S., SU's history is steeped in a legacy of racist policies and practices. The institution used enslaved labor to clean students' rooms, maintain facilities, and supply water to the campus. Enslaved people at SU frequently endured violent abuse from students and their movements about campus were strictly regulated. For many years, administrators at SU vigorously defended its racist white-only admission policy and did not admit its first Black students until 1961—a decision that was met with violent backlash.

The reverberations of SU's racist and exclusionary history can still be felt generations later. In Fall 2015, SU conducted a campus climate assessment in which 27% of the Black respondents and 26% of the Native respondents reported experiencing exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, or hostile conduct on campus. An analysis of the study's narrative data revealed that students' experiences around exclusion centered on racism and homophobia, while faculty and staff spoke of hostile work conditions. In March 2019, four white SU students were expelled from a fraternity after a video surfaced in which they made racist slurs and mocked slavery. Days later, students organized a town hall-style event in which students discussed their experiences around race and racism on campus, their frustrations towards the administration's lack of action, and the contradictions between SU's racial climate and its espoused values of diversity and inclusion.

Procedure

At Southeast University, any student who enrolled in an introductory psychology course was required to satisfy a research participation requirement for six and a half hours of credit. To satisfy this requirement, students could participate in a research study within the Psychology Department, write reviews of scholarly psychology articles, or a combination of both. Sue offered participation in this research project as credit towards satisfying this requirement. Prior to the Fall 2019 semester, I met with Sue three times to discuss the project's goals and parameters, address questions and concerns, and reach a common understanding of how the project would be implemented in her course. I also shared with her all the content to be copied and pasted into her course management site and the dates as to when each chunk of content would be posted. By the beginning of the Fall 2019 semester, I had built an online portal in Qualtrics that housed an electronic version of the consent form, a demographic survey, an online training module (which I

will discuss below), the online diary submission form, and a how-to guide for creating a shortcut to the online diary submission form on mobile devices.

Prior to the first day of class, I shared an “invitation to participation” script with a third-party individual (unaffiliated with the course and research project) to read aloud to the class. The purpose of using this third-party individual to introduce the class to the study was to mitigate undue influence pressuring students to participate. The script provided an overview of the research project, instructions for accessing the consent form with details about participating, and a description of the alternatives to participation. Participation was open to all students, though the consent form specified that results would be analyzed by participants’ racial/ethnic identities.

Preliminary phase. A link to the online portal, which contained the consent form (See Appendix A) with additional details about the study, was posted on the course management site for interested students to review. The third party individual informed the class that students who were interested in participating must: 1) go to the course management site, 2) access and review the consent form, 3) click the link in the consent form to access the online portal for the study, 4) indicate their consent by checking a box, 5) complete the demographic survey (See Appendix B), and 6) email their instructor proof of completion (the demographic survey’s end page, which contained the participant’s pseudonym) by the deadline set by their instructor. These instructions were reiterated on the online portal and in the consent form. Sue built a key linking students’ identities with their pseudonyms to award credit for participation and did not share this key with anyone else. During this stage, 144 participants (including 85 who self-identified as monoracially white, non-Hispanic) completed the consent form and survey.

Training module. Bolger and colleagues (2003) warned that studies using participant diaries should include detailed training to ensure participants fully understand the protocol. To

do this, I created an online tutorial adapted from Johnson, Johnson, Thomas, and Green (2018) to prepare participants for creating detailed entries sufficient for answering my research questions (Appendix C). I instructed them to complete the tutorial, which also counted towards credit, before starting phase one of the study. The tutorial took approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Phases one. Data for this study were collected and analyzed concurrently across two phases. During phase one, participants submitted at least two diary entries per week for four weeks in an online Qualtrics form (to which only I had access) that captured: 1) their encounters, interactions, and observations that related to race; 2) their emotional responses to these events; 3) their thoughts about why they had these emotional responses; 4) whom they talked to (if anyone) about the event; and 5) any other thoughts they had about the event (See Appendix D). These questions were adapted from Brandstätter (2007) for assessing emotional experiences through participant diaries. I also gave participants a 150-word minimum for their diary entries and asked them to submit their pseudonym with each entry. I asked Sue to send periodic reminders to the class about submitting the entries in the same manner she normally sent reminders about any other class assignment. At the end of phase one, I emailed the instructor a list of the pseudonyms from her class who submitted entries, along with the numbers each pseudonym submitted for the purposes of awarding credit. A total of 110 participants (including 66 self-identified monoracially white, non-Hispanic participants) submitted entries during this phase.

Phase two. During phase two, participants responded to two essay prompts in a minimum of 500 words. I developed these essay prompts based on my holistic analysis (i.e., an analysis of the data as a whole; Saldaña, 2016) of the data I collected from white participants and Participants of Color during phase one (which I describe more fully in the following section). The essay prompts allowed me to fill in and explore gaps in the data to answer my research

questions—an approach that is appropriate for grounded theory research (Charmaz, 2014). Participants had three weeks to write and submit responses to these prompts using the Qualtrics form in the study’s online portal. Only participants who had submitted a minimum of two diary entries during phase one were permitted to submit essays during phase two. At the end of this phase, I emailed Sue a list of pseudonyms that had submitted responses to the prompts for the purposes of awarding credit. A total of 80 participants (including 47 self-identified monoracially white, non-Hispanic participants) submitted essay responses during this phase.

Data Analysis

As I collected data during the first phase of the study, I developed two levels of analytical memos (Saldaña, 2016) that captured my emerging thoughts about the data—memos concerning both the data as a whole and individual participants. At the end of phase one, I reviewed my memos and conducted a holistic analysis (Saldaña, 2016) of the data to identify emerging themes and gaps in the data. During this stage, I noticed that the types of encounters that white participants and Participants of Color wrote about in their diaries were generally different; the former primarily wrote about their experiences overhearing and witnessing racist aggressions perpetuated by other white people in their environments, while the latter’s entries were more diffuse in their focus. These included experiences with being on the receiving end of racist aggressions, contending with racial prejudice across and within Communities of Color, and colorism. Despite these general differences in the types of encounters participants wrote about, I noticed that the emotional responses they reported were very similar. The most frequent among these were discomfort, anger, and conflict/confusion. Given the study’s initial focus on the affective dimension of racial framing, I developed my first essay prompt to elicit more details about these three emotions. During the holistic analysis, I also noticed that participants’ diaries

did not capture their impressions of the racial climates on their campus or within the U.S. To elicit additional data about this topic, I developed the second essay prompt to elicit their impressions about racial climates. A copy of the essay prompts appears in Appendix E.

At the end of phase two, I filtered out responses from Participants of Color and white participants who did not fully complete both phases of the study. After this process, I was left with 31 participants who self-identified as white (and not any other race/ethnicity), submitted at least eight entries during phase one, and submitted responses to both essay prompts during phase two. I commenced analyzing data collected from only these participants by developing additional analytic memos that continued to capture my thoughts about the data as a whole and as it pertained to individual participants. At this stage, I compared individual participants' entries against one another—looking for similarities and contradictions within individual participants—consistent with the *constant comparison* method (Charmaz, 2014). During this process, I paid close attention to participants' emotions, cognitive processes, behaviors, perceptions of their racial climates, and connections and disconnections between these areas.

During this phase of analysis, I noticed that while the essay prompts elicited richer data about participants' emotional responses to racial issues, theorizing racial emotions as distinct processes became difficult. Participants' emotional responses were tied to behavioral responses (actions and inactions) to what they experienced, their perceptions of racial climates, and the racial frames they brought into their encounters. These insights about the data led me to expand the scope of my inquiry beyond the affective domain of white college students' racial framing to explore their general processes of racial meaning-making. Additionally, my analysis found that participants' ways of making meaning of race and racism in their environments often (but not

always) served to perpetuate whiteness and led participants to evade these issues. Accordingly, I turned my line of inquiry towards exploring the processes underlying such evasion.

With these new research questions, I resumed data analysis. After I completed *within*-participant analysis, I imported all the data into NVivo to analyze data *across* the participants. During this phase of analysis, I used process coding (Saldaña, 2016) to develop an initial set of codes—a method of coding that is consistent with grounded theory’s focus on actions and processes (Charmaz, 2014). I then completed focused coding (Charmaz, 2014) to re-examine the initial codes and group those that seemed most significant to develop more abstract codes. During axial coding, I developed categories and subcategories from the codes, and detailed their properties and conditions as well as how they related to one another (Charmaz, 2014). These categories became the components of the theory generated from this study and describe how participants made meaning of and evaded race and racism in their environments. I compared these categories back to my analytic memos to confirm that they accurately captured the data and further refine the categories’ dimensions.

Participant Sample

Of the 31 white participants whose data I analyzed for this study, 61% (n=19) were in their first year of college, 20% (n=6) were second-year students, 6% (n=2) were third-year students, and 13% (n=4) were fourth-year students. Seventy-seven percent (n=24) were women and 23% (n=7) were men. Eighty percent (n=25) reported spending most of their childhoods growing up in suburban environments; 12% (n=4) were raised in rural environments and six percent (n=2) were raised in urban environments. Fifty-four percent (n=17) reported both growing up in a predominantly white neighborhood *and* attending a predominantly white high school. Politically, 41% (n=13) identified as very conservative, conservative, or slightly

conservative; 29% (n=9) identified as very liberal, liberal, or slightly liberal; and the remainder identified as either moderate (16%; n=5) or as being uninterested in politics (13%; n=4). Slightly less than half (45%; n=14) indicated they either belonged to a Greek letter organization or were in the process of being initiated into one.

Evaluating the Study

Because my data collection methods maintained participants' anonymity and precluded member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) as a mechanism for establishing credibility, I sought to evaluate the quality of the study through other means. Charmaz (2014) stated that grounded theory research is evaluated on four criteria: credibility, originality, resonance, and usefulness. To evaluate the study along these criteria, I used a peer review process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) with a white scholar who was unaffiliated with the project and has studied whiteness in higher education through a critical lens. This peer reviewed: the study's original and revised research questions, a description of how data were collected and analyzed, a randomly selected sample of ten percent of the data I collected, my codebook, my analytical memos, and the study's preliminary findings. I provided the peer reviewer a series of evaluative questions that addressed each of the four criteria to which they responded. The reviewer confirmed the integrity of the findings and indicated no concerns regarding the study's procedure.

My data collection and analysis methods served as additional means of establishing credibility. Over the span of an entire semester, I collected and analyzed diary entries individually and used memos to capture emerging ideas about the data and tentative findings. The prolonged length of time devoted to collecting and analyzing data allowed me to bolster the credibility of the study by: 1) developing an understanding of the participants' inner-worlds of racialized perceptions and emotions, 2) keeping a researcher journal in which I took account of

how my positionality shaped my interpretations of the data (which I discuss below), and 3) disproving emerging findings through negative case analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Researcher Positionality

Nearly one hundred years ago, W. E. B. DuBois developed what some scholars have argued was the first published analysis of whiteness. In the opening sentences of “The Souls of White Folk,” DuBois (2004) positioned blackness as something that was constructed by white people (“bone of their thought and flesh of their language”; p. 21) and argued that this gives Black people like DuBois a valuable vantage point for critiquing whiteness. That is, Black people's racial positioning at the margins—as the ultimate racial outsiders—grants us an ability to observe and understand how whiteness works in ways that others cannot. I took up this perspective about blackness in relation to whiteness as I considered my own positionality as a Black researcher conducting this study.

I entered this study as a middle-class, Black/African American, queer, transgender man whose evolving understandings of self and of whiteness have been shaped from the racial margins of a pervasive white U.S. context. To prepare myself for collecting and analyzing data from white college students about their racial thoughts and feelings, I immersed myself in predominantly white environments that had the potential to be racially charged and make me uncomfortable. Such efforts included attending a Turning Point USA rally held near Southeast University several months prior to data collection. During this experience, I paid close attention to my emotions and journaled about them and their implications for how I might conduct the study. For example, during the rally, I noticed myself feeling tense and angry in response to the speakers’ constant use of anti-Black stereotypes and “reverse racism” tropes. In my journal, I unpacked how the rally provided a space for white attendees to vent their pent-up racist beliefs,

express an unnamed white solidarity, demonize Black progressives and liberals, and position white men as the true victims of contemporary racism. Although I was constantly angered by what I saw and felt inclined to dismiss attendees' claims of racial victimization as ignorance, I noted in my journal that, for the study, I should pay close attention to such claims (not dismiss them) so as to enhance my understanding of participants' racial framing. I continued journaling about my emotional experiences with the study throughout data collection and analysis as I further engaged my researcher reflexivity.

Also relevant to my researcher reflexivity was a Ghana study abroad experience I undertook during data analysis that profoundly transformed how I situated this study and understood myself in relation to it. While in Ghana, I traveled with my class to the slave fortress in Cape Coast (popularly called the Cape Coast Castle), which housed thousands of captive Africans in its lower-level dungeons during the transatlantic slave trade. The guide told us of the dungeons' dark, dank, and squalid conditions and how they were filled with terror. In these dungeons, Africans were packed tightly and chained together, and many died of disease, heat, and hunger. After we visited the dungeons, the guide took us to the living quarters that housed the appointed British governor, which were situated directly above the dungeons. In contrast to the dungeons, the governor's quarters were luxurious and spacious and contained several large windows that provided copious amounts of light and beautiful views of Cape Coast and the ocean. The guide told us that the British slavers had also built a church for themselves above the dungeons, and I found myself imagining how anyone could live and worship only several feet above the inhumanity taking place below. Nevertheless, I felt myself growing increasingly disinterested in this part of the tour; I had felt such a deep connection to my ancestors in the dungeons below and viewed the British slavers' quarters as disconnected from my experience.

After I returned to the U.S., I continued reflecting on my experience at Cape Coast and the duality of the Africans' dungeons below and the British slavers' castle above, which I thought of as distorted mirror images from one another. I came to understand the fortress as both dungeon *and* castle and, moreover, that the dungeons required that there *be* a castle. Put more plainly, I realized that the violent racial trauma that Black people of the diaspora experienced then and experience now did not/does not materialize out of thin air; it comes from *something*. Spiritually, that *something*—white supremacy—requires that its perpetrators enact spiritual violence on themselves by making severances from their own humanity—acts that necessitate modes of distraction (as evidenced by the luxurious living conditions in the British living quarters). I began to understand the slavers' castle not as separate from my experience, but as very much connected to it.

Prior to Ghana, I felt—in retrospect—detached from the data I was analyzing; notwithstanding the occasional bits of anger I felt in response to what I read, I was mostly numb. After returning from Ghana, I experienced the data analysis process differently: I felt myself becoming increasingly emotionally triggered by what I read. Reading participants' diaries post-Ghana elicited painful memories of prior experiences with racism and forced me to reckon with my own racial trauma. I realized that my general sense of detachment from the data had been a coping mechanism. My reflections about my experience at the Cape Coast dungeon-castle and the painful memories data analysis triggered led me to finally understand what my connection was—as a Black/African American researcher—to the critical study of whiteness and this study, in particular. Further, I concluded that I needed to render myself more visible in this study, which I sought to do by foregrounding trauma.

Along with my experiences in Ghana, these new insights about my visibility within this study led me to adopt an epistemology that centered the spirit (Dillard, 2006), engaged cultural memory (Dillard, 2012), and framed whiteness as a pathology (Thompson & Watson, 2016). Through these epistemological shifts, I placed the questions guiding this study within the broader goal of exposing the pathology of whiteness and bearing witness to the cultural trauma it has caused not only to People of Color, but to white perpetrators of racism—those who commit direct acts, as well as collaborators, supporters, and silent witnesses. Expounding on the trauma of perpetrators, Hegel (as cited in Giesen, 2004) stated:

Perpetrators are human subjects who, by their own decision, dehumanized other subjects and, in doing so, did not only pervert the sovereign subjectivity of the victims but challenged also their own sacredness. Every subject needs the recognition of others for its own self-consciousness, and it is exactly this recognition that is denied to the perpetrators (p. 114).

By framing whiteness as a pathology, I do not seek to minimize the pain that racism continues to enact on People of Color, nor suggest that racism is *not* endemic; racism is indeed endemic. What I argue is that, when taken beyond social, political, economic, and legal contexts and into the realm of the spirit, there is something profoundly pathological about what whiteness does to *everyone*, including white people. By taking up this lens, I join a lineage of other Black writers who have articulated the inextricable link between the profound pain that whiteness causes for People of Color and the loss of humanity that accompanies these racist aggressions (Thompson & Watson, 2016). I sought to make this link explicit in the present study using counterstorytelling.

Counterstorytelling

In chapter one, I argued that understanding whiteness and rendering it visible was crucial to understanding and addressing systemic racism. However, several scholars have cautioned that whiteness studies has the potential to re-center or participate in the very thing it aims to critique (Ahmed, 2007; Apple, 1998; Applebaum, 2016; Cabrera, 2014b, Karenga, 1999; Sheets, 2000). In order to maintain a focus on the study's goal of ameliorating the conditions facing Students of Color at historically white institutions and in ways that centered the spirit and foregrounded trauma, I decided to present the findings from this study as a composite counter-narrative (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002)—a method whose theoretical foundation in critical race theory aligns with the present study's goal of creating more affirming campus environments for Students of Color. In contrast to the master narratives that racist ideologies create, maintain, and justify about People of Color, counter-narratives aim to “expose, analyze, and challenge” these master narratives, shatter complacency, and further the struggle for racial justice (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 32). The counter-narrative in the following chapter challenges dominant views of the U.S. as a post-racial society and racist aggressions as the acts of outliers. The counter-narrative also bears witness to the persistent cultural trauma whiteness has brought to both People of Color and the white people who perpetuate racism through direct actions, collusion, and/or silence.

Central to Solórzano and Yosso's (2002) definition of counter-narratives is the centrality of the voices and experiences of those “whose experiences are not often told (i.e., those on the margins of society)” (p. 32). Consistent with this definition, counter-narratives are most often used in studies *about* minoritized communities—namely People of Color (e.g., Cook & Dixon, 2013; Corbin, Smith, & Garcia, 2018; Harper, 2009)—particularly within the field of education. The use of a counter-narrative here, in this study on white college students, is unorthodox and

may initially seem inappropriate. However, I made adaptations to how counter-narratives have traditionally been told in the scholarly literature to be consistent with the method's purpose and maintain a square focus on the voices and experiences of People of Color.

To develop the composite counter-narrative, I drew upon data I collected from the 31 white participants whose data were analyzed as part of this study, as well as Students of Color at SU who also participated in this study (but whose data were not analyzed as part of this study). I also drew upon press releases that SU had published on its website about its diversity and inclusion efforts. Finally, I drew upon entries from my researcher journal. After I completed data analysis, I used a critical whiteness lens (Cabrera et al., 2017) to construct six scenes that drew upon data collected from white participants and SU's press releases to illustrate the components of the theory generated from this study. After I developed the six scenes of the counter-narrative, I searched for diary entries and essay excerpts from Participants of Color, as well as my own researcher diary entries, that related to plot points in each of the scenes and spoke to the speakers' experiences with racism. I then set these excerpts as the prologues for each scene. By inviting the reader to interpret the scenes through the lenses of the prologues, I hoped to center the voices of People of Color in the counter-narrative.

Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the grounded theory methodology that I used to conduct this study. This study was situated within a transformative paradigm, given its effort to address Students' of Color experiences with racism through exploring white college students' racial meaning-making. The study was informed by Cabrera and colleagues' (2017) critical whiteness analysis of higher education. Participation in this study was integrated into a Fall 2019 undergraduate psychology class at Southeast University and I collected data through elicited participant diaries (Bolger et

al., 2003). During phase one, participants submitted diaries that documented their perceptions, emotions, and reactions to everyday interactions and events in which race was a salient issue. Throughout this phase, I analyzed data and developed memos that captured my emerging thoughts about the data. At the end of this phase, I conducted a holistic analysis (Saldaña, 2016) to develop essay prompts for participants to respond to during phase two. Following phase two, I continued analyzing data using the constant comparison method (Charmaz, 2014), which led me to shift the research questions guiding this study. Once I completed data analysis, I sent materials to a peer reviewer to evaluate the study against a set of four criteria appropriate for grounded theory studies (Charmaz, 2014). To present the study's findings, I used a critical whiteness lens to develop a composite counter-narrative (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) grounded in the data collected for the study.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

“I have often wondered...just what white Americans talk about with one another. I wonder this because they do not, after all, seem to find very much to say to me, and I concluded long ago that they found the color of my skin inhibiting. This color seems to operate as a most disagreeable mirror, and a great deal of one’s energy is expended in reassuring white Americans that they do not see what they see. This is utterly futile, of course, since they do see what they see... What they see is a disastrous, continuing, present condition which menaces them, and for which they bear an inescapable responsibility. But since in the main they seem to lack the energy to change this condition, they would rather not be reminded of it...they are perpetually defending themselves against charges which one, disagreeable mirror though one may be, has not really, for the moment, made. One does not have to make them. The record is there for all to read. It resounds all over the world.... One wishes that white Americans would read, for their own sakes, this record and stop defending themselves against it. Only then will they be enabled to change their lives.”

—James Baldwin, *“White Man’s Guilt”* (1965)

Study Summary

This grounded theory study explored white college students’ processes for making meaning of race and racism in their environments, how these processes were shaped by their emotions and socio-political contexts, and how these processes either served to disrupt racism or (re)construct whiteness. Given my positionality as a Black/African American researcher whose

understandings of both whiteness and the present study were profoundly transformed and deepened through a study abroad experience in Ghana, I also placed the research purpose guiding this study within the broader goal of exposing the pathology of whiteness and bearing witness to the cultural trauma it has caused not only to People of Color, but to white perpetrators of racism—those who commit direct acts, as well as collaborators, supporters, and silent witnesses. Through this study, I aimed not only to generate theory concerning white college students' processes of making meaning of and evading race and racism in their environments, but also to present a “disagreeable mirror” (Baldwin, 1998, p. 320) to the reader—one that makes whiteness strange by exposing its regressive, destructive, and pathological nature—and invite the reader to reflect upon it and their lives.

This grounded theory study uses data collected from 31 white undergraduate students at Southeast University—a pseudonym for a large, public historically white institution in the southeastern U.S.—during the Fall 2019 academic semester. Participation in this study was integrated into an undergraduate psychology class. I collected and analyzed data across two phases. During phase one, participants submitted a minimum of eight diary entries that captured encounters, interactions, and observations that related to race; their emotional responses to these events; their thoughts about why they had these emotional responses; whom they talked to (if anyone) about the event; and any other thoughts they had about the events. During phase two, participants responded to two essay prompts that I developed based on my analysis of data collected during phase one. In their essays, participants elaborated upon their feelings of anger, discomfort, and conflict/confusion in response to the race-related events they wrote about and reflected upon their perceptions of racial climates on their campus and in the U.S. I analyzed data using the constant comparison method through a critical whiteness lens to develop the theory's

components and a composite counter-narrative—a narrative that “exposes, analyzes, and challenges” master narratives about race and People of Color that are rooted in racist ideologies and white racial privilege (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 32).

Reading the Composite Counter-Narrative

The dominant narrative about contemporary race relations in the U.S. is shaped by race-evasive ideologies that minimize racism as a salient factor shaping People of Color’s lives, explain race-related phenomena as natural occurrences, and frame racism as something perpetrated only by a few fringe outliers whose actions are incompatible with mainstream white America’s non-racist values (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Thompson & Watson, 2016). Likewise, U.S. college campuses are often purported to be bastions of liberalism where racist acts are framed and addressed as the work of a few perpetrators—not as something endemic (Cabrera, 2018).

The counter-narrative below seeks to 1) challenge dominant views of the U.S. as a post-racial society and racist aggressions as the acts of outliers, 2) challenge dominant narratives about racism and race relations at Southeast University—an institution that has won numerous awards for its diversity initiatives, and 3) bear witness to the persistent cultural trauma whiteness has brought to both People of Color and the white people who perpetuate racism through their direct actions, collusion, and/or silence. Consistent with Solórzano and Yosso’s (2002) description of counter-narratives, I drew upon data I collected for this study to create the composite characters, settings, plots, and dialogue. Although the characters in the counter-narrative’s scenes are fictionalized, the settings, dialogue, and events are all based on real-life experiences and grounded in the data collected for this study (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

The counter-narrative below is presented in six scenes with each taking place either at Southeast University (SU) or in its surrounding town of Voula [pseudonym]. The scenes were

developed using data I collected from white participants and, together, encapsulate the nine interrelated components of the theory generated from this study: 1) *triggering events*, 2) *prior racial frames and contexts*, 3) *meaning-making strategies*, 4) *evasion strategies*, 5) *constructing racial climates*, 6) *emotional responses*, 7) *emotional coping strategies*, 8) *evasive actions*, and 9) *actions towards racial justice*.

In the interest of de-centering whiteness within this study that sought to expose and critique it and foregrounding People of Color’s voices and experiences, I set some of the data I collected from Students of Color (who are identified by their pseudonyms) and an entry from my researcher journal as prologues to the scenes. Although the counter-narrative below departs from Solórzano and Yosso’s (2002) use of this method in that characters do not engage in critical dialogue to illustrate the findings, I use the juxtaposition between the prologues and the scenes to illuminate concepts and experiences that challenge master narratives about race and racism in addition to illustrating the findings. Each prologue details an account from a Person of Color that connects to a plot point within the scene it precedes and serves as a lens through which I invite the reader to interpret that scene (thus comprising the *disagreeable mirror*).

Table 1 lists the major characters in the counter-narrative, brief descriptions of who they are, and the scenes in which they appear. In the scenes, “Black” is not capitalized to reflect the white characters’ race-evasive, power-neutral framing. An analysis of the counter-narrative appears after the last scene.

Table 1: Major Characters in the Counter-Narrative

Name	Description
Jessica (<i>scenes 1,2,3,6</i>)	white first-year student from a predominantly white suburb;

	Karen's roommate
Karen (<i>scenes 1, 2, 3, 6</i>)	white first-year student from a predominantly white suburb; Jessica's roommate
Kat (<i>scene 3</i>)	white third-year student; friend of Jessica
Bobby (<i>scene 4</i>)	white fourth-year student from a small, rural predominantly white town; friend of Paul and Sam
Paul (<i>scene 3; mentioned in scenes 1 and 4</i>)	white fourth-year student, member of an Interfraternity Council fraternity; friend of Bobby
Sam (<i>scene 4</i>)	Black fourth-year student, friend of Bobby, member of a National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) fraternity
Katie (<i>scene 5</i>)	white first-year student from a racially diverse suburb, potential new member of a National Panhellenic Council (NPC) sorority
Madison (<i>scenes 5 and 6</i>)	white first-year student from a predominantly white suburb, potential new member of an NPC sorority; friend of Karen

Outstanding Learning Environments for Whom?: A Counterstory of Southeast University

Prologue to Scene One

“Coming to [SU], I was really nervous. I didn’t really have a lot of caucasian friends back at home. Attending a primarily white institution was very intimidating to me and I knew it would be a culture shock. It has been a little hard so far. I have felt as if I wasn’t good enough for this

school. Yet, I realize my other minority friends feel the same. It made me feel good knowing that I wasn't alone. Another thing I realized was that the caucasian people I have met thus far have been friendly. I feel relieved, joyful, and excited for my next years here at [SU]. I feel this way because I have experienced discrimination from caucasian people before and it was very intimidating for me to come to a school that's full of them. I talked to my best friend and she was really relating with me then she encouraged me, saying that 'Yes, it'll be different, but it allows you to go out of your comfort zone, which is what college is all about.'"

Participant diary entry by Alma 4, a multiracial (Asian, Latina/Hispanic, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander) first-year student at SU

"Every time I walk into my English 1101 class [at SU], I feel different for one simple reason, race. I am one of the few people of color in the classroom, drowning in a sea of white skin. It really put into perspective the demographic I had entered upon by choosing this school. The second reason I feel different was because [when] I called out my name, a name that no one on this hemisphere would ever really encounter, it felt as though all eyes were on me and I was standing on a stage, vulnerable to judgement. I came from an ethnically diverse area and to hear all topics of side conversation on something I wasn't a part of or a culture I didn't understand made me feel like a flamingo trying to walk with a group of ostriches. The scariest part of it all is that I think that we may never understand each other. It may never be more than just classmates....I felt different because there is only one other Black person in my class and everyone else is white. I felt discouraged because I was wondering if this is how the rest of my classes are going to be for the next four years."

Participant diary entry by Renee, a Black first-year student at SU

“...the Black community of [SU], also known as BSU (Black SU), has the main goal of bringing everyone together to make being a minority feel less like we actually are a minority. I finally got around to going to [“Tevis Time”; informal gatherings organized by Black students in the student center at SU] because I’ve been shy with getting to know people and making new friends over the past two months.... As I was sitting next to everyone and soaking in the environment, [SU] no longer seemed like a PWI. Whenever BSU comes together, it feels like a whole HBCU at this very PWI. It always scared me the heavy white presence at this school, but when I sat at Tevis Time, I felt more and more comfortable at this school. I think I’ve found my community and I’m excited to make my place.”

Participant diary entry by Renee, a Black first-year student at SU

Scene One: Welcome to Southeast University

The first two scenes follow Jessica—a white first-year student at Southeast University. Presently, Jessica’s mother (who is also white) is driving Jessica from their home to SU’s campus at the end of an extended weekend.

“You know, I’m really glad that you’re attending SU. Your father and I are so proud of you for attending such a prestigious university.” Mom smiles wistfully. “Driving you back to SU reminds me of my days as a student there. Of course, SU is a lot more diverse now than it was back then, which is a good thing.”

“Yeah, it’s pretty cool,” I add. “It’s a lot more diverse than my high school was—that’s for sure. SU’s won some diversity awards, too. Multiple times.”

Mom continues: “You know, SU has really come a long way. Back when I was a student there, you didn’t see too many African Americans. But now, look—they’re even honoring its

first African American graduate! It makes me feel so good knowing that my alma mater is really celebrating diversity and creating a culture of unity and inclusion for all their students.”

I pause to think about not just how far SU has come towards embracing diversity, but how far the country has come. Just last week, I learned about eugenics in my psychology class and how some Black people used to be forcibly sterilized because they were thought to be less intelligent. I had felt such relief knowing that doesn't happen anymore. The U.S. has made so much progress. But not all of the students really take advantage of the school's diversity.

“Yeah, I mean, it's also a shame too, because SU's great and diverse and all, but the white and African American students just segregate themselves. Like, in the student center. You can see it. The African American students just hang out with themselves. It makes me so frustrated. Like, can you imagine what Martin Luther King would say about that? I feel it goes against everything he worked for, everything SU stands for. I became friends with two African American girls in my dorm in only a few months. They're pretty cool. I wish more people would get out of their comfort zones.”

“Wow, that's so unfortunate,” mom adds, as she shakes her head in disappointment. “Before I was born, there were laws that kept the races apart. Such a shame to see people now doing it voluntarily. But it's not all that bad, right? At SU?”

“No. Things overall are pretty good. Like, last week, I even saw an interracial couple on campus. Seeing them made me so happy, I, like, almost cried. I just had to take a picture of them to remind myself that, even though there's all this racial negativity in the news and at other colleges, that things are generally pretty great at SU, in Voula, in the U.S., even. I haven't seen any racism anywhere....”

At this moment, I recall a video I saw on Instagram last night of a police officer shouting the n-word at some black boys.

“I mean, I know there’s *some* racism out there. But it’s 2019 and it’s just not that big anymore.”

“Yeah,” mom responds with a slight grimace. “I think that sometimes the media plays things up too much sometimes and makes things seem worse than they are. Yes, there is some racism, but it’s all blown out of proportion.”

I add: “I mean, it’s gotten to the point where I don’t even want to talk to anyone else about race. People are so touchy these days. And I have to actively search for news stories about racial positivity to remind myself that the world is a good place. Such a shame the media doesn’t want to cover that stuff. Wouldn’t get as many clicks and views, I guess.”

We’re approaching the campus now and drive through one of the local neighborhoods. Mom glances around nervously.

“You know, Jessica, your father and I wanted to remind you to avoid certain parts of Voula. They just aren’t safe.”

I roll my eyes because I’ve heard this speech from her and Dad dozens of times before. A black man walks past us in the crosswalk while we stop at a traffic light and Mom reaches for the door lock. I look away from her and return my gaze to the passenger window.

“I’m *fine*, mom,” I reassure her. “Really.”

I’m a little uncomfortable about her comments about my safety because she’s kinda stereotyping black people a little. But I know that mom is a good person and isn’t racist; she just wants me to be safe. I don’t want mom to think that I think she’s racist, so I don’t say anything and continue to gaze through the window.

Eventually we reach the campus and Mom drops me off at my residence hall. As I walk into the building, I pass two black students in a very loud and intense argument. I'm a little scared and think it will probably get physically violent, so I rush inside.

When I reach the elevator, a short blonde student follows me inside. She looks at me and retorts, "Ugh, I wish those black girls arguing outside would just go back to the ghetto where they came from, know what I mean?"

Her comment catches me off-guard and I don't know what to say. So I just give an awkward laugh and we ride the rest of the way in silence. My discomfort with her comment lingers with me as I get off the elevator and walk into my room where my roommate Karen (also a white first-year student) is busy folding her laundry.

"Hey Jessica! How was your weekend?"

"It was ok. Sorry if I seem a little off. I just heard this girl say something to me in the elevator." I tell her what happened. Karen looks shocked and drops her jaw.

"Omg what? That's so messed up! You didn't say anything to her?"

I feel guilty. "I guess I should have."

I wish I could speak up more when I hear people saying bad things about others based on what they look like. If the students arguing had been white, the blonde girl would not have made that comment. I plop onto my bed, unlock my phone, and browse through my friends' Instagram stories.

"Anyway, how was *your* weekend, Karen?"

I can tell that she has been waiting for me to ask. She starts gushing about Paul—a white fourth-year student we met at a frat party a few weeks ago.

“Paul and I hung out with some of his friends this weekend. Omg, he’s so hot and incredibly sweet.”

I roll my eyes. “Yeah, he’s kinda cute. But he doesn’t seem that nice. Remember that time he was really rude to that worker at Hamburger Heaven?”

“Yeah, but it was because she got our order wrong, *twice*. He’s really a sweetheart, though. Really.”

Karen pauses.

“Come to think of it, the only bad thing I’ve heard him say is that he likes to drive drunk sometimes and gives himself a point for every nigger he hits.”

I bolt straight up. My jaw drops in shock.

“What?! Paul uses the n-word?? How can a guy who says that be ‘sweet’?! It’s such a rude, awful word tied to so much past hatred. People shouldn’t be saying it in the 21st century! It’s just so unnecessary.”

Karen is unfazed and shrugs. “Yeah, def the worst thing I’ve heard him say,” she says as she goes back to folding her laundry.

I am furious, but say nothing more. Karen is my roommate and I don’t want her to think that I’m judging her about Paul. I turn back to my phone and start browsing the internet for Halloween costume ideas.

Prologue to Scene Two

“As I am reading participant after participant largely notice racist aggressions and not do anything or say anything, I am reminded of a time when I went to a store in a predominantly Indian/Pakistani neighborhood in Chicago. I went with two friends—one who was white and the other was Indian American [Ashish; a pseudonym]. I was on a search for an incense holder. We

walked into a store where two middle-aged Southeast Asian men were talking in a language I did not understand. I looked around the front of the store and immediately found incense holders.

Within a matter of minutes, I had picked one out and made my purchase shortly thereafter.

Shortly after leaving the store, Ashish said that the two men were speaking in Punjabi. He overheard one man tell the other (in Punjabi)—“there goes a Black one, keep your eye on him” as we walked into the store. The man was obviously referring to me. Ashish went on to say that the men had been watching me closely while I was in the store; I had not noticed. I recall a flood of emotions: anger at the men, but also hurt at feeling betrayed by my friend. Why had he not said anything to me or the men? Why had he allowed me to buy something from a store that had racially profiled me? He relayed this story so casually to me, as if he was reporting the weather.

Was he not angry, too? I felt alone in my hurt and anger. Like what happened to me didn't matter, that my feelings didn't matter, that I didn't matter—to someone I called a friend.”

Researcher's journal entry, dated December 21, 2019

Scene Two: Lunch with Friends

An hour later, Karen and I decide to meet three of our friends downtown for dinner at Hamburger Heaven. Two of our friends—Lisa and Ashley—are both African American first-year students who are roommates in our residence hall. The third, Eric, is a white second year student who lives off-campus and knows Karen and Lisa from a sociology class they have together.

We all pile into a booth next to a large white family. The family is having a very loud conversation and repeatedly using the n-word. It isn't an argument—just boisterous conversation. I quickly glance at Lisa and Ashley to see if they notice it, too. They both look uncomfortable and offended, but don't say anything. I then begin to feel uncomfortable, too. I'm

also angry because the family is being very rude and inconsiderate. One of the men at the table shoots Lisa and Ashley dirty looks, so I know they're intentionally being racist.

My friends and I receive our menus and look them over as the family in the next booth continues to use the n-word very loudly. I feel like someone should say or do something, but everyone just ignores it. Eventually Eric cracks a joke about the family and says they're being ridiculous. I laugh a little to relieve the discomfort I feel. After Eric's joke, I don't notice the family in the next booth anymore and eventually tune them out.

Prologue to Scene Three

“The Instagram and Facebook posts after this sorority / fraternity fiesta-themed social triggered me and I found them very hurtful and inconsiderate. My grandmother is a Mexican-American and these social posts made me sad because they poorly represented her culture and heritage. There were posts like “#WillKissForQueso” and pictures of girls with mustaches and some even were wearing costumes that made them look like drug lords. I do not think the people at the social were trying to insult anyone directly, but I found it very childish and rude that they would wear something so degrading to a culture.”

Participant diary entry by Lovie Brown, a multiracial (Latina/Hispanic and white) second-year student at SU

“Last Friday ...my friend and I were on a [campus] bus headed to class and overheard this group of guys talking. This group of guys was all white and were all friends I assume. At first, they were just talking about the [upcoming SU football game] and how it was a black out so everyone was going to wear black. But then one of them said “there's going to be a lot of accidental blackface this weekend” and then the rest of them started laughing and agreed... I felt unimportant and not seen during this incident. Stuff like this happens all the time so now I don't

feel anything...I felt unimportant and unseen because they made this joke right in front of me and I am Black without taking my feelings into consideration. I think a lot of students just become desensitized to the things people say because if we got upset every time we wouldn't be able to focus on what's important which is our education and why we are here."

Participant diary entry by LA2, a Black fourth year student at SU

Scene Three: Halloween Costumes

This scene follows Kat—a white third-year student at SU. Presently, she is in her room in a residence hall on campus, with several of her friends—all of whom are white and are discussing costumes they are planning to wear for Halloween.

“So what’s your Halloween costume gonna be, Kat?” Paul, a white fourth-year student, asks.

“Mmm - haven’t given much thought to it,” I reply. “Maybe Wonder Woman?”

“Really? Mmm. That’d be super hot!” Paul says with a wink. I roll my eyes and turn to my friend Jessica, a white first-year student.

“What about you, Jess? What are *you* gonna be for Halloween?” I ask.

“Well, I was kinda thinking I would be an Indian Princess or something. I saw a cute headdress online, with this short brown leather dress and a pair of moccasins that I could match with it,” Jessica replies.

Jessica pulls out her iPhone and shows everyone the photos of the costume that she has saved in her online cart. Everyone else thinks it’s a cute idea, but I’m a little uncomfortable. Her costume feels like cultural appropriation, at least according to my understanding of it. The situation makes me think of Jay—my friend from back home who is Native American. He was one of only a few people of color at my high school. I remember how the other students would

make fun of him and do a tomahawk chop around him. Jay was really hurt and angered by it at first, but eventually ignored them. Jessica's costume makes me think of how Jay would feel if a friend wore a similar costume.

“Wow—yeah the headdress really sets it off!” our friend Karen (Jessica's roommate) exclaims over the photos of Jessica's proposed costume. “Just like a little Pocahontas!”

Others laugh. I cringe. I want to say something to Jessica but decide to wait until later. No need for me to make a big scene and shame her about it in front of everyone. At the same time, I'm annoyed that everyone is just going along with it and is being so clueless. Times have been changing for a while, and I feel it's common sense to know the difference between what is ok and what is just taking it too far. Jessica is one of the last people to leave when I decide to ask her to stay behind.

“Hey, can I talk to you for a minute, Jess?”

“Sure.” She turns to Karen. “Hey, I'll catch up with you later.”

“What's up, Kat?” she asks as the door closes behind her.

“So...your Halloween outfit. I was thinking...what about being one of those girls from Mama Mia? Remember how you said Tanya would make a really good Halloween costume?”

“Oh.” I notice that Jessica is visibly uncomfortable. “Um...you didn't like my Indian Princess idea?”

“Well, it's not that I didn't like it. But it's kinda like cultural appropriation. When people who don't belong to a particular culture adopt parts of that culture as their own. It's wrong because it reduces that culture to stereotypes.”

Jessica looks pensive and slowly nods her head. “Well, that didn't even cross my mind, honestly, how something could be cultural... ?”

“Appropriation,” I finish. “Look, I know you didn’t mean to mock an entire culture, that’s not what I’m saying. I just wanted to talk to you about it so that you know—and suggest another costume.”

Jessica looks relieved that I’m not judging her. I feel relieved, too. I think the conversation went well and hope that Jessica decides to pick a different costume.

Prologue to Scene Four

“My roommate and I were invited to a fraternity party. I did not know anyone involved and went in hopes of meeting new people. We went to the fraternity houses and met up with her friend (Sam). Sam claimed he knew a guy there so it was fine for us to be his guests, but also that the party was open invite so we didn’t have to worry about paying or anything. When the three of us walked in, it was obvious we were the only Black students there, but it didn’t bother me until most people around us kept whispering and staring. We found Sam’s friend who was really cool and some other people. Then a guy walked up and told us that we had to leave. At first he said it was a special event, then when we argued, he said there weren’t enough drinks. I couldn’t help but assume it was our race, as other people had come in after us. Plus we were obviously the only non-whites. I was scared because the person who told us to leave seemed so stern that it led me to believe that there were other reasons for kicking us out. I felt nervous because I have social anxiety and having so many people around during the altercation was unnerving. I was uncomfortable because I felt targeted from the moment we stepped through those doors because of the looks we were given when we walked in. I told my mom about the incident over the phone because I usually tell her everything. She wasn’t surprised as she figured an “all white” fraternity would have prejudice. She told me to be careful in situations like that from now on.”

Participant diary entry by Brianna12, a Black first-year student at SU

“A week ago, a few friends and I decided to go to a fraternity party and thought it would be okay since we were told about it from someone else. After we got there, we were initially very aware of our minority status, in a way, (we are all Black). After some time, more Black people began to come and then all of a sudden, the fraternity members began to tell the minorities the party was invite-only and they were no longer welcomed. After leaving when some other friends of ours were told, we went outside to see almost every Black person that had been in the room. During the event, I was eager to leave because I initially didn’t really want to go out, so I was upset that I had to be in a situation where I felt so left out by choice. Right after, I was slightly shocked and disappointed that something like this had happened here so early in the year. Now, I am over the anger behind it and I’m just hoping that no one else has to deal with this issue in the future. The issue also made me feel slightly sick at the knowledge that there was really nothing we could do. This issue brought this much emotion to me because I know the history of these sorts of issues. It is frustrating that we couldn’t do anything because it was their event and so it made us realize how helpless we were in the situation. I was also upset because there was no way for them to know any of the white people there had been invited or not, so it was just obvious we didn’t belong because of our skin colors. I spoke to a girl who went to the party, who happened to be white, and she was talking about how none of her friends were invited, but the only people in her friend group who were kicked out were the Black guys they knew. She was trying to convince me to report the fraternity, but I knew the issue wasn’t big enough for us to use a “race card.” I didn’t want the Black community to lose credibility if most people didn’t respect the issue.”

Participant diary entry by Violet57, a Black first-year student at SU

Scene Four: Bobby's Friday

This scene follows Bobby—a white fourth year student at SU. Bobby is from a small rural, predominantly white town several hours away from SU. Presently, he is in his sociology class where an invited speaker, Dr. Johnson (an African American professor at SU), is talking to the class about diversity.

“So. You’re a young Black man walking in the streets of Atlanta wearing your SU class shirt. A Black man walks up to you and asks how diverse SU is. What would you say?”

Dr. Johnson waits for students to respond, but no one does right away. It’s kind of uncomfortably silent for a while. Eventually, a few students of color start raising their hands. Lisa—a black student in my class—says:

“No, it’s not. African Americans make up about 8% of SU’s student population. So it is not diverse.”

Dr. Johnson nods his head. “Ok.”

Then Fāng, a Chinese international student, says “I am from China, and I came directly here. I see more people of different races here than I did in China, so I think it is pretty diverse.”

Dr. Johnson thinks that is interesting. He switches to the next slide and it’s a list of categories that qualify under diversity: race, age, gender, religion, ethnicity, disability, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation.

He goes, “Now, y’all were quick to go to race, and even more specifically the African American population here. That does contribute to diversity, but there is also so much more and SU is one of the most diverse places you will ever be in. Sticking to your own race, or one issue, rather than sprouting out and realizing multiple forms of diversity, exacerbates the overarching issue of segregation.”

I am really intrigued and find the presentation eye-opening. Dr. Johnson brought a new outlook to the topic of diversity and racial divide. Most of the time, I see friend groups of the same race and have always wondered why. Dr. Johnson showed us that so many of us are so stuck on the fact that there is a racial divide, but aren't doing anything to help reverse it. Class discussion ensues for another 30 minutes. After class, I stuff my laptop inside my backpack and make my way back to my apartment.

During my walk, I continue thinking about class. The lesson made me think about the current climate right now in this country and how divided we are. I think the country is moving further and further away from the values of our founding fathers. Our country was founded on brotherly love and all I see in the media is hate and division which makes me feel disappointed and frustrated. I remember growing up and learning in school every year about the civil rights movement and slavery, hearing about all the great work that had been done to give black people the fair seat at the table that they deserve. Before I came to college, my teachers and family members said that about 15 years ago, the relationship between black people and white people was fairly harmonious. Up until the deaths of Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown, I believed what I had been told in school that racial conflicts between white people and black people had been resolved. And maybe to some degree, they had been at that point. But other people I know say that these two events were the catalyst for the increasing racial tensions we see today. As a young boy, I would catch things on the news or see things scrolling through Facebook about how white people were evil, white cops were genociding black people, black people are natural criminals, etc. I wasn't old enough to be able to think about societal problems, but I recognized that what I had been taught was not what I was seeing. Clearly, there was either a newfound conflict or a continuing racial conflict, and in fact, these two groups did not get along like

advertised. I wish I could have conversations with my friends about what they think about the racial climate in this country, but, from my personal experiences and observations, I know these conversations tend to end up in bitter arguments.

I walk inside my apartment and text my black friend, Sam:

“Hey what’s up. Wanna link up for pizza 2nite @ Royale and go to the Gamma Gamma party?”

“I’m down for pizza. When?”

“Meet me there at 9. So, no on the party?”

“K. I’ll meet u there at 9. I’ll pass on the Gamma party.”

It bothers me how he never wants to join me at these things and always prefers to do things with his black fraternity. Maybe I can convince him to come during dinner. Even though I’m not Greek, the party tonight has an open invite. My friends Ted and Paul (two white fourth-year students) told me about it.

After dinner, Sam and I are hanging out in my apartment killing time before the party. We’re mostly on our phones and scrolling through social media when Sam finds something interesting.

“Hey Bobby, did you see this study that was done recently? It listed the top causes of death for black people, and it found that death by a police officer is a top ten leading cause. You and I were just talking about police brutality the other day.”

Sam airdrops a *Washington Post* article to me from his iPhone.

“Wait. Seriously?”

I'm incredulous and don't believe him at first, but I look up the sources in the article, and the sources they got the study from seem legitimate. Sam and I then discuss what this means and the ramifications of this statistic being true.

"Yeah, see, it's stuff like this that shapes how I navigate society and how I see cops," Sam says.

I nod my head and get to thinking. There has been a lot of anti-cop rhetoric in recent years, and studies like this show what the rhetoric is rooted in. Sam and I continue to discuss cops' behaviors towards black people come from. We hypothesize that it is ingrained historically and, because of this, is still perpetuated today.

I look at my watch and realize it's almost time to head to the Gamma Gamma party.

"Hey man, you *sure* you don't want to go to the Gamma party tonight? It's gonna be real lit."

"Naw, I'm good."

"You got plans or something?"

"Some of my fraternity brothers were gonna go out tonight for a bit. Haven't confirmed where or when yet, though."

"You can do both—party with us, then meet up with your brothers. C'mon. How come you just want to hang out with your fraternity and not any of the others?"

Sam seems defensive. "I like my fraternity a lot. My brothers make me feel like I belong here at SU."

I can't help but disagree. People fought so long and hard to end segregation, but now we do it voluntarily. Do people really think MLK would be happy with black-only organizations? That is the definition of segregation and I believe it is backwards thinking. I understand pride in

your race, and the struggles it has overcome. But it still seems backwards thinking. I want to live in a world where race isn't brought up. People are just people. But I don't say anything. As a white guy, I gotta watch what I say. I don't want to come across looking like the small-town, backwards-thinking racist white guy, especially with the way things are now in this country.

“Ok, but just try it out. Just once. C'mon, their parties are a lot of fun; the music's always good and they never run out of booze.”

“Aight, fiiiiine, I'll come through for a little while. I'll invite some of my friends along, too.”

“Sweet, let's go.”

The party is hype. There are lots of students here, everyone is dancing, singing, laughing, and having a great time. Sam sees some of his friends and goes over to talk with them. My friends Ted and Paul aren't here yet, but they're on their way.

About 30 minutes after Sam and I arrive at the party, I notice that some white frat guy is making people leave the party and is being pretty rude about it. I notice that all the people leaving are black. This guy is forcing *only* the black students out of the party—including Sam! There's a lot of commotion going on and people screaming things I can't understand. I feel concerned for my friend and rush outside to meet him. On my way out, I hear “Mo Bamba” [*a 2018 hip-hop track that includes multiple instances of the n-word in its lyrics*] begin to play inside the house. It's one of my favorite songs, but I'm too angry to pay much attention.

“What the hell just happened back there!?” I ask Sam as I catch up to him.

“They kicked all the Black people out. Said they was runnin' out of alcohol. Of course that was a lie 'cause someone pointed out there were still plenty of drinks. Then dude said it was a 'closed' party—invitation only. But it was just an excuse to kick the Black people out.”

“What? That makes no sense. I wasn’t invited either and no one came to kick me out. Fuck those assholes!”

“Yeah, whatever man. Listen, Imma link up with my fraternity brothers. Talk to ya later.”

I’m furious. Those guys kicked them out for no reason at all. No one should be discriminated against because of their race. And for this to happen to my friend makes me even angrier. Also, the rudeness was uncalled for and had no real reason behind it, it just seemed straight out racist. As I make my way back home to let off some steam, I vow never to go back to that fraternity.

Prologue to Scene Five

“Honestly, I would not be able to function if I got upset at everything people said around me because I hear it all the time. The only reason I’ve been actively listening to others is because of this race diary study. Most of the time I wear my headphones to tune people out because I don’t want to constantly have race interactions with others. People always say speak up and to an extent that is effective, but it’s mentally exhausting to advocate for all people of color all the time. Another thing I do that seems to help me is to not react right away and talk about it with my sorority sisters later on. I am in a multicultural sorority and we have forum discussions so I often bring these things up during discussion to get my feelings out. I find that having others to talk to that share my same concern helps me cope with life. I think it’s even more important for students of color to have a space to speak about these things when attending a predominantly white institution because we are encountering these interactions all the time.”

Participant diary entry by LA2, a Black fourth-year student at SU

“I joined a sorority this year. Being a woman of color in this sorority has been very lonely. A lot of people turn away from the girl who is Indian. Recently at some sorority events at night, I

would go up to girls, and they would barely try to hold a conversation. I have learned that sororities are predominantly white, and most girls are used to having white friends. Going to a high school that was so diverse made me have a culture shock coming to this. I felt extremely lonely during these events. I felt I did not have anyone to talk to just because of the color of my skin. I cannot blame people for being sheltered, but I still do not feel included. I would say I feel hurt and lonely. I feel this way because I have never had an encounter like this because I was very used to everyone's being accepting in my hometown. Being the minority seems very alarming. I talked to my sister who also was in a sorority at [SU]. She said that some people are always going to be sheltered, but there are people who are very open and accepting."

Participant entry by Anna16, an Asian/Asian American first-year student at SU

Scene Five: Sorority Recruitment Week

This scene follows Katie—a white first-year student who is participating in sorority recruitment week at SU. She grew up in a racially diverse suburb and attended a racially diverse high school. Presently, the Potential New Members are on a break between visiting various sorority houses.

I really like Alpha Beta. The girls seem really nice and very serious about giving back to the community. But I'm beginning to see how segregated the school is here. Prior to coming to SU, I was concerned that the school wouldn't be diverse. And now I'm seeing that it's true. Last night, I texted some of my friends back home about how the university lacks much diversity and said how much I wished I had gone somewhere else. Throughout the recruitment, I've been noticing that it's almost all white girls, and very few women of color, especially black women. In fact, I have rarely seen any. Is this because sororities typically attract predominantly white girls,

or because they turn away black girls, or because there just happens to be more white people than black at SU? I walk over to Julia, one of the girls in Alpha Beta, to ask.

“Hey, so, I’ve noticed that there aren’t many women of color in these sororities. Do you know why there aren’t any?”

“Oh, no. There *are* some. Like, I heard Sigma Omega Kappa initiated an Indian girl last year,” Julia replied.

“Well, ok. But how come most of the women *here* are white? During this entire process, I’ve noticed it’s overwhelmingly white,” I press on.

“Well, it’s just kind of a social norm not to join Greek life if you’re a woman of color, especially if you’re a black woman. There are tons of clubs you can join in the community that represent strictly black sororities and fraternities.”

“Oh,” I reply.

I am intrigued and a little sad. I have spoken to other people about this and they have said they truly don’t know why this happens, it just does. These organizations were created for specific people and that’s just how it is known to be. I feel now that there is a separation between us and that this shouldn’t be the social norm. I felt that this divide adds to the segregation on campus and our lack of connection as a student body. I hope that in the future, anyone can participate freely.

As the recruitment day comes to an end, we pile into a bus to take us to the last house. I find a seat next to a white first-year student I met yesterday during the sorority recruitment activities named Madison, who immediately starts talking to me before I even have a chance to sit down:

“You know, Katie, my sister goes to SU. She’s in Sigma Omega Delta. I think that’s where we’re going next.”

“Oh? One of my good friends is in that sorority, too. Cassidy Rogers.”

“I think I might know her. Who’s her big?” Madison asks.

“Her name is LaKeisha, I think.” I notice that Madison looks shocked. “What, do you know her?”

“No, I’m just surprised that she’s black!”

At this point, I’m a little shocked. Had she really racially profiled someone based on their name?

“Um, aren’t you stereotyping someone based on their name?”

“Well, I didn’t know black girls were allowed to be in the same sororities as us!”

I laugh. “You’re kidding, right? It’s 2019.”

Madison just stares back at me with a serious look. She really believes it and my jaw drops. I cannot believe this girl genuinely believes that black girls are not allowed to be in the same sororities as white girls. I mean, it’s 2019—not the 1960’s! I’m really angry that she stereotyped someone off of their name and that she was saying such ignorant comments about black people! Clearly, she’s not very well-educated, which concerns me.

As we all depart the bus and walk up to the Sigma Omega Delta house, I find my roommate Olivia (who is also rushing) to tell her what happened.

“Omg, you know what that girl just said to me back there?” I drop my voice so that no one else can overhear. “She said she didn’t know that black girls were allowed in the same sororities as white girls!” I say in a loud whisper.

Olivia just stares back at me.

“So...?” She shrugs. I can’t believe that Olivia sees nothing strange about that remark!

After the Potential New Members leave the Sigma Omega Delta house and are done meeting with the recruitment counselor, I make my way to the bus stop to catch a ride home and change before dinner. As I walk towards the bus stop, I notice a group of white girls in front of me and two more black girls in front of them. When I get to the bus stop, there is a horrible smell. And by horrible, I mean it is so unbearable that I have to walk to the next bus stop. The smell reminds me of sulfur. The group of white girls starts giggling and I can hear every word they say:

“Those black girls are coming with us, so the smell will come with us, too,” one of them says.

The white girls laugh. I feel bad for the black girls of course, because if I can hear the white girls, they obviously can hear them, too. I continue to walk and the white girls continue to talk:

“I bet their ancestors would know that smell since they had to clean people's shit all the time.”

“The smell is still following us because black people don’t shower.”

More laughter. It’s so hurtful to me and I can only imagine how the two black girls feel. I am astonished that they have absolutely no shame in the fact that they are saying very racist remarks, and the two black girls are so close to them. They have no remorse for saying these comments out loud for literally anyone passing them to hear.

When I get back to my room, I call my mom to tell her what happened:

“Mom, I hate the way people talk about other people, and I just wish we could fix our society and see past color.”

“I agree, sweetie. You know, I encounter stuff like that in my workplace everyday. It just saddens me.”

We’re from up north, so it’s not as prominent at home as it is here at SU. I wish I hadn’t come to this school.

Prologue to Scene Six

“I was in the [SU] Student Center, leaving an event sponsored by one of the organizations I am a member of. I used the restroom and when I was washing my hands, two caucasian male students walked in. Everything was normal at first, then I heard one male tell the other one “nigga shut the fuck up.” At the time, I was washing my hands; I stopped what I was doing and shook my head in disappointment. Then, I expeditiously finished washing my hands and left the bathroom, removing myself as quickly as possible. I felt uncomfortable because it disappoints me that caucasians feel entitled enough to use the word “nigga” to fit in. I wouldn’t expect to hear this language first-hand at a University that has received so much praise on its diversity. People were beaten, murdered, and denied an education, just because of the color of our skin. It reminds me of the quote, “they wanna act like us but they don’t want to experience the hardships that we face every day.” When that word is used by a person whose race is not considered a minority, I feel uneasy and want to remove myself immediately.”

Participant diary entry by D2J, a Black first-year student at SU

“I was in [a campus dining hall] with my friends when I saw some people saying the N-word at their table without a care in the world and once they saw me and my friends they stopped and looked scared as we walked in. We eventually passed them and they immediately started back without a care in the world. I felt angry and disappointed. I felt this way because they had no regard for what they were saying whenever there were no Black people around but right when

we showed up they stopped and seemed scared of us. I was disappointed because of how they looked at us when we came, I felt more like a criminal than a fellow peer because of the fear in their eyes. I talked to my roommate and some other Black students that I am friends with and they all said the same thing, talking about how they hate being seen like that in the eyes of someone who doesn't even know them."

Participant diary entry by Chadwick, a Black first-year student at SU

Scene Six: Hanging Out with the Girls

This scene follows Madison—a white first-year student at SU who grew up in a predominantly white suburb and attended a predominantly white high school. Presently, she is about to meet up with her friend Karen and her friends—all of whom are white.

Karen and I have known each other for years and went to the same high school. I consider her a good friend, though we have somewhat grown apart since coming to SU. So I'm excited to have an opportunity to catch up and reconnect. She picks me up from my residence hall in her car, which is blasting "Mo Bamba." Several of her friends are already in the car with her. One of them gets out of the passenger seat and gets in the back so that I can ride up front.

"Hey everyone," I say as I get in. Karen turns down the music.

"Hey, Madison! Love the 'fit, girl!" one of the girls says.

"Thanks!" I reply.

As Karen backs out of the parking spot, I notice there are people walking behind the car.

"Wait, some people are behind you." Karen hits the brake, turns and looks behind her.

"Ugh, goddamn Asians!"

"Oh my god, Karen!" the other girls exclaim in high pitches.

"So, where are we going?" I ask.

“Let’s go to The American. I’m starving,” Jessica (Karen’s roommate) suggests.

“Yeah, I was thinking we’d go there then to Club Ivory later,” Karen replies. On the way over, the conversation quickly turns to boys.

“Hey, guess what? I started snapchatting with two of the SU football players!” Karen announces to the car.

“Oooo—are any of them cute?” I ask.

She glances at me and is silent for a second. “Well, uhhhh. I mean, they’re black.”

“Ooo, get that BBC, Karen!” someone in the back says. They all giggle.

Karen rolls her eyes. “Nigga, please.”

“Well, are they cute still?” I ask.

“Well, one is sorta cute... I guess. And then the other isn’t,” Karen replies.

Another girl chimes in: “I don’t think many of the sports players at SU are hot because they are all either black and then the white ones aren’t that cute, either.”

“So, wait, you don’t even think Donovan Wilson’s cute?” I ask.

“Nope.”

“What about Eric Tyler?”

“I’m just not into black guys.”

Jessica needs to stop at the ATM for cash, so Karen pulls into a parking spot while the rest of us wait inside the car. Every time a black man walks past the car, Karen makes a remark about how scared she is and makes sure the car doors are locked.

“I wish Jessica would hurry up soon. This area is kinda sketch,” Karen says in a low tone.

My friends and I go to Club Ivory and have a really fun night. Hours later, Karen drops me off at home. I collapse on my bed and unlock my phone. I open snapchat and see a picture on my friend's private snapchat story. This friend also goes to SU. In the picture, she is with some of her white friends holding a chicken nugget. She captioned it "1, 2, 3, 4, how many niggers are in my store I know you're stealing."

I continue browsing through my social media channels and see a video posted on my best friend's spam account [*a secondary social media account that people only share with their closest friends*]. In the video, she is walking down a street with her friends. She keeps saying "nigga" and quickly covering her mouth while laughing.

Before I go to sleep, I remember that I have a race diary assignment where I am supposed to write about the racial things I see and how they make me feel. I pull out my laptop and start to think. I honestly don't hear that many racial slurs or see any acts of racism in my daily life. Probably because I surround myself with people who aren't racist and accept people based off of their personalities.

A few things come to mind to write about, but they are nit-picky. I think about my friends' social media posts. The first one didn't really make sense to me and seemed kinda weird. I am confused as to why she posted it on her story. I think it might be lyrics to a song? But I'm not quite sure. It is obvious she knows it isn't good to post that because she put it on her private snapchat and not her real snapchat story. I write about my friend's snapchat in my race diary.

Then I think about the second video with my friend saying the n-word. Personally, it doesn't make me that angry because I am white and don't have a direct relationship to the word for it to be offensive to me. But I still don't like when people use the word. She wasn't being rude or disrespectful to anyone, but it is a word that is not accepted and is quite derogatory. She

should know better. It's not the end of the world, but it could have been avoided and not said, or recorded, or even posted. Some people might take it as offensive if they see it. It has a negative connotation and could come back to bite her in the butt in the future. Maybe I should tell her to take it down. I write about this in my race diary.

Then I think about the comment in Karen's car about the football players not being attractive because they are black. I don't like how she didn't just say "no, they aren't that cute," but instead said "well, they're black" indicating they aren't that cute. It is sorta generalizing a race. I understand people of certain races might not be her type, because some races are more attractive than others, in my opinion. But I didn't like the way she said it and how it came across. Her comment doesn't make me feel bad that much, but I just thought to myself that that wasn't the nicest thing. So I write about that in my race diary, too.

I really have to choose little bitty things that people said and write about those, because I have nothing else to write about. Maybe this is because younger people are not that racist these days, and especially the people I choose to hang around. The only thing I see commonly with people my age is the use of the n-word.

Honestly, whenever racial things come up, it makes me uncomfortable. And the strategy I use to cope with that is just act like I didn't see it. If it is one of my closest friends saying something *super* bad on social media, I would tell them to take the video/picture down, but most of the time I don't say anything and just ignore it.

A Critical Analysis of the Composite Counter-Narrative

In contrast to dominant narratives about contemporary race relations in the U.S. (broadly) and on U.S. college campuses (in particular), the composite counter-narrative illustrates how racism is an everyday reality for Students of Color at SU that is perpetrated not by a few outliers,

but by white students through direct acts, collusion, and silence in ordinary encounters. The counter-narrative also illustrates the nine interrelated components of the theory generated from this study, which describes participants' processes of meaning making concerning race and racism in their environments and how these processes served to either disrupt racism or (more often) perpetuate racism through (re)constructing whiteness: 1) triggering events, 2) prior racial frames and contexts; 3) meaning-making strategies; 4) evasion strategies, 5) constructing racial climates, 6) emotional responses, 7) coping strategies, 8) evasive actions, and 9) actions towards racial justice. With the exception of triggering events, each of the components falls into one of three dimensions: cognitive, affective, and behavioral.

Consistent with grounded theory methodology, the theory's components were derived inductively from the data. In the sections below, I describe each of the theory's components. Throughout, I integrate the counter-narrative's prologues to draw upon the experiential knowledge of People of Color in theorizing each component and elucidating how whiteness operated in the study. Finally, it bears repeating that these components are *interrelated* and do not exist in isolation from one another. For example, participants' strategies for meaning making were often linked to their emotional responses to triggering events and informed actions they took. Additionally, some components overlap with one another. For example, participants' methods for coping with their emotional responses to triggering events doubled as meaning-making or evasion strategies. To mitigate confusion for the reader, I will explicitly point out these points of connection and overlap and ask that the reader pay attention to the multiple distinct functions that individual components serve.

Triggering Events

Participants in the study experienced various types of events that triggered their processes for either making meaning of or evading race and/or racism in their environments. These triggering events included having conversations about race or racism, learning about racial issues in the classroom or through conversations with Friends of Color, observing explicitly racist actions, hearing racist language, and taking notice of racial patterns in their environments (particularly when these patterns provoked cognitive dissonance). These events took place on- and off-campus, as well as through their engagement on social media.

As in the counter-narrative, the most commonly reported triggering events in the study were encountering explicitly racist language and actions (racist aggressions). In the prologues, Students of Color repeatedly indicate that SU's environment is rife with racist aggressions and racial isolation. LA2, a Black fourth year student at SU, indicates that she and her Peers of Color encounter racist aggressions "all the time" and to the extent where she has to tune people out with her headphones in order to persist in her campus environment. Consistent with this characterization of SU, the counter-narrative illustrates the mundaneness of racist aggressions in the white characters' environments. Perpetrators of these racist aggressions were classmates, friends, family members, roommates, other college peers, strangers—potentially anyone the characters encountered. Sometimes white participants were third parties either witnessing racist aggressions unfold (e.g., when Bobby sees Black students being tossed out of the fraternity party) or listening to conversations of which they were not a part (e.g., when Katie hears white students make racist statements about the Black students at the bus stop). Other times, white participants were active members of the conversations or encounters in which racist aggressions

took place, as in the last scene when Madison is in the car with her friends who repeatedly use racist language to talk about Asian people and Black men.

The triggering events that involved racist aggressions tended to be casual and unexpected and often caught white participants off-guard. Such events took place in both backstage (presumed all-white) settings, as well as in frontstage (multi-racial) settings. In some backstage encounters, perpetrators of racist aggressions presumed that white participants shared their racist ideologies and expected them to collude. One example of this scenario is illustrated in the first scene when the white student in the elevator expects Jessica to share her racist characterizations of the Black women arguing outside of their residence hall.

Cognitive Dimension

This dimension of white participants' racial meaning-making/evasion consists of participants': 1) previously established racial frames, 2) pre-college racial contexts, 3) meaning-making strategies, 4) evasion strategies, and 5) constructions of their racial climates. As I mentioned earlier, these components are interrelated and do not exist in isolation from one another. In the following paragraphs, I will illustrate how each of these components operated together to enable white participants to make sense of and/or evade the salience of race and racism in their environments and frequently reconstruct whiteness.

White participants frequently brought racial frames and pre-college racial contexts with them into their experiences with triggering events. These frames and contexts, along with the affective dimensions I will describe later, shaped characters' processes of making meaning of and/or evading race and racism in their environments. White participants' racial frames were deeply embedded, unquestioned, and often unconscious. Their pre-college racial contexts similarly served as deeply embedded backdrops and points of comparison to the campus context.

Prior racial frames. In the counter-narrative’s prologues, Students of Color at SU articulate with depth how their racial locations shape their college experiences. What bears emphasizing is that even Students of Color who were in their *first year*—and had only been on campus for less than two months at the time of data collection—had developed such nuanced understandings. This is because they had previously developed race-*conscious* frames before coming to SU and were in campus environments that constantly emphasized their racial marginalization. For example, in the prologue to the first scene, Alma 4 indicates that she experienced discrimination from white people before coming to college and, thus, incorporates those experiences into her racial frame. She then uses that racial frame to make sense of her college environment.

Conversely, race-*evasive* framing was common among the white characters in the counter-narrative (and white participants in the study) who, for the most part, were unaware of how their racial locations shaped their experiences. These race-evasive sub-frames included: 1) historicized renderings of racism, 2) ontological expansiveness, 3) minimization of racism and racial stereotypes, and 4) uses of racist slurs and white innocence.

Historicized renderings of racism. In the opening scene, Jessica and her mother talk about racism as something that Southeast University and the U.S. have largely progressed beyond. Katie’s response to Madison’s comment in the fifth scene (“it’s 2019, not the 1960’s”) similarly suggests a framing of racism as something purely historical and not contemporary. In the last scene, Madison remarks that younger generations are less racist than previous generations. While the white characters in the counter-narrative frame racism as strictly historical, Students of Color at SU—particularly Violet⁵⁷ and D2J—frame racism as something

historical *and* contemporary. This is particularly evident in Violet57's entry where she connects her experience at the fraternity party to a broader history of U.S. racism.

Later in this section, I will illustrate how whiteness promotes a collective historical amnesia—a forgetting of cultural trauma. However, this subframe illustrates how, as far as historical contexts surrounding racism *are* recalled, they are often recalled in ways that romanticize the present. Whiteness distances itself from its own violent history and, because of that, white characters in the counter-narrative take up its epistemology of ignorance concerning not only the continued persistence of racism in their environments, but the roles they often play in enabling that persistence.

Ontological expansiveness. In a related racial sub-frame, white participants often objected to the perceived racial segregation in their environments. Sometimes, as with Jessica and Bobby in the counter-narrative, it was the perceived self-segregation of *Students of Color* that was problematized, not the whiteness of *their* environments. This double-standard illustrates the ontological expansiveness that is characteristic of whiteness. In the prologues, several Black students at SU indicate the sense of belonging, pride, and community Black and multicultural spaces on campus give them and articulate how engaging with these spaces serves as a resilience practice for coping with their racist campus environments. Because whiteness promotes an epistemology of ignorance, Jessica and Bobby are unaware of how their white racial privilege insulates them from the racism in their environments and what purposes Black spaces serve for Black students at SU. Other times in the counter-narrative, it was the whiteness of the environment that was perceived to be a problem (as with Katie's observation of NPC sororities). However, Katie's interpretation also reflects race-evasive framing because she later indicates that

she wants society to “see past color” and does not consider how environments—particularly NPC sororities—are not always welcoming for Students of Color.

Minimization of racism and racial stereotypes. White participants in the study also held racial frames that minimized racism and—albeit less often—were shaped by racial stereotypes. Madison illustrates these sub-frames when she downplays the racist aggressions perpetuated by her friends as “little” and “nit-picky” and tacitly endorses their anti-Black stereotypes (e.g., associating Black men with violence, hypersexuality, and undesirability). For example, Madison excuses her friend’s romantic disinterest in Black men as something relatable, ignores Karen’s racist language targeting the Asian people walking behind Karen’s car, ignores Karen’s use of a racist slur, does not trouble one student’s joke about “BBC’s” [“big Black cocks”], does not trouble Karen’s behavior of locking the car doors whenever she sees a Black man near the car, and minimizes her friends’ use of the N-word on social media.

Conversely, in the prologue to the sixth scene, Black students at SU are clear in the harmful impact similar actions have on them. Chadwick, a Black first-year student at SU, talks about how angry and disappointed he feels when he notices white students viewing him with fear and how their actions make him feel “more like a criminal than a fellow peer.” Madison’s tacit endorsement of (and indifference towards) behavior that harms and marginalizes her Peers of Color illustrates how the pathology of whiteness encourages a trauma response of withdrawal that promotes an emotional detachment from People of Color and prevents her from recognizing our full humanity.

Use of racist slurs and white innocence. The prologue to the sixth scene illustrates how the N-word affects D2J—a Black student at SU. D2J connects the N-word to its historical context (that of racist violence and discrimination in the U.S.) and articulates how, because of

that context, hearing his white peers say it creates a campus environment for him that is so uncomfortable, that he wants to remove himself from it physically. Additionally, both D2J and Chadwick take issue with their white peers' casual use of this slur—indicating that they recognize that the word has a different meaning for them. D2J understands his white peers' casual use of the N-word to be culturally appropriative and as a marker of social status among one's peers.

In contrast to the harmful effect this slur has on D2J, Jessica and Madison frame the N-word slur as something *rude* and not as something *harmful*—a finding that was highly prevalent amongst the white participants in the study. Effectively, their preoccupation with the impropriety of the N-word generally superseded any concern for Black people—the racial group that is most directly harmed by this slur. For example, towards the end of the first scene, Jessica listens to her roommate Karen describe how her crush, Paul, likes to drive drunk and hit Black people (referring to them with the racist slur). The alarm and anger Jessica expresses are *not* in response to Paul's acts of racist violence for sport, they are in response to his use of the N-word. By divorcing this slur from its violent and racist history and reducing it to just an “unnecessary” word, Jessica reflects how whiteness insists on maintaining white innocence and an emotional detachment from Black people and concern for Black life.

However, not all of the white characters are alarmed by their white peers' use of the N-word. In the sixth scene, Madison encounters several friends who use the slur—in person and on social media—and is primarily unfazed by it, except for the damage it may do to one friend's reputation (a concern that reflects her investment in whiteness). Additionally, Madison remarks, “Personally, [seeing my friends use the N-word] doesn't make me that angry *because I am white* and don't have a direct relationship to the word for it to be offensive to me [emphasis added].”

When placed in a historical context, her statement belies the reality that white people *do* have a relationship to that slur and that relationship is rooted in a history of racist violence. That Madison readily accepts this racial frame (a myth) of white innocence in relation to the N-word slur indicates the power of the collective historical amnesia that is inherent to whiteness. Moreover, this collective historical amnesia promotes an emotional detachment from Black people and concern for Black life, as well as a willful aversion to reckoning with a collective cultural trauma.

Prior racial contexts. In addition to their prior racial frames, participants' pre-college racial contexts mattered significantly in how they made sense of and/or evaded race and racism in their environments. Katie comes from a racially diverse neighborhood and had previously attended a racially diverse high school in the northern U.S. (a place in which she perceives racism is uncommon). Because of this context, the whiteness of the SU environment and NPC sororities provokes so much cognitive dissonance that it leads her to develop a negative assessment of SU. Likewise, Jessica comes from a primarily white town, which enables her to view SU as an exemplar of racial diversity.

Students of Color at SU also brought the prior racial contexts with them to their experiences at SU. However, unlike white participants in the study, these contexts served to emphasize their racial marginalization in the campus context. In the prologues, Renee, Alma 4, and Anna 16 all indicate they come from racially/ethnically diverse environments, which is in stark contrast to their perceptions of the predominantly white environments at SU. Although Katie also experiences a stark contrast between her hometown and the college environment in the fifth scene, her white racial privilege in SU's context insulates her from experiencing racial isolation or marginalization.

Meaning-making strategies. Participants frequently used strategies that enabled them to interpret and make meaning of race and racism in their campus environments and within broader socio-political contexts. These strategies were often conscious behaviors and were shaped by overlaps with other components, including *emotional responses*, *coping strategies*, *prior racial frames and contexts*, and *constructions of racial climates*. Bobby's experience at the fraternity party in the fourth scene illustrates overlaps between an *emotional response*, a *coping strategy*, and a *meaning-making strategy*. Bobby witnesses Black students being kicked out of the fraternity party and goes to find Sam, exclaiming "That makes no sense!" Bobby points to how he also was not invited to the party, but was not asked to leave. His thought process reflects the confusion (*emotional response*) concerning the expulsion of the Black students from the party. Even after Sam leaves, Bobby continues to dwell on the perceived illogic of what he witnessed ("the rudeness was uncalled for...had no real reason behind it...") and searches for logic behind it (a *meaning-making strategy*) to resolve his confusion (*coping strategy*) before he eventually concludes that the expulsion of the Black students from the party was racially motivated.

In contrast to this scene, Brianna12 and Violet57—two Black students at SU—describe how they experienced the same fraternity party in the scene's prologue. In their accounts, Brianna12 and Violet57 were quicker to recognize that their expulsion by the white student was racially motivated. They were acutely aware of the unwelcoming stares that targeted them from the moment they walked inside (signals that elude Bobby's notice) and, in Violet57's case, the historical context behind their expulsion from the party. Bobby lacks such an understanding of this historical context and, thus, is left to go through the futile motions of trying to make meaning of his white peer's behavior by searching for logic behind it. Bobby's experience highlights how meaning-making strategies also served as coping strategies for alleviating

participants' emotional responses to triggering events—a point of overlap between the cognitive and affective dimensions. However, the juxtaposition between the fourth scene and its prologue highlights something deeper and illustrates how whiteness 1) obscures historical, social, and cultural contexts necessary for making sense of racism in students' environments and 2) allows Bobby to focus more of his energies on resolving his confusion (by searching for logical explanations) than on naming and addressing the harm that racist aggressions cause. In this example—which draws upon cognitive (*meaning-making strategies*) and affective dimensions (*emotional responses* and *coping strategies*)—whiteness functions as a collective historical amnesia and as a device for distraction.

The counter-narrative also depicts additional meaning-making strategies that white participants used in the study. In the third scene, Kat uses perspective-taking and previous learning about cultural appropriation to understand the racist overtones of Jessica's proposed Halloween costume. Katie makes explicit comparisons between her hometown (*prior racial context*) and SU's campus that enables her to question and problematize the whiteness of NPC sororities. Employing another meaning-making strategy, Katie later discusses the encounter with the racist aggressions at the bus stop with her mother, which serves to provide external validation for her interpretation of the encounter and the meaning she ascribes to it. Using another meaning-making strategy, Bobby reflects on his own beliefs and assumptions concerning U.S. race relations to make meaning of the current racial climate.

Evasion strategies. While meaning-making strategies frequently deepened participants' engagement with the salience of race and racism in their environments, participants also expressed cognitive processes of evading these issues. These strategies, which were often shaped by emotional detachment and/or feelings of discomfort and prior racial frames and contexts,

served to distance participants (cognitively, emotionally, and physically) from their observations of racist aggressions or the salience of race in other triggering events. Ultimately, these evasion strategies—many of which doubled as trauma responses—served to protect the characters' white fragility (and those of the white people around them), perpetuate the epistemology of ignorance that is inherent to whiteness, and obscure People of Color's full humanity.

These evasion strategies are illustrated in the counter-narrative through Jessica, Bobby, and Madison's applications of race-evasive frames to (re)interpret triggering events and perpetuate whiteness. Bobby evades considering the significance of historically Black fraternities for his friend Sam by applying race-evasive frames (that emphasize ontological expansiveness and ahistorical, power-neutral renderings of racism) to reinterpret Sam's membership in an NPHC fraternity as racist. Madison applies race-evasive frames that minimize racism and obscure the harmful impact of her friends' racist aggressions to perpetuate the epistemologies of ignorance inherent to whiteness. Finally, in response to her mother's anti-Black rhetoric and behavior in the first scene's opening dialogue, Jessica focuses on her mother's intentions, which allows her to evade considering the implications of that rhetoric and behavior for normalizing anti-Black dehumanization.

Constructing racial climates. This final cognitive component of participants' racial meaning-making and evasion consists of their perceptions of their campus racial climates and the U.S. racial climate. As with other components, white participants' constructions of their racial climates were interrelated with other components. For example, participants' constructions of racial climates 1) were often formed through *prior racial frames, meaning-making strategies* and *evasion strategies*, 2) elicited particular *emotional responses*, and 3) led to specific *evasive actions* and *actions towards racial justice*.

One of the strongest findings from the study was that white participants expressed having mixed perceptions of the U.S. racial climate. They variously described the climate as positive, negative, and mixed; described perceiving both increases and decreases in overt forms of racism; and described a mix of hopefulness and hopelessness about race relations. In fact, white participants often contradicted themselves within the same essay when writing about their perceptions of the U.S. racial climate.

In the study, white participants' negative perceptions of the U.S. racial climate were shaped by engagement with news media (particularly with news stories about racist violence), perceiving a deterioration in cross-racial dialogue (particularly online), the rhetoric and policies of U.S. politicians (most notably those of President Trump), their knowledge of systemic racism (e.g., police brutality, inequitable access to healthcare and education), and encountering racist aggressions in their environments. In the counter-narrative, for example, Bobby indicates that his negative perception of the racial climate is driven by all the "hate and division" he sees in the media. White participants' positive perceptions of the U.S. racial climate were enabled through *prior (race-evasive) frames, evasion strategies*, perceiving the campus racial climate to be positive, and interacting with Friends of Color who indicated that racism was not a problem for them. In the counter-narrative, for example, Jessica's mostly positive perception of the U.S. racial climate is enabled through her active search for news stories about positive race relations—an *evasive action* (a component that I will discuss below).

In the study, most white participants described their perceptions of the campus racial climate as being directly influenced by their perceptions of the U.S. racial climate. For example, Bobby's construction of the broader U.S. racial climate as tense, along with his understanding of his *pre-college racial context* (being from a small, rural, predominantly white town) shapes how

he perceives his campus environment and specific *evasive actions* he takes (i.e., pulling back on engaging with others in race-related discussions). In the study, a few white participants stated that their perceptions of campus and U.S. racial climates mutually shaped one another.

On the whole, white participants largely did not speak about their racial climates (whether their campus racial climates or broader U.S. racial contexts) as something they were actively involved in co-creating. This detached relationship with their racial climates is depicted in the counter-narrative's fifth scene. Katie repeatedly complains about the racial climate at SU; it is incredibly white and white students perpetuate racist aggressions boldly and openly. But despite her negative characterizations of the campus racial climate, Katie does not see a role for herself in changing that environment and does nothing when she is within earshot of white students who are perpetuating racist aggressions targeting two Black students.

In contrast, Students of Color discussed the racial climate at SU as something that they are active in creating for themselves. For example, in the prologue to the first scene, Alma 4 discusses a conversation in which her sister encourages her to go outside of her comfort zone to ameliorate the isolation she feels. Renee engages with Tevis Time in the student union with other Black peers which enables her to find her community and "make [her] place." Not only do Students of Color at SU engage with co-constructing racial environments on campus, but their experiences with racial marginalization on campus necessitate this engagement as a resilience practice. The juxtaposition between white participants' detachment from the racial climate and Students' of Color engagement with it as a resilience strategy emphasizes how whiteness served to promote dissociation (another trauma response) among white participants. Through this dissociation, white participants were able to guard themselves against the overwhelming prospect

of disrupting the racist aggressions perpetuated by their peers and facing the social consequences of doing so.

Across their perceptions of the U.S. and campus racial climates, white participants often expressed an emerging understanding of racism as something contemporary and endemic—even participants who had more positive views of their racial climates. Many white participants expressed shock and disappointment in response to the racist aggressions they observed due to prior racial frames that emphasized historicized renderings of racism. However, when prompted to reflect on their perceptions of the racial climate as a whole, many white participants articulated a view of racism as something pervasive and permanent. This is another example of how participants' constructions of their racial climates were strongly linked to prior racial frames and contexts.

Affective Dimension

This dimension of participants' racial meaning-making consists of both their emotional responses to triggering events, as well as their practices for coping with these emotional responses. Earlier, I mentioned that the components of the theory generated from this study were interrelated. In this dimension, participants' emotional responses and coping strategies were frequently intertwined with other components/dimensions of their racial meaning-making. For example, attempts to make meaning of triggering events (*meaning-making strategies*) also served to resolve participants' internal conflict or confusion (*emotional coping strategy*).

Emotional responses. As with white participants in the study, triggering events often elicited emotional responses from the counter-narrative's white characters. These ranged from strong emotional responses that would linger well after the event occurred (as in the fourth scene when Bobby's heightened anger draws him to leave the fraternity party and never return), to

weaker emotional responses that were fleeting (such as Jessica's fleeting discomfort in the second scene when hearing the racist slurs in the restaurant). Some participants indicated feeling unaffected by triggering events altogether, which is illustrated in the sixth scene through Madison's complete sense of detachment from her peers' racist aggressions. The most prominent emotional responses participants indicated were confusion/conflict, discomfort, anger, and empathy. In the following sections, I expound on each of these emotions and discuss the characters' various methods of coping with them.

Confusion and conflict. Confusion and conflict were most often expressed as an inability to comprehend the whiteness or racist aggressions the white characters witnessed in their environments and within broader socio-political contexts. Sometimes, white participants' confusion stemmed from their attempts to search for the logic behind racist aggressions—a point of overlap between this dimension and the *meaning-making strategies* within the cognitive dimension. I provided an example of this earlier with Bobby's confusion and search for logic in response to the Black students being expelled from the fraternity party. In another example, Katie was confused as to why Women of Color were largely absent from NPC sororities.

Discomfort. Discomfort was a trauma response that many white participants experienced and it was almost always in response to observing/hearing a white person perpetrate racist aggressions. For example, in the third scene Kat is uncomfortable with Jessica's Halloween costume idea and with its endorsement by their mutual friends. Discomfort arising from witnessing racist aggressions was particularly acute when People of Color were present in the setting and/or when racist comments were loud enough in a public place for anyone to hear. For example, Jessica's discomfort with the racist slurs from the neighboring booth intensifies when she notices Lisa and Ashley's discomfort. Similarly, in the fifth scene, Katie's discomfort with

the white students' racist comments at the bus stop is particularly pronounced because they are made boldly in a public setting and within earshot of the comments' intended targets. White participants' feelings of discomfort, a result of white fragility, frequently begot their evasive actions, which I address more fully later.

Anger. Anger was another frequently reported emotional response among white participants in the study—almost always in response to hearing/witnessing racist aggressions. White participants expressed anger towards racist aggressions because they constructed it as cruel, unnecessary, rude, illogical, “backwards” and against characters' unstated race-evasive and egalitarian values. For Bobby, witnessing a racist aggression that targeted his friend elicited particularly strong feelings of anger. Due to his recognition of the events at the party as racist (and, to him, illogical) Bobby's anger prompts him to never return to the fraternity—an overlap between this dimension and the *evasive action* component in the behavior dimension (which I discuss below). Tellingly, his anger does not result in actions that directly address the harm that was done to Sam or any of the other Black students at the party. Rather, Bobby's anger focuses its attention on the illogic of what happened and, possibly, the conflict between the event and his preconceived understanding of U.S. race relations between Black people and white people (which he articulates in a reflection during his walk home after class). In this scene, confusion serves to fuel Bobby's anger and illustrates how, even when the invisible cloak of whiteness begins to be punctured, whiteness can still refocus attention away from People of Color and the harm that it causes us.

Empathy. White participants sometimes expressed empathy in response to either witnessing racist aggressions (particularly if the person harmed was a friend), discussing race with Friends of Color, learning about race and/or racism in the classroom, or hearing a story

about racism from a friend or family member. The empathy was usually directed towards a specific person impacted by the racist aggression (rather than towards an entire racial/ethnic group), as when Katie expresses empathy for the Black students at the bus stop (and not Black students at SU—a campus she characterizes as incredibly white). In the third scene, Kat recalls the empathy she felt for her friend Jay from high school, when hearing about Jessica’s proposed Halloween costume. Kat’s empathy accompanied her use of perspective-taking—a *meaning-making strategy* I will address more fully later.

Coping strategies (or responses to cultural trauma). In the counter-narrative’s prologues, Students of Color at SU name the isolation, discomfort, and hostility they experience in their campus environments. To cope, they use various strategies that include talking with family members and peers and emotionally detaching themselves from triggering events. Although both strategies were employed by white participants, they did not serve the same purposes. For Students of Color, these coping strategies served as resilience practices; for the white participants, they often served as strategies for dissociation, protecting white fragility, and (re)constructing whiteness. These coping strategies frequently doubled as *evasion strategies*, in that they often served the purpose of evading the salience of race and racism. Earlier, I introduced the concept of cultural trauma and its effects on perpetrators of and bystanders to racist aggressions. With this understanding in mind, I reframe the characters’ coping strategies as trauma responses.

White participants in the study used several strategies to cope with cultural trauma in response to triggering events. For example, Madison uses ignorance and detachment as a coping strategy to protect her white fragility (masked as white racial discomfort) in light of her friends’ use of racist language and Jessica reinterprets her mother’s anti-Black behavior in the car as an

innocuous concern for her well-being. This coping strategy, which doubles as an evasion strategy, serves to resolve the internal conflict she feels between her perception of her mom and her racist behavior. When placed within the context of whiteness as a pathology, Jessica's strategy can be understood as a process of denial and decoupling her mother's actions from a history of racial trauma to protect an image of her mom as racially innocent.

Sometimes, trauma responses doubled as *meaning-making strategies* that helped characters reflect on the triggering event, such as when Bobby looks up the sources in the news article about police and Black death to resolve his initial sense of disbelief (or not wanting to believe), or when Katie seeks various perspectives about the overwhelming whiteness of NPC Greek life at SU to resolve the cognitive dissonance she experiences in its all-white environment. These examples highlight points of overlap between the affective and cognitive dimensions of white participants' racial meaning-making and evasion. Another common coping strategy among white participants (which also frequently doubled as a *meaning-making strategy*, but not always) included discussing triggering events with others, a strategy used by Bobby, Jessica, and Katie. Less commonly, white participants' methods of coping consisted of directly addressing racist aggressions (a point of overlap with *actions towards racial justice*, which I discuss below), such as in the third scene when Kat resolves her discomfort by confronting Jessica about her Halloween costume idea.

Behavioral Components

This final dimension of white participants' racial meaning-making and evasion describes concrete behaviors: *actions towards racial justice* and *evasive actions*.

Actions towards racial justice. In response to triggering events (and as a result of engaging strategies for making meaning), some white participants developed inclinations

towards racial justice actions. Again, this component was interrelated with other components of the theory generated from this study. For example, Kat's empathy (*emotional response*), along with her use of perspective-taking and integrating previous learning about cultural appropriation (*meaning-making strategies*) lead her to confront Jessica about her Halloween costume.

Sometimes, white participants' racial justice actions were expressed as future commitments or desires. For example, after the lesson on diversity in his sociology class prompts him to reflect on the U.S. racial climate and his evolving understanding of racial relations, Bobby expresses a desire to engage in racial dialogue with his peers.

Evasive actions. White participants in the study occasionally confronted racism in their environments, but—more often—they evaded doing so. In an important distinction, white participants' *evasion strategies* were primarily cognitive, while their *evasive actions* (discussed here) were behavioral. One point that bears emphasizing here is that evasive actions were the result of participants using *evasion strategies* and *meaning-making strategies*. In other words, using *meaning-making strategies* did not necessarily prompt white participants to disrupt racism.

One way in which white participants frequently evaded the salience of race and racism in their environments was by not naming racism. In the counter-narrative, white characters develop and use alternative language (other than "racism") to describe the racist aggressions they observe: "rude," "awful," "unnecessary," "ridiculous," "wrong," "uncalled for," "derogatory," "taken as offensive" (by some people), "negative connotation," "sorta generalizing a race," "not the nicest thing," and "bad." Naming racist aggressions as racist did not necessarily prompt white characters to disrupt them; in the third scene, Kat understands Jessica's proposed Halloween costume as cultural appropriation without using the language of *racism*. However, by *not* naming racism, the white characters fully evade grasping the harm and violence of the racist aggressions

they observed and, in so doing, illustrate how whiteness promotes an epistemology of ignorance vis-a-vis a profound emotional and spiritual detachment from People of Color.

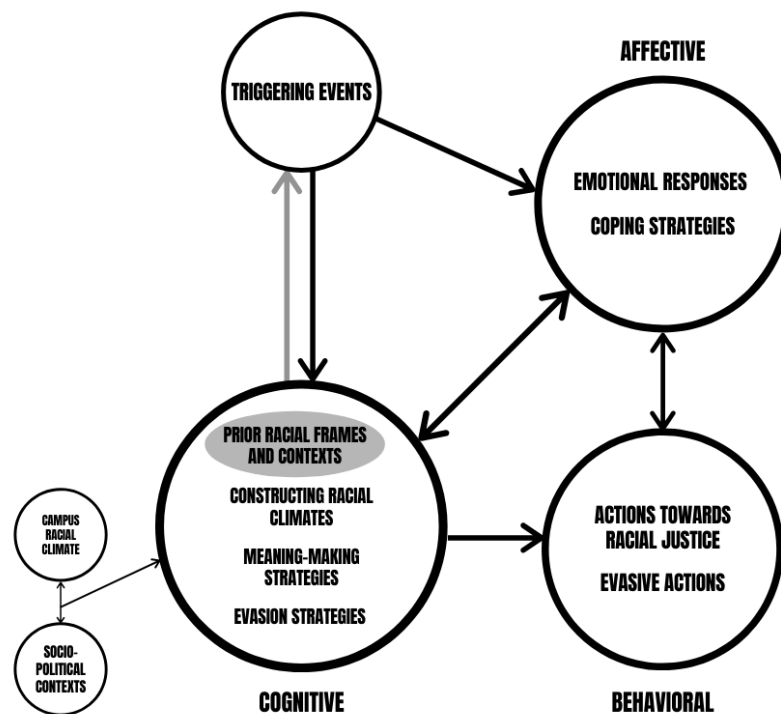
In the first and second scenes, Jessica engages in additional evasive actions. When talking with her mom, she indicates that she actively searches for positive news stories concerning race and even fetishizes an interracial couple she sees on campus by taking a picture of them. Both behaviors enable her to evade the continued realities of racist violence and racial tension, which she would rather not think about. In these ways, she prioritizes her white racial comfort/white fragility. When Karen tells Jessica about Paul's racist drunk driving game, Jessica deliberately drops the subject in order to avoid a potential confrontation with Karen. Furthermore, by avoiding this potential confrontation with Karen, Jessica protects her image in the eyes of her roommate and friend, which illustrates her investment whiteness.

However, white characters' silence and *inactions* were also present in the counter-narrative and functioned as evasive actions. In the prologue to the second scene, I discuss how a friend's silence in response to my explicit racial profiling in a store affected me; I felt hurt, betrayed, and angry. Moreover, I felt as though my friend did not care about me and as though my feelings did not matter to him. In the counter-narrative's second scene, Jessica repeatedly ignores racist aggressions at the restaurant with her friends, *even while observing the discomfort her friends Lisa and Ashley are experiencing from it*. From the perspective of People of Color whose friends have served as silent witnesses to racist aggressions that target them, the juxtaposition between the second scene and its prologue further elucidates the pathology of whiteness; it elicits a trauma response of withdrawal that promotes an epistemology of ignorance and an emotional and spiritual detachment from People of Color that obscures our humanity.

Synthesizing the Components

The nine components I described in the preceding sections are interrelated parts of characters' processes of making meaning of and/or evading race and racism in their environments. Although triggering events comprise a part of this process, they are not the beginning of this process; characters brought pre-college racial contexts and previously developed racial frames to these triggering events that then enabled particular cognitive, affective, and behavior processes. Figure 1 captures how I conceptualize the relationship between the various components.

Figure 1: Model of White Racial Meaning Making and Evasion



Chapter Summary

This grounded theory study explored white college students' processes for making meaning of race and racism in their environments and broader socio-political contexts and how

these processes either served to disrupt racism and/or (re)construct whiteness. In the preceding sections, I addressed this research purpose through analyzing a counter-narrative of Southeast University and outlining nine interrelated components that comprised characters' processes for making meaning of race and racism in their environments and for evading race and racism.

These components consisted of 1) *triggering events*, 2) *prior racial frames and contexts*; 3) *meaning-making strategies*; 4) *evasion strategies*, 5) *constructing racial climates*, 6) *emotional responses*, 7) *coping strategies*, 8) *evasive actions*, and 9) *actions towards racial justice*.

My analysis of this counter-narrative illustrated not only how these nine components operate, but how whiteness operates throughout the process. Furthermore, I demonstrated through my analysis how the counter-narrative challenges dominant narratives of the U.S. as a post-racial society, racist aggressions as the acts of a few outliers, and SU as a place that cultivates “outstanding learning environments”—a verbatim description of SU’s environment by a senior-level administrator. Additionally, the counter-narrative and its analysis illustrate the pathological nature of whiteness and its traumatic impact on both the white characters in the story and the People of Color in the prologues. In the following chapter, I discuss how findings from this study confirm, extend, and challenge the literature concerning white racial learning and socialization, frameworks, emotions, and behaviors. I also discuss several implications for educators, practitioners, and researchers.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

“Whatever popularity the slave narratives had—and they influenced abolitionists and converted anti-abolitionists—the slave’s own narrative, while freeing the narrator in many ways, did not destroy the master narrative. The master narrative could make any number of adjustments to keep itself intact. Silence from and about the subject was the order of the day. Some silences were broken, and some were maintained What I am interested in are the strategies for maintaining the silence and the strategies for breaking it.”

—Toni Morrison, *“Playing in the Dark”* (1992)

This chapter begins by connecting the findings from this study to the scholarly literature. Specifically, I address how the theory generated from this study confirms, extends, and challenges the literature concerning white racial learning and socialization, framing, emotions, and behaviors. I also briefly discuss how the theory extends Watt’s (2007) privileged identity exploration model. In the second half of this chapter, I discuss implications for practice and research.

Discussion

The bulk of the scholarly literature concerning white racial learning, framing, emotions, and behaviors draws upon data collected prior to the 2016 U.S. Presidential election cycle—a period that marked an increase in racist hate crimes on and off-campus (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2016; U.S. Department of Education, n.d.; U.S. Department of Justice, 2017). This study offers needed contributions to the literature not only by drawing upon data about white college

students' racial attitudes that are more recent, but by theorizing how white college students are making sense of their racial environments in light of this recent resurgence in racist hate and how they are responding (and not responding) to it. In the following sections, I discuss how the findings and theory generated from this study confirm, challenge, and extend the literature concerning white racial learning and socialization, framing, emotions, and behaviors.

White Racial Learning and Socialization

Consistent with Hagerman's (2018) and Winkler's (2012) characterization of children's processes of racial learning as comprehensive and active, the theory generated from this study suggests that these processes continue well into college. White participants used various means of interpreting and making meaning of the often conflicting racial messages in their everyday observations and interactions. Not only did their processes of making meaning largely center on specific observations and interactions, but they extended beyond these observations and interactions to shape their constructions of the racial climates on their campuses and in broader U.S. socio-political contexts.

Findings from this study also trouble Bonilla-Silva's (2018) concept of the *white habitus*—a process of white racial socialization that is facilitated through white people's high levels of spatial and social segregation from People of Color. In the present study, only slightly over half of the white participants (n=17) reported growing up in a predominantly white neighborhood *and* attending a predominantly white high school. Some white participants who reported coming from racially/ethnically diverse backgrounds expressed experiencing some conflict and confusion concerning the lack of racial diversity and racialized social patterns they saw in SU's campus environment. The fifth scene in the counter-narrative illustrated how Katie's upbringing in a more racially diverse environment contrasted sharply with the whiteness of the

campus at SU and within National Panhellenic Council sorority life, in particular.

Notwithstanding the literature indicating white people's hyper-segregation from People of Color (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Gest, 2016), scholars must also recognize that white people's racial socialization does not always occur exclusively within predominantly white environments. Findings from this study suggest the need for scholars to theorize white racial framing in ways that address the complexity surrounding white racial socialization and the environments and contexts in which they occur.

White Racial Frames and Emotions

Findings from this study confirm and extend the literature concerning white racial frameworks and emotions. Broadly speaking, this strand of the literature is primarily framed through analyses of racism, while my study extends the literature by positioning racial frames and emotions as manifestations of whiteness. In the following sections, I specifically address how the study confirms and extends Feagin's (2013) *white racial frame* and Bonilla-Silva's (2018) *colorblind racism*.

Extending Feagin's (2013) white racial frame. Consistent with Feagin's (2013) analysis, findings from the present study confirm that white racial framing is comprised of multiple elements: beliefs (i.e., stereotypes), emotions, actions (and inclinations towards actions and inactions), cognitive elements, and visual/auditory elements (e.g., language accents and slang). Additionally, findings support Feagin's (2013) assertion that frames are learned and constantly re-worked through everyday experiences. For example, the first and sixth scenes of the counter-narrative illustrate how the casual use of the n-word slur (an *auditory element*) by the white people in the white characters' environments shapes the white characters' racial frames. In the sixth scene, in particular, the white people in Madison's social world repeatedly use this slur

casually. Additionally, this slur is heard loudly in her friend's car—which is blasting “Mo Bamba”—when she gets in. The whiteness of Madison's environment insulates her from understanding the slur as nothing beyond impolite. Although none of the white participants in the study indicated using this slur themselves, the meaning they attached to that slur was still a salient component of their racial framing.

In an extension of Feagin's (2013) analysis, the theory generated from this study identified several strategies that white participants used to reconcile various racial frames and make sense of race and racism in their environments. These strategies included making comparisons between the campus environment and their pre-college racial contexts, validating their interpretations of triggering events through talking with others, and seeking multiple perspectives. Findings from this study confirm Feagin's (2013) analysis that perceptions of and interactions within racial climates can and do matter in shaping racial framing. However, although Feagin (2013) argued that people frequently hold multiple racial frames for understanding and interpreting everyday situations (at both micro- and macro-levels) and even offered three additional categories of racial frames, Feagin did not explicate how (or if) people reconcile (or attempt to reconcile) multiple frames for thinking about race. This study found that white participants frequently attempted to make such reconciliations possible and the theory generated from this study offers some insight into how such reconciliation occurs (e.g., through specific meaning-making strategies and coping mechanisms).

Challenging Bonilla-Silva's (2018) colorblind racism. Several of the *evasion strategies* I discussed in the preceding chapter are consistent with Bonilla-Silva's (2018) colorblind frames, specifically naturalization (framing race-related phenomena as natural occurrences) and the minimization of racism as a salient factor shaping People of Color's lives. Also consistent with

Bonilla-Silva's (2018) analysis, white participants in the present study indicated using several stylistic features of colorblindness, such as expressing discomfort and framing matters as non-racial. However, an underlying premise of Bonilla-Silva's (2018) analysis is that colorblindness is still a prominent (or *the dominant*) trope in white racial thinking, and it is that premise that I trouble. As I will discuss in the section about white racialized behaviors below, findings from this study suggest that white individuals are becoming increasingly comfortable with expressing their racism openly and directly towards People of Color. Although Bonilla-Silva (2018) addressed the recent national resurgence of explicit racism, it is minimized as a different "tone" (p. xiv) of colorblind racism or as an intermittent racial regime cycle; Bonilla-Silva further emphasizes an ephemeral characterization of the racial climate by calling it "the Trump *moment*" (p. xiv; emphasis added). However, what Bonilla-Silva (2018) does not take up is how this recent resurgence of overt racism shapes individuals' racial framing—particularly given the premise that racial frames are largely formed through everyday experiences. Here, I am not arguing that dominant racial frames do not influence individuals' racial frames; they often do. Rather, I am stating that even those dominant racial frames are enacted and learned through concrete everyday experiences, as findings from this study indicate. Further, racial frames are not static and are constantly being reformed. For example, it became increasingly difficult for some white participants in the present study to maintain a colorblind frame while witnessing everyday acts of racist aggressions in their immediate environments. Although many white participants expressed some components of race-evasive framing, most also indicated that their observations and experiences with racist aggressions may have troubled their racial frames.

Finally, unlike Feagin's (2013) white racial frame, Bonilla-Silva's (2018) colorblind racism does not sufficiently account for the role that emotions play in racial meaning making—a

role that is supported by the findings from this study. In the following section, I describe how this study contributes to the scholarly literature concerning white racial emotions.

White racial emotions. Consistent with Feagin's (2013) white racial frame, findings from the present study suggest that emotions often shaped how participants made sense of and evaded issues concerning race and racism. The scholarly literature describes several white racial emotions, including: apathy/detachment, anxiety, fear, empathy, confusion, anger/rage, arrogance, melancholia, resentment, superiority, and discomfort as common white racial emotions (Anderson, 2016; Feagin, 2013; Gest, 2016; Ioanide, 2015; Spanierman & Cabrera, 2015; Trepagnier, 2010). While all of these emotions were present to varying degrees within the current study, findings also signaled significant extensions of this strand of the literature.

First, although anger was a persistent theme in the present study, that anger was, for the most part, not directed towards People of Color. Only a few white participants expressed anger or resentment towards People of Color (specifically, Black people)—usually in response to the perception that Black people were segregating themselves from white people, had a cultural license to use the n-word slur when white people did not, and to other perceived double-standards concerning racial scripts. More often, however, white participants' anger was directed towards white people who committed racist aggressions. This anger may have stemmed from white participants' mixed/negative perceptions of broader socio-political contexts, particularly given that they overwhelmingly indicated their perceptions had strong influences on how they perceived their campus racial climates.

The present study also extends the literature about white racial emotions as it concerns confusion. Trepagnier (2010) described white racial confusion as an uncertainty about what constitutes racism—a rendering of confusion that was also present in the current study. However,

findings from this study illustrated additional renderings of racial confusion. For example, the counter-narrative's fourth scene illustrates how confusion stems from Bobby's search for logic behind a racist aggression he witnesses. Although not present in the counter-narrative, additional renderings of white racial confusion in the study included not understanding white racial scripts (evident when white participants did not understand what racial behaviors were expected of them by other white people) and witnessing racist aggressions perpetrated by people that white participants had believed to be non-racist.

Third, findings from this study extend the literature about white racial emotions through reframing racial apathy and detachment as trauma responses that stem from a pathology of whiteness (Thompson & Watson, 2016). Here, I draw upon a paradigm of the spirit (Dillard, 2006) to underscore that this systemic detachment from People of Color (and Black people, in particular) signals that there is something spiritually perverse about what whiteness does to human relations. This is illustrated not only through the indifference of several of the counter-narrative's white characters towards anti-Black language and behaviors, but in how Black students at SU (like LA2 in the prologues to the third and fifth scenes) are compelled to also emotionally detach themselves from what they see and hear just to persist. Analyses of whiteness as a pathology are largely missing from the literature yet, as I will discuss in the implications section, such analyses are sorely needed to more fully address the impact whiteness has on humanity and develop strategies for healing from its trauma and terror.

Finally, findings from this study explicate the affective dimension of Feagin's (2013) white racial frame by detailing coping strategies that are used as a part of racial framing. Analyses of dominant/white racial framing primarily attend to how strong racial emotions are elicited through deeply embedded stereotypes, political rhetoric, and dominant racial tropes

(Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Feagin, 2013; Gest, 2016; Ioanide, 2015). However, findings from the present study suggest that, along with these macro-level elements, micro-level interactions and phenomena are also salient in shaping racial emotions, as are strategies for coping with them.

White Racialized Behaviors

Findings from this study confirm and extend the scholarly literature concerning white racialized behaviors. In their study exploring white college students' racial behaviors, Picca and Feagin (2007) found that white college students frequently engaged in racial performances to communicate racial views and images to others and that these performances differed according to whether they were *backstage* (perceived all-white settings) or *frontstage* (settings in which People of Color were present). Consistent with findings from Picca and Feagin's (2007) and Cabrera's (2014b) studies, white participants were often privy to racist jokes and comments in backstage settings through which white peers, friends, and family members revealed their racist ideologies. Although Picca and Feagin (2007) found that white people's frontstage racial performances tended to signal tolerance towards People of Color and avoidance of racial topics, findings from the present study suggest diminishing distinctions between front- and backstage performances. Many of the white participants reported witnessing racist aggressions openly and directly targeting People of Color—behavior that was primarily displayed in the backstage in previous studies. This pattern is consistent with documented increases in racist hate crimes on U.S. college campuses (and in the U.S., broadly).

Extensions to Watt's (2007) Privileged Identity Exploration Model

Finally, the theory generated from this study also extends Watt's (2007) privilege identity exploration model, which identified eight defensive reactions people employ when prompted to reflect on their social, political, and economic privilege. Although our models address different

constructs (how white college students make meaning of and evade racism versus how people respond to exploring their social privilege), the components of our models overlap in several ways and both models were developed towards a similar purpose: to prepare educators and practitioners for facilitating individuals' development of critical consciousness as it pertains to privileged identities.

First, the theory generated from this study lends more depth to understanding the defensive strategies (or what I call *evasion strategies*) that white people employ as it concerns race *specifically*, whereas Watt's (2007) model addresses these strategies within the context of privileged identities *broadly*. Moreover, the theory generated from this study illustrates how whiteness shapes these strategies. For example, white participants frequently employed these strategies to protect their white fragility (and those of the people around them) and perpetuate an epistemology of ignorance. Second, the theory generated from the present study suggests that processes for meaning-making and evasion (or for thinking about privilege) do not start with *dissonance-provoking stimuli* (or, what I call *triggering events*). White college students in this study brought their racial frames (acquired through prior racial learning) and their pre-college racial contexts with them into their experiences with triggering events. These racial frames and contexts then shaped how they interpreted such events. For example, in the counter-narrative, Katie's experience growing up in racially/ethnically diverse contexts informs her interpretation of her campus environment as excessively white and serves to problematize its whiteness.

Implications for Practice

On the most fundamental level, the theory generated from this study makes a strong case for educators and practitioners to be proactive in engaging white college students with issues concerning race and racism, rather than wait for racist aggressions on their campuses to rise to

administrators' attention. As the counter-narrative illustrated, college students experience, witness, and enact racist acts on- and off-campus everyday. Most of these actions do not rise to administrators' attention, yet still have harmful impacts on Students of Color. The juxtaposition between the pain, isolation, and fear that Students of Color expressed in the counter-narrative's prologues and the detachment, minimization, and indifference that white students frequently expressed in its scenes illustrates glaring disjunctures that should be alarming to higher education professionals. It is my hope that these disjunctures serve as a call to action for higher education professionals to be proactive, not reactive, in addressing interpersonal racism on their campuses.

In the preceding chapter, I outlined participants' *evasion strategies*—methods that served to maintain silence surrounding race and racism in participants' environments. In the following sections, I draw upon Morrison's (1992) concepts of silences and master narratives to expand upon and reimagine *meaning-making strategies* as potential strategies for breaking that silence. To be effective, these strategies should be implemented together, not as standalone interventions. Throughout the sections below, I attempt to name how socially constructed power—which educators and practitioners should not ignore or minimize—may mediate the strategies' implementation. Finally, while some of these strategies could certainly be useful for Students of Color as resilience practices, my square focus on white college students in this chapter serves to name what white people's work for racial justice in higher education must be to make such resilience practices unnecessary.

Provide Venues for Meaning-Making and Start with Concrete Experiences

The theory generated from this study supports Ephirim-Donkor (1997) claim that “concrete experiences with everyday life form the criterion of meaning, the matrix of meaning making” (p. 8). Accordingly, I argue that education about race and racism should use white

college students' everyday race-related experiences and observations as starting points for reflection and/or discussion. This practice may be more effective than introducing race as an abstract concept or even prompting white students to unearth their prior racial frames and socialization. Such reflections could take place through journal assignments that ask questions such as: 1) How do you perceive the race relations on campus?; 2) How is this different from or similar to the context in which you grew up?; 3) Was it common to hear people use racist slurs where you grew up?; and 4) Is it common for you to hear these on campus?

At the beginning of data collection for this study, most participants were in their first semester of college. Despite being new to their college environments, participants were already developing their own explanations (informal theories) about race-related phenomena on campus, based in part on their everyday observations and experiences. For that reason, I argue that racial engagement grounded in concrete observations and experiences is particularly crucial for white students in their first year of college. Their observations and experiences can serve as rich material for forging meaningful connections that emphasize the salience of race in their everyday lives. For example, one white participant in the study noted:

When I first heard about this racial study that I would be taking a part in for my psychology class, I thought it would be super easy and nothing out of the ordinary. People from where I grew up make derogatory comments about different racial groups often, without trying to be racist. After a while, I sort of learned to ignore these comments. But while participating in this study, I was forced to notice these comments.... There were many interactions during this racial study that made me realize how jokes that are meant to be lighthearted, could be taken very differently by other people ... I am actually glad that I took part in this racial study. I never would've really

been able to formulate thoughts about the current racial climate if it weren't for this assignment. I actually think it would be really helpful if more people were forced to think about their beliefs.

As Madison's thoughts and actions in the counter-narrative's final scene illustrated, many white college students may be unprepared for recognizing the racism in their environments due to dominant race-evasive framing. Accordingly, the theory generated from this study makes the case for not only using race diaries as a pedagogical tool for prompting white students' racial engagement, but for using educator/practitioner feedback as a mode for deepening that engagement. This practice necessitates educators and practitioners being on their own journeys towards unlearning white supremacy and replacing their race-evasive frames with race-conscious ones. Nevertheless, such feedback from educators and practitioners working with white college students should: 1) reflect on their actions/inactions and how white supremacy is showing up in their daily practices; 2) prompt white students to interrogate prior racial frames and contexts in light of their everyday experiences, actions, and observations concerning race; 3) normalize emotional responses; and 4) encourage specific meaning-making strategies (outlined in the preceding chapter). In one such example, Linder (2016) employed a similar pedagogical practice in a doctoral course on equity, diversity, and inclusion in student affairs practice. Through this privilege journal assignment, students in the course journaled throughout the semester on their reflections about one of their privileged social identities.

Finally, given my heavy emphasis on trauma and critiquing whiteness as a pathology in the preceding chapter, findings from this study also make a strong case for using healing practices as a component of silence-breaking strategies. Towards this end, Singh (2019) offered several racial healing practices that practitioners and educators can integrate into their own

internal work and their work with white college students. Although these practices do not exclusively focus on concrete experiences, they can be integrated into the reflection exercises I discussed above as a way of deepening their engagement. To be an effective means of deepening white college students' racial engagement, instructors should also prompt them to consider historical contexts surrounding their racialized experiences, actions, and observations, which I discuss more fully in the following section.

Bridging Past and Present Racial Realities Through Memory Projects

Institutions' histories of racist exclusion matter in shaping present day practices and campus racial climates (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998). Illustrations of this truth appeared in the present study when white participants were frequently unprepared for disrupting interpersonal forms of racism, in part, by racial frameworks that were either devoid of historical contexts or positioned racist aggressions as aberrances or relics, rather than as common contemporary realities. Relatedly, making connections between past and present realities was a meaning-making strategy that some white participants used to make sense of their observations and develop perceptions of their racial climates. In taking up the lens of whiteness as a pathology that perpetuates cultural trauma, Thompson and Watson (2016) articulated an antidote that makes use of these connections:

An antidote to the trauma of whiteness is a critical white double-consciousness...a resistant subjectivity. It is one that demands a fuller, multi-voiced narrative of the past and present, which it then utilizes for honest self-reflection and accountability (p. 249).

Therefore, I argue that racial engagement that makes explicit connections between past and present racial realities comprises another strategy for preparing white college students to break the silence surrounding race and racism in their environments.

Findings from a study conducted by Bonam, Das, Coleman, and Salter (2019) suggest that not only is a lack of critical historical knowledge of racism correlated with a denial of modern-day systemic racism among white people, but that such denial may *decrease* through interventions that highlight place-focused critical histories about racism. Their findings, as with the findings of the present study, suggest that, in order to recognize, make meaning of, and ultimately disrupt interpersonal racism in their environments, white college students must understand the racial histories of their environments—specifically their college campuses.

Possibilities for such interventions can be found in the memory projects that dozens of U.S. colleges and universities are currently undertaking to acknowledge, research, and reconcile with their legacies of enslaved African labor (e.g., College of William & Mary, 2020; Georgetown University, n.d.; Hollins University, 2020; Prell, 2017; University of Virginia & Scholars' Lab, 2013). To be effective in encouraging white students to make meaning of and disrupt racism on campus, I argue that these memory projects must accomplish five tasks. First and foremost, these memory projects need to not only trace and recount historical knowledge and narratives concerning race and racism on their campus, but prompt individuals and communities to contend with their emotional and moral engagement with these past racial realities (Irwin-Zarecka, 2009). Here, I concur with Irwin-Zarecka (2009) in arguing that resources, alone, are insufficient for meaningful engagement; race-evasive frames are powerful enough to enable white people to ignore or minimize even the most compelling narratives and attend only to those ways of making sense of past realities that best suit them and bolster white innocence. When considering slavery and its legacies, in particular, institutions must acknowledge that—because anti-blackness is central to white racial framing (Feagin, 2013) and whiteness functions as a pathology that dehumanizes Black people (Thompson & Watson, 2016)—white people may

consider such memory projects as irrelevant and devoid of any value (outside of the grant money and publications they bring to institutions). As institutions develop memory projects that acknowledge their racist histories, they must also acknowledge the power tensions underlying whose past is made to matter and why (and how) and engage their campus communities in wrestling with such questions.

Second, the scope of these projects must broaden beyond the legacies of slavery to address the totality of institutions' historical racist discriminatory practices—not just those that have targeted Black people—and the thefts of the indigenous lands on which they reside. This expanded scope can deepen white college students' understanding of racism and colonization in ways that acknowledge the continuing harm of racism and colonization on indigenous people and non-Black People of Color.

Third, these memory projects should extend beyond research papers and academic symposiums to engage students and surrounding communities. How does the institution's history connect to gentrification, the quality of school systems, and economies in the surrounding communities? To serve as effective linkages to the present, institutions' memory projects should take up such questions. Fourth, these memory projects should become a part of institutions' hegemonic canon, rather than be buried in working groups, delegated to the realm of "specialists," or abandoned after the research these projects produce has resulted in publications. Finally, and most pertinent to this section, these projects should be paired with additional interventions that promote explicit linkages between past and present racial realities on campus. Such linkages could be forged through campus-wide programming and through integrating memory projects into course and program curricula.

In this section, I position institutions' memory projects concerning slavery partially as what Sharpe (2016) called *wake work*—that is, practices that teach, think, write, and live through anti-blackness as an *ongoing* project in the aftermath of slavery. In addition to that, I call upon institutions to grapple with colonization and other forms of racism through their memory projects. Central to this important and necessary work of interrogating anti-blackness, racism, and colonization as ongoing projects is the practice of storytelling—specifically the practice of telling and amplifying stories that are “capable of engaging and countering the violence of abstraction” (Saunders, 2008, p. 5). I expound upon storytelling's potential as a strategy for breaking white racial silence in the following section.

Leveraging the Power of Place-Focused Storytelling

Various minoritized communities in the U.S. and abroad have long used storytelling as an effective tool for teaching about social justice (including racism) given its potential for forging connections through emotional empathy and encouraging meaning-making (e.g., The Counter Narrative Project, n.d.; Listen For Change, n.d.; Epix, 2017). A criticism of this approach to racial justice work is that dominant white racial frames are extremely powerful and are premised on People of Color's (particularly Black people's) dehumanization (Feagin, 2013). Given this truth, storytelling may not always be effective in eliciting empathy towards a group that many white people have been socialized to dehumanize. For this reason, I argue that, as with the other strategies in this chapter, storytelling should be employed in conjunction with other strategies.

What I am not suggesting here is that Students of Color be called upon to take up the emotional labor of sharing their stories to educate their white peers about race and racism. Rather, I encourage educators and practitioners to search for and use narratives by People of Color that have already been written and published—both historical and contemporary accounts.

Ideally, these accounts should be *place-focused*—tied to the particular institutional context—to enable white college students to understand racism as an issue that is present on their campuses in the here and now, and not as geographically or chronologically distant. Such examples could include relevant stories from student newspapers, institutional archives, and other published sources. Educators and practitioners should integrate these works into their practices with the *hopes* that Students of Color might then feel comfortable sharing their stories about racialized experiences with their white peers; however, this should not be an expectation.

In the study, participants frequently expressed shock in response to the racist aggressions they witnessed in their environments, and this proximity to explicit interpersonal racism served to trouble prior frames of racism as something distant and/or historical. Through using place-focused storytelling about racial issues in curricular and co-curricular interventions, educators and practitioners can render the issue of racism more real and salient to white college students.

Institutional rhetoric as storytelling. Institutional statements in response to high profile racist aggressions on campus can also be leveraged a means of place-focused storytelling. Previous studies have found that these statements tend to describe racist aggressions in vague, broad terms (if at all); do not place them within the institutions' historical contexts; do not address perpetrators nor specific individuals or groups who were targeted by these actions; obscure the endemic nature of racism; and amplify dominant race-evasive ideologies (Cole & Harper, 2017; Davis & Harris, 2015). The literature is fraught with suggestions on how college campuses can respond rhetorically to racist aggressions on their campuses. My aim here is to highlight how shifting the institutional rhetoric can be used in the service of preparing white college students for meaningfully engaging with racial issues on campus and disrupting interpersonal racism in their environments as a silence-breaking strategy.

First, by framing high-profile racist aggressions as “incidents,” institutions minimize their impact on People of Color and send the message to their campus communities that such acts are exceptional, rather than everyday occurrences. Institutions should shift their language in ways that acknowledge the ordinariness of these aggressions and that only a small fraction of them rise to their attention. Through such a shift, administrators can challenge white college students’ framing of racism as something geographically or chronologically distant or rare and prepare them for recognizing and disrupting racism in their environments.

Second, as with any compelling and effective storytelling, I argue that institutions should describe these racist aggressions in detail, rather than in broad, vague terms. Providing richer details about racist aggressions on campus can not only serve to provide white college students with more substantive and accurate information about racism on campus, but also to elicit emotional responses from white students that foster connection (e.g., empathy) and further challenge dominant frames that minimize racism. Finally, institutions should address perpetrators and victims of these racist aggressions in their statements about them, in addition to the broader campus community. Although entire campus communities are impacted by racist aggressions, they have a particularly harmful impact on Students of Color (and specific racial/ethnic groups, depending on the nature of the aggression). By not addressing who was harmed by the actions, institutions portray racism as something happens in a vacuum—devoid of real people and without perpetrators and victims. Such framing erases the gravity of these actions and can inhibit white college students’ capacities for understanding (or attempting to understand) the impact of racist aggressions on their Peers of Color.

As people in positions of authority, college and university administrators wield enormous power in shaping narratives, perceptions, and understandings about issues in the college setting.

As Dillard (2006) noted:

Our worldviews arise out of what those around us believe, our experiences with the communities in which we live, and *what those who are perceived as legitimate and powerful in our eyes* tell us of the nature of the world (p. 34; emphasis added).

By framing racist aggressions as endemic, providing greater details about these acts, and addressing perpetrators and victims, institutions can take a broad approach to shaping narratives in ways that both shift white college students' racial framing away from perpetuating whiteness and prepare them for breaking white racial silence.

From Place-Focused Realities to Broader Socio-political Contexts

Just as engagement with racial issues ought to bridge past and present realities, so too does this engagement need to bridge place-focused contexts and broader socio-political contexts. Among the white participants in this study, processes for making meaning of racism in their environments were tied to their perceptions of the campus racial climate and the broader U.S. racial climate. In particular, most white participants indicated that their perceptions of the racial climate in the U.S. shaped their perceptions of both the racial climates on their campuses and (more generally) the race-related events in their day-to-day lives. Additionally, many of the white participants experienced tensions between their everyday observations and experiences concerning racist aggressions and their prior racial frames and contexts.

For these reasons, I argue that educators and practitioners should provide white college students with venues for meaning-making that leverage their concrete experiences with race and racism in conjunction with storytelling and place-focused memory projects to promote reflection

and dialogue about racism within broader socio-political contexts. Such interventions should also consist of feedback and interventions to deepen white students' interrogation of how their perceptions of campus and broader racial climates shape one another. In the present study, several white participants indicated that their perceptions of the U.S. racial climate heightened their awareness of racism in their local environments. For a few, this heightened racial awareness prompted them to disrupt interpersonal racism in their environments.

The need to connect placed-focused realities to broader contexts in racial engagement interventions is especially urgent for higher education given our mission for preparing students for meaningful civic engagement. In this sense, colleges and universities are training grounds for preparing college students for transforming the world through their post-college roles in society. In order to reach these goals for the public good, institutions should equip white college students with models for disrupting racist aggressions and tools for racial climate stewardship, which I address in the following sections.

(Re)Defining Racism and Modeling Racial Justice Actions

Mirroring some of the assumptions DiAngelo (2018) identified as underlying white fragility, findings from the study indicated that many white participants defined racism as something strictly interpersonal and, within that dimension, through a focus on perpetrators' intentions and character. In other words, racist aggressions often were not understood as racist unless the participant believed the perpetrator was intentionally trying to do harm to People of Color, or otherwise signaled racist hatred. In the counter-narrative's second scene, for example, it is not until Jessica notices the "dirty looks" the white man at the next table gives to her friends that she labels his actions as racist—even though he had been loudly saying the n-word repeatedly before then. This focus on negative characterizations and motivations as factors for

defining racism serves as a strategy for maintaining white racial silence because it encourages one to ignore the impact of racist aggressions on People of Color, refocuses attention and energy on protecting the reputation of white perpetrators, and preserves white solidarity.

As a rebuttal to these underlying assumptions, DiAngelo (2018) offered several assumptions that promise to transform white people's understanding of racism, including the assumption that "being good or bad is not relevant" concerning the impact of racist aggressions (p. 142). However, DiAngelo's (2018) suggestion that white people simply internalize these assumptions as a matter of daily practice presumes an initial understanding that racism is a salient present-day reality for People of Color. Findings from the present study suggest that starting from such a premise may be unrealistic for many white college students and that they may need additional support on internalizing these assumptions.

Given the pervasiveness with which racial evasion and silence are modelled for white college students as responses to racist aggressions, I argue that white college students need white educators and practitioners to either model behavior for disrupting racist aggressions or openly talk about how they have done so—particularly as such examples relate to confronting friends and family members. Most of the white participants in this study were silent witnesses to the racist aggressions in their environments and many also talked about how the white people around them (including peers and family members) were also silent. Such findings are consistent with the literature concerning white people's racial silence and how it is learned through socialization (Vitrup, 2018), encouraged by white fragility (DiAngelo, 2018), and necessitated by the trauma response of dissociation (Thompson & Watson, 2016). By modelling and openly talking about disrupting racist aggressions perpetuated by friends and family members, educators and practitioners can challenge white college students' racial framing that positions racism as

something only enacted by “bad” people or those who *intend* to be racist. Indeed, this approach requires substantial education and internal work on the part of white college educators and practitioners, which is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, my point here is that white college students need white educators and practitioners to model racial justice actions for them.

Tools for Racial Climate Stewardship

Finally, educators and practitioners can prepare white college students for breaking white racial silence by equipping them with tools for not only reflecting on how their words and actions uphold white supremacy, but for talking about race and racism with their peers. Noticeably, not one participant mentioned talking about race or racism with faculty members outside of structured class lessons about these topics. Similarly, not one participant mentioned any engagement with student affairs practitioners. To the extent that they discussed race or racism at all, participants in this study reported only discussing these topics with friends, family members, roommates, or other college peers.

The strategies I mentioned earlier in this chapter can serve as necessary steps towards normalizing discussions about race and racism and the discomfort that frequently accompanies such discussions. Additionally, educators and practitioners should prepare white college students for asking deeper, probing questions about racism in their environments—both of themselves and the white people in their lives. In the present study, white participants’ conversations about racist aggressions were often short and superficial. In contrast, broader conversations about race and racism that did *not* involve a specific racist aggression (to the limited extent that white participants reported engaging in such conversations) were frequently longer, richer, and elicited more in-depth internal processing. An example of this appears in the counter-narrative’s fourth scene when Bobby and his friend Sam have an in-depth conversation about Black people and

police-involved deaths; in fact, their conversation in this scene is a continuation of a conversation they had earlier about the same topic. White college students should be similarly probing when it comes to racist aggressions in their environments. This can involve facilitating in-depth discussions about high profile racist aggressions on campus in class, residence halls, and/or student group settings, prompting questions that elicit specific meaning-making strategies (outlined in chapter four), and assignments that encourage white students to discuss these topics with their peers within outlined parameters.

Additionally, higher education professionals need to support white college students in recognizing their own power for addressing racism on their campus and how to wield it. Further, we need to frame these efforts as racially just campus climate stewardship. Earlier I mentioned that white students constitute a numerical majority of the college-going population in the U.S. and that, with such representation comes proportionate responsibility for the racial climates on their campuses and cultivating racially just campus environments that are affirming for their Peers of Color. The framing of campus racial stewardship should be implemented throughout campus programming, institutional responses to high profile racist aggressions—generally, as part of the institutional lexicon.

Passive programming (e.g., interactive displays and posters) that illustrate examples of students disrupting interpersonal racism in their environments is one way that institutions can normalize the concept and practice of racially just climate stewardship. Here, I want to underscore that such passive programming—alone—would be insufficient for empowering white college students to disrupt racism in their environments; as I mentioned earlier, dominant race-evasive framing provides substantial barriers to doing this work. But as part of a broader campus strategy for combating racism that uses the multiple strategies outlined in this chapter, such

programming can: 1) signal to white college students that racism is endemic on their campuses, 2) normalize conversations about race and racism, and 3) model racial justice actions.

An underlying premise in my description of campus climate stewardship is that campus climates extend beyond the walls of the physical campus. As the counter-narrative illustrated, college students interact with one another off-campus and online all the time, and their behaviors in these contexts spill into the physical campus environment. For example, in the counter-narrative's second scene, Lisa and Ashley (two African American students) dine at an off-campus restaurant with white peers with whom they live and take classes. They observe their white peers silently ignore (and then minimize the gravity of) the racist slurs from the white family sitting next to them. When one interprets this scene through the lens of its prologue to imagine how Ashley and Lisa might feel after observing the behavior of their white peers—with whom they live and take classes—the connection between white students' off-campus behaviors and the on-campus racial climates for Students of Color becomes apparent. Even when Students of Color are not present to experience racist aggressions, that these acts often go unchallenged by their white peers signals to perpetrators that their language/actions are socially acceptable and encourages their use across multiple contexts.

Implications for Research

The theory generated from this study needs further empirical testing, particularly as it concerns changes over time and white students beyond their first year. Most of the participants in the present study were within their first semester of college, a time fraught with many transition challenges and confusion (Johnston, 2010). Future research examining racial meaning-making and evasion needs to be longitudinal to explore how the theory's components hold up over time.

Intersections of Social Identities

Additionally, future research should explore how intersections of social identities shape whiteness. Over the course of analyzing the data for this study, I developed initial hunches about how some of my findings might be shaped by white participants' gender and socioeconomic class, in particular, but I did not systematically collect and analyze data to explore these connections. For that reason, the theory generated from this study runs the risk of essentializing whiteness. In writing about researcher positionality within the field of white studies, Gallagher (2000) called for analyses of whiteness that resisted such essentialism:

Taking into account the social location of a participant and the personal biography of the researcher, and approaching the interview knowing that the meaning whites attach to their race varies by region, class, gender, sexual orientation, and political philosophy allows for a more reflexive and nuanced understanding of the complex and contradictory ways whites understand their race and define who they are... no single metanarrative of whiteness exists.... However, if whiteness is treated as a monolithic identity based on privilege or the assumption that all whites harbor certain negative (or positive) attitudes towards other racial groups, researchers will miss the opportunity to examine the social complexities and the social geography of how and where racial identities are constructed and the multiplicity of meanings that define whiteness (p. 80).

In that vein, future research that builds upon the findings generated from this study should interrogate how other social identities shape how white college students make meaning of and evade race/racism in their environments. Such studies could offer richer insight about how whiteness enables white college students' direct acts of racism, collusion, and silence and inform approaches for developing tailored interventions that prepare them for disrupting these acts.

On a related note and taking up Crenshaw's (1989, 1991) intersectionality, future research should examine how whiteness (particularly as it is (re)constructed interpersonally across contexts by white college students) shapes the intersectional experiences of Students of Color with additional minoritized social identities. Although scholars in the humanities, social sciences, and interdisciplinary fields (e.g., disability studies and gender studies) have analyzed the links between whiteness and disability, sexuality, gender, and class—such analyses are largely missing from higher education and student affairs. This absence is notwithstanding the plentiful analyses in the higher education and student affairs literature linking *racism* with other categories of identity and marginalization.

White Racial Meaning-Making in Conjunction with White Identity Development

Although this study provided a significant contribution to the literature concerning white college students' processes for how they made meaning of race in their environments, it did not address how white college students made meaning of whiteness as it pertained to their own white racial identities. Because the theory generated from this study negates the role of identity development as a crucial component of white racial meaning-making, future research should explore how these processes operate in conjunction with one another. Such research could provide implications for practice that can more effectively engage white college students with racial issues on and off-campus.

Participant Diaries as Method

Findings from this study make a strong case for using participant diaries in student affairs research. Participant diaries have been used as a data collection method within the field of psychology and sociology, but less often within the fields of higher education and student affairs. In this study, participant diaries proved to be valuable in eliciting rich data to study sensitive

topics that participants may have been uncomfortable talking about in an interview, particularly with a Black researcher. Collecting data anonymously provided an additional means of mitigating participants' discomfort with speaking openly about their racial thoughts and feelings.

Additionally, participant diaries can minimize the extent to which positional and socially constructed power between participants and researchers shape the data. In chapter three, I discussed my initial concerns with collecting data sufficient for answering my research questions as a Black researcher interviewing white college students about race. The richness of the data I collected for this study suggests that future Black scholars who study whiteness through an empirical focus on white individuals may use similar means to conduct their research.

Leveraging Black People's Knowledge to Theorize Whiteness as a Pathology

Findings from this study suggest that counter-narratives are necessary for analyzing, exposing, and critiquing whiteness in ways that center the experiential knowledge of People of Color—particularly Black people, given the centrality of antiblackness in white racial framing (Feagin, 2013)—to challenge the dominant racial narratives inherent within whiteness. To develop the study's counter-narrative, I drew upon accounts by People of Color that spoke of pain and resilience to underscore how whiteness functioned primarily as a pathology that detaches white people—emotionally and spiritually—from People of Color (especially from Black people). Although numerous scholars have explicated various dimensions of whiteness (e.g., as a phenomenology, as rhetoric, as an epistemology, as an ontology, as systemic), whiteness as a pathology remains undertheorized in the literature (Thompson & Watson, 2016). This negation divorces the study of whiteness from the emotional and spiritual impact that whiteness has on People of Color and (as the counter-narrative illustrated) on white people who commit racist aggressions, collude with them, or act as silent bystanders. Research that addresses

whiteness as a pathology and draws upon the voices of Black people to do so is necessary, particularly given how other critical whiteness scholars have warned that the field runs the risk of re-centering and participating in the very object it aims to critique (e.g., Ahmed, 2007; Applebaum, 2016; Cabrera, et al., 2016). More importantly, Black people (as W. E. B. DuBois argued) have unique and valuable knowledge about whiteness from which critical whiteness scholars have much to learn.

In writing about a paradigm of the spirit, Dillard (2006) offered: “only when spirit is at the center of our work can we create a community in love” (p. 37). To be a meaningful racial justice project, critical whiteness studies needs to work towards building communities grounded in love—work needs to be restorative. For that reason, we *cannot* overlook the spiritual and emotional trauma that whiteness exacts on humanity or the lives of People of Color—those who are most harmed by the white supremacy that whiteness normalizes.

Projects of White Supremacy within Communities of Color

Finally, if we (critical whiteness scholars in higher education) are to take up the project of transforming racial campus climates for Students of Color, we must also contend with and address how other projects of white supremacy (e.g., anti-blackness, xenophobia, and internalized racism) manifest and circulate within Communities of Color and how they harm us. Although data collected from Students of Color were not systematically analyzed for this study, a holistic analysis of the data at the end of phase one revealed many cases of racial/ethnic stereotyping and similar aggressions that Students of Color enacted upon one another. The bulk of the literature concerning racist aggressions on college campuses understandably situates white *people* as their primary actors. What is largely missing from the literature is an analysis of how white supremacy is supported and maintained within Communities of Color on college campuses

(through interpersonal interactions) and its role in shaping Students' of Color experiences. Related to that, future research should also explore how anti-blackness (a prevalent pattern in this study) structures college students' racial framing—both among white college students and non-Black Students of Color.

Conclusion

This study was an effort to understand: 1) white undergraduate students' processes of making meaning of race and racism—in their immediate on- and off-campus environments and within broader U.S. socio-political contexts, 2) how these processes connect to their emotional responses to issues of race and racism, and 3) how these processes serve to continuously (re)construct whiteness and/or disrupt racism in white students' environments. The study sought to reduce the level of racist aggressions targeting Students of Color at historically white institutions through an empirical focus on an underlying root cause, whiteness, as perpetuated by their white peers.

In chapter two, I situated the study within the literature concerning white racial learning, engagement, ideologies, emotions, and behaviors. The literature discusses several components of dominant white racial framing; the roles of anger, apathy, and fear as common emotions undergirding these frames; the dramaturgical aspects of white people's frontstage and backstage racial performances; and the role of the *white habitus* in forming white people's racial frames, feelings, and engagement patterns. What was under-theorized within the literature was the role of broader socio-political contexts and racial emotions in shaping white college students' racial framing.

In the third chapter, I described the study's grounded theory methodology (which was well-suited for an empirical focus on processes), the transformative paradigm that guided it

(which was well-suited for the study's racial justice goals), and its data collection and analysis procedures. Given my positionality as a Black/African American man, I sought to collect data in ways that eliminated direct contact between me and participants. Accordingly, I collected data using anonymous participant diaries that prompted participants to reflect on race-related encounters and interactions, their emotional responses, and their perceptions of the racial climates on campus and in the U.S. Consistent with Charmaz's (2014) description of grounded theory, I collected and analyzed data concurrently across multiple phases and used the constant comparison method to ensure findings were grounded in the data. An external reviewer evaluated the study using criteria established by Charmaz (2014). This reviewer indicated no issues with the study's procedure and confirmed the integrity of the study's findings.

Findings from the study generated theory concerning how white college students make meaning of and evade race and racism in their environments, which I presented in chapter four. The theory consists of nine components: 1) *triggering events*, 2) *prior racial frames and contexts*; 3) *meaning-making strategies*; 4) *evasion strategies*, 5) *constructing racial climates*, 6) *emotional responses*, 7) *emotional coping strategies*, 8) *evasive actions*, and 9) *actions towards racial justice*. I presented these components as a counter-narrative—a method that seeks to disrupt dominant narratives about race and racism by foregrounding the experiences of racially/ethnically minoritized groups. My use of the counter-narrative was born from a study abroad experience in Ghana that led me to frame whiteness as a pathology that perpetuates cultural trauma and to render that trauma more explicit in the study. I did so in ways that connected the shared, but distinct cultural trauma between Students of Color and the white students who enact or collude with racist aggressions.

In this fifth chapter, I outlined implications for practice that provide curricular, co-curricular, and institution-wide strategies for engaging white college students with issues concerning race and racism. These include providing venues for meaning-making, starting with concrete experiences in teaching about race, making explicit connections between past and present racial realities, leveraging the power of place-focused storytelling, modelling racial justice actions, and equipping white students with tools for racial climate stewardship. In addition to implications for practice, I also offered directions for future research, which should advance an analysis of whiteness as a pathology to develop solutions for addressing racism in ways that are profoundly transformative and center the spirit and People of Color's experiential knowledge. I also advocate for research that addresses how whiteness is normalized and experienced across intersections of identity, as well as how the theory generated from this study coheres across white students' time in college beyond their first year.

As a documented resurgence in explicit forms of racist hate plagues the nation and U.S. college campuses, we (researchers, practitioners, and educators in higher education) need to expand our focus on addressing racism to include whiteness. Such a focus is needed to more fully understand how we can work proactively towards reducing the racist aggressions targeting Students of Color on our campuses. Key to this work is developing meaningful and effective racial engagement interventions for white college students, who comprise a numerical majority on most historically white college campuses. Course electives about diversity, intergroup dialogue programming, diversity workshops and training, and tame institutional responses to high profile racist aggressions are not enough. What we need are a toolbox of strategies that can be used across the institution. For example, findings from some studies suggest that white students are either resistant to campus diversity initiatives or view them as not valuable

(Johnson, Rich, & Cargile, 2008; Vaccaro, 2010). However, some research suggests that integrating content about diversity into *required* courses in major programs of study (as opposed to course electives or courses within the general education curriculum) may be a useful tactic (Vianden, 2018). The venues for reflection and dialogue concerning race and racism I offered in this chapter could and should be implemented within major programs of study and tied to course and program outcomes. In so doing, educators signal to white college students that race and racism are important topics for discussion and relevant to their post-college careers.

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Appendix A: Informed Consent

My name is Melvin Whitehead and I am a doctoral student in the Counseling and Student Personnel Services Department at the University of Georgia. I am under the supervision of Dr. Darris Means. I am inviting you to take part in a research study that has been approved by the University of Georgia Institutional Review Board. **Please review this document carefully.**

Purpose:

The purpose of this research study is to understand the processes associated with college students' emotional responses to racial issues. You are being invited to participate in this study because you are an undergraduate college student in the United States.

Overview of Study

This study consists of two phases. Phase 1 will run from **September 9** to **October 7**. During this phase, you will document interactions, accounts, and/or events that relate to race or racial issues and your emotional reactions to them. They can be troubling accounts or positive ones. They can happen on campus, off campus, or online. You will tell me what happened and what you felt about it. To receive credit for Phase 1, you will need to submit no more than **two entries per week** for a total of **eight entries**. You will submit entries throughout the duration of Phase 1; do not wait until October 7 to submit all of your entries. Each entry should be a minimum of 150 words.

During Phase 2, you will write responses to two prompts. The links to the prompts will be posted in your course eLC module on **October 21**. To receive credit for Phase 2, you will need to submit your responses to both prompts by **November 11**. Each response should be a minimum of 500 words.

Instructions:

Step One: You may give your consent to participate in this study by checking a box at the bottom of this screen. After you indicate your consent, you will be asked to complete a brief demographic questionnaire. On the last screen of the survey, you will see a "submission complete" page containing your pseudonym. **To receive credit for your participation in this study, you should email a screenshot of the survey completion page to [REDACTED] at [REDACTED] by September 8.**

Step Two: Click the link in your course eLC site to complete the 20-minute tutorial that will communicate exactly what I am looking for and prepare you for writing excellent entries. You should complete this tutorial before submitting your first entry

Step Three: On September 9, come back to your course eLC module and click on the link to submit your journal entries during Phase 1. The link will also be posted in your course's eLC site.

Step Four: On October 21, come back to your course eLC module and click on the link to submit responses to the prompts during Phase 2. The link will also be posted in your course's eLC site.

Time Commitment:

The demographic survey should take less than 5 minutes to complete. The tutorial should take about 20 minutes. If you submit two entries per week during Phase 1, you could spend a total of 2 hours writing entries for that phase (30 minutes for each entry). If you write 500 words for each of the prompts in Phase 2, you could spend a total two hours for that phase (1 hour for each response).

Incentives for Participation:

Students who participate in this study will have the opportunity to satisfy the [REDACTED] Psychology Department Research Participation requirement. For Fall 2019, you must complete 6.5 hours of research credit. There are two ways you can earn credit.

- Participate in an eligible research study (including the study described in this document), or
- Write brief (1-2 pages) review papers of psychology articles You may complete any combination of research studies and review papers to earn your credit.

Students who want to satisfy this requirement but not participate in the research study described in this document may participate in other research studies (your instructor will provide details). Please note that the research study described in this document is only available to your class and is not listed in the SONA system.

You can receive credit for each phase of the study, however you may not participate in Phase 2 unless you participated in Phase 1.

- You will earn one half-credit (0.5) for completing the consent form, demographic survey, and tutorial

- For Phase 1, each entry you submit will be worth one half-credit (0.5); students who complete all entries during Phase 1 can receive a maximum of 4 credits.
- For Phase 2, each response will be worth 1 credit; students who submit responses to both prompts will earn 2 credits

At the end of each phase, I will email [REDACTED] a list of the pseudonyms who participated and the number of entries/responses they submitted. You will be awarded credit based on the number of your submissions.

Withdrawal From the Study:

Participation is voluntary. You can refuse to take part or stop at any time without penalty. Should you decide to stop part-way through the study, you will be awarded credit equivalent to the number of entries/responses you submitted (see above). For example, if you only submitted 2 entries during Phase 1, you would earn 1 credit.

Anticipated Risks:

Sometimes students feel uncomfortable writing about race. Guilt, embarrassment, and anger are just a few emotions that we experience in response to racial issues. I encourage you to write freely and frankly. If you are troubled by something you experienced, it can be cleansing to write it down. However, you may skip any questions if you do not wish to answer them.

Anticipated Benefits:

People all over the world could learn from your experiences concerning race. By understanding college students' emotional reactions to racial issues, faculty and campus administrators can work to make their campus environments better places to live and learn.

Confidentiality:

Respect for privacy is very important to me. You will choose a pseudonym (a fake name) to use throughout the study; do not use your actual name or nickname. You will provide this pseudonym with each journal entry to maintain the confidentiality of your responses.

I will be the only person reviewing all journal entries; no one else (not even your instructor or Shannon) will see anything you submit. An external reviewer will review a small sample (no more than 20) of the total entries I collect across the three universities participating in this research study. The reviewer's sole purpose is to make sure that my findings are trustworthy.

When you write your journal entries, please don't mention names or other information that could identify you or others. For example:

Instead of this:

Write this:

Carlos and Carmen	my friends
Professor Jones	my professor
Memphis	my hometown

For each entry, you will be asked to provide your pseudonym. [REDACTED] will maintain a list linking students' pseudonyms with their actual identities only for the purpose of awarding credit. At the end of the study, [REDACTED] will destroy this list.

Once you agree to participate, you will be asked for demographic information about yourself (e.g., race, gender, year in school). This data, along with your entries, will be stored in a secure database maintained by Qualtrics, an international data collection and analysis company. If I use your journal entry, I will mention your pseudonym, race/ethnicity, gender, a pseudonym for your school, and year in school (e.g., "K.W., a black Southeastern University freshman").

All other personal data about you remains strictly confidential. I may disclose aggregate information about large groups of students (e.g., women, students in Greek-letter organizations). With your permission, I may use excerpts from your journal in academic research papers and presentations. Additionally, your journal entries will be retained for use in future studies. I will never release your name nor any information that will reveal the identity of anyone who participates in this study.

Internet Data Collection:

Your confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used. This research involves the transmission of data over the Internet. Every reasonable effort has been taken to ensure the effective use of available technology; however, confidentiality during online communication cannot be guaranteed.

Additional Questions:

Data from this study will be analyzed by participants' racial/ethnic identities. In order to make this study a valid one, additional information about how data will be analyzed will be withheld until the study's completion.

If you have questions about this research study, please contact me at melvin.whitehead@uga.edu. When contacting me, please do not include your pseudonym. If you have any complaints or questions about your rights as a research volunteer, contact the University of Georgia Human Subjects Office at 706-542-3199 or IRB@uga.edu.

- Yes, I consent to participate in this study
- No, I do not want to participate in this study

Appendix B: Demographic Survey

Below are a few demographic questions I have for you. **After you complete the survey, take a screenshot of the completion page and email it to [REDACTED] at [REDACTED] by September 8 in order to receive credit.**

Please provide the pseudonym (fake name) you will be using for this study.

Your pseudonym MUST include at least two letters AND a number.

What is your year in school?

- 1st year
- 2nd year
- 3rd year
- 4th year
- 5th year or more

Which of the following best describes your race/ethnicity? (Select all that apply)

- Biracial or Multiracial
- American Indian, Native North American, Alaska Native
- Asian, Asian American, or of Asian descent
- Black, African American, or of African descent
- Hispanic, Latina/o/x, or of Hispanic origin
- Middle Eastern and/or North African
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- White or Caucasian
- Prefer not to answer

Age _____

Gender _____

In what type of environment did you spend most of your childhood?

- Rural
- Suburban
- Urban

Which comes closest to describing the **neighborhood** in which you spent the majority of your childhood?

- Most people shared the same racial/ethnic background as me.
- Most people had a racial/ethnic background that differed from mine.
- My neighborhood was very racially/ethnically diverse.
- Other: _____

Which comes closest to describing the **high school** you attended during the majority of your adolescent years?

- Most people shared the same racial/ethnic background as me.
- Most people had a racial/ethnic background that differed from mine.
- My high school was very racially/ethnically diverse.
- Other: _____

What best describes your political views?

- Very conservative
- Conservative
- Slightly conservative
- Moderate
- Slightly liberal
- Liberal
- Very Liberal
- Other (please describe): _____
- I am not interested in politics

Which political party do you feel closest to?

- Democratic Party
- Green Party
- Independent Party
- Libertarian
- Republican Party
- Tea Party
- Other (please specify): _____

What is your religious/spiritual preference, if any?

Are you a member of a Greek-letter organization?

- Yes, I am a member
- I am currently engaged in a membership intake process (e.g., "pledging")
- I am not a member/not pledging

Appendix C: Participant Training Tutorial

(adapted from Johnson et al., 2018)

Before you submit your first journal entry, take a few minutes to review the following tutorial that explains exactly what I am looking for and will prepare you for writing excellent journal entries. This tutorial should take about 20 minutes to complete. If you have any questions about the study, please contact me at melvin.whitehead@uga.edu. Remember, if you email me, **do not** include your pseudonym.

Please enter your pseudonym (This should be the same pseudonym you provided in the demographic survey):

Follow these tips to develop your journal entries:

1. **Write as much as you can.** Longer entries are more helpful than shorter ones
2. **Write about RECENT encounters and it down soon.** Do not write about things that happened a long time ago. Memories can fade, and key information can be lost quickly. Focus on recent interactions that occurred the same day or within the past few days.
3. **Avoid using names to protect people's privacy.** Instead of giving your friend's name, say “my friend.”
4. **Once you start, you can take your time.** If you stop writing to get a snack, the software won't time-out on you. So if you can't finish your entry in one sitting, don't worry.
5. **You won't lose what you've written.** Whatever you write is saved automatically every time you hit the forward arrow button. If you happen to close your browser before you finish your journal entry, the information you've entered will be stored for one week. You can return to finish your journal entry from any computer or mobile device.
6. **Detailed writing and observations are more important than the content of the accounts you write about.** Provide accurate portrayals of the events you write about. Please do not exaggerate or “tone down” your comments. I am interested in hearing about your real experiences and emotional reactions, no matter how mundane or offensive you believe them to be.

When submitting each entry, you will be prompted to provide the following information:

1. **Pseudonym.** This should be the same pseudonym (fake name) you put in the demographic survey. Write it down somewhere if you need to remember it.
2. **Describe what happened.** Include who was present, where the incident/interaction took place, and how recently it happened (e.g., this morning, last night, 4 days ago). You are encouraged to write about incidents/interactions that occur on-campus, off-campus, and online.
3. **How did I feel during and/or after this incident/interaction?** Describe these emotions by up to three adjectives. Please describe your emotions as precisely as possible. Adjectives like *good* or *bad* are too general to be informative.
4. **Why did I feel this way?** Write down your explanations for the feelings you experienced in relation to the incident/interaction. Be specific in naming what aspect of the incident/interaction prompted you to feel this way and why.
5. **If you talked to anyone else, describe who you spoke to and what they said.** Provide any other thoughts or comments. Here you can include additional thoughts or reactions to what happened, including additional context useful for understanding the incident/interaction.

Keeping a Journal: A 20-minute tutorial Here are five sample journal entries that illustrate how race and ethnicity can play out for college students. Some of the scenarios may seem straightforward, others more complicated. After each one, I am going to ask you a few questions that will prepare you to write excellent journal entries. Read each scenario, then try to answer the questions honestly. Don't worry about trying to remember every element of an ideal journal entry; I'll prompt you when the time comes.

SCENARIO #1: Hateful acts

Pseudonym: Moe

Describe what happened:

This morning when I was in my dorm room I heard a police radio outside our window. When I looked out into the parking lot, there were maybe 15 students there, both white and black. They were standing around a car belonging to a black student. Everybody looked stunned, like they were in a state of shock. Friends were hugging the student, who was trying not to cry. When I

went out to find out what was wrong, I saw that somebody had spray-painted the car with a really bad racial slur and then smashed the windshield into a thousand pieces. I heard one student say she thought she had seen someone run into the woods next to our dorm after she heard the sound of breaking glass. When one of the guys (a white football player) heard that, he picked up a rock and threw it as hard as he could into the woods, screaming out "You frigging coward!" He said other things I won't repeat here, but from the look on people's faces I think he spoke for everyone. I don't know the student whose car was vandalized, but I felt really bad for them. I mean, what a thing to wake up to.

How did I feel during and/or after this incident/interaction? Describe these emotions by up to three adjectives.

Astonished, Curious, Detached

Why did I feel this way?

I was surprised that in this day and age, this kind of blatant racism still happens. It's scary to think that there are people on my campus who hold such racist views. I felt curious because I wondered why this happened. I also felt a little detached from the situation because I didn't know the student whose car got vandalized, or any of the people standing by the car. I wasn't personally affected.

If you talked to anyone else, describe who you spoke to and what they said.

This evening, I told my roommate what happened. She mentioned that she had heard about it through a friend of hers and remarked what a shame it was. She quickly changed the subject.

What do you think about this situation?

Do you know anyone who's witnessed or experienced racial or ethnic violence?

Yes

No

When you see racial or ethnic violence first-hand, it feels unforgettable. But to explain what happened to someone who wasn't there, **the key element is detail**. In this journal entry, notice how the writer pays attention to detail. Instead of simply saying "Someone messed up a black student's car," the student describes the physical scene (15 students, both black and white, standing around a car). The writer also describes students' reactions (the victim was trying not to

cry; onlookers looked stunned, in a state of shock; the football player screamed out "You frigging coward!"). That's the kind of detail that makes for the best journal entry. (Details should be relevant, of course. If you saw a student tell someone a "Hispanic joke," the fact that the speaker was laughing and the hearer looked mortified is a very important detail. But if you wrote down where they were walking or what they were wearing? Not so much.)

Have you yourself ever witnessed racial intolerance, discrimination, or violence?

- Yes, I have
- No, I haven't

Display This Question:

If Have you yourself ever witnessed racial intolerance, discrimination, or violence? = Yes, I have

Briefly describe what happened. Include key details that might help explain what you witnessed to someone who wasn't there. (*Your starting point for each journal entry will be explaining what happened.*)

SCENARIO #2: Playing on stereotypes

Pseudonym: Jamie

Describe what happened:

Today in chemistry class our professor was asking lots of questions about the periodic table of elements. There was this Asian student sitting in the front row who kept raising his hand and really nailing the questions. After a few minutes of this, the guy sitting next to me turned to me and said under his breath, "Of course the Asian dude knows every answer!" I felt annoyed and irritated and thought to myself, "Really? All Asian students are good in math and science? That's the oldest stereotype in the book!" I guess it had never occurred to Mr. Close-Minded that the student knows the periodic table because he studied really hard, not because he's Asian. As soon as class was over, I went straight to the computer lab so I could send you this entry. I think it helped to get my classmate out of my system!

How did I feel during and/or after this incident/interaction? Describe these emotions by up to three adjectives.

Annoyed, Irritated, Angry

Why did I feel this way?

I was angry that this guy assumed I would agree or go along with the stereotype that Asian people are good at math or science. It reminded me of a previous time when another student made a comment to me about the black students in his class. I hate it when people assume I share their stereotypes about other people because I am not prejudiced.

What do you think of this situation?

A good journal entry tells more than what happened. It also explains **how you feel** about what happened. Notice how this student describes what she was feeling (anger, irritation). When you tell me how you feel, I am not judging; there's no right or wrong way to react. I just want to know your authentic perspective on what you're describing. Notice also: the student wrote her journal entry immediately. Short-term memory degrades dramatically over time, and especially once you fall asleep at night. So you are encouraged to write down what happened as soon as you can, before your mind has a chance to lose key details.

Have you ever encountered someone who thinks of people in terms of stereotypes?

Yes

No

Display This Question:

If Have you ever encountered someone who thinks of people in terms of stereotypes? = Yes

How did you feel when you were with this person? *(In your journal entry, I'll ask you to describe your emotional reactions to what you're writing about.)*

SCENARIO #3: Ball of confusion

Pseudonym: Jorge

Describe what happened:

Yesterday, my best friend (who is white) had his parents in town visiting for a professional football game. I happened to watch him introduce his mom and dad to a bunch of his friends.

When he introduced one girl (I'll call her "Rosa") as "another friend of mine" his buddies glanced at each other nervously because Rosa is more than a friend: she's his girlfriend, she's Mexican, and the parents don't approve of interracial dating at all. I like Rosa a lot and I obviously like my friend, but I hated to go along with the deception. After all, what if his parents started asking me questions about the relationship? I felt caught between a rock and a hard place. Should I keep the deception going in order to spare my friend's feelings? Or should I tell the parents the truth because I disagree with their racial views?

How did I feel during and/or after this incident/interaction? Describe these emotions by up to three adjectives.

Confused, conflicted, upset

Why did I feel this way?

I was confused because I did not know what to do. I was also angry at the parents for their views. Rosa and I are both Mexican, so my friends' parents' views also felt like an attack on me. I was also upset with my friend because I felt like he could do more to challenge his parents on their views instead of just avoiding the issue.

If you talked to anyone else, describe who you spoke to and what they said.

I spoke to one of my friends from back home, who's also Chicano because I needed to vent to someone about my friend and his parents. I just needed to get some stuff off my chest and get some advice. My friend asked me how I could be friends with someone whose parents felt that way. I felt even more conflicted because I like my friend and he is otherwise a really good guy.

What do you think of this situation?

This journal entry is a good example of how race can cause confusion, and maybe even a moral dilemma. We all like to think we're well-intentioned people who just want to do the right thing. The problem is, it's not always easy to know what the right thing is! Whatever your feelings might be, don't worry if you're still sorting things out. Life is complicated; it's OK not to have all the answers.

Have you yourself ever felt confused over how to respond to a racial situation?

Yes

No

Display This Question:

If Have you yourself ever felt confused over how to respond to a racial situation? = Yes

What were you confused about? *(In your journal, it's OK to write about something even if you're not sure what to make of it.)*

SCENARIO #4: Feeling defensive

Pseudonym: Maddy

Describe what happened:

I live down the hall from this student who's from Saudi Arabia. She dresses in traditional clothing and everyone can tell she's a Muslim. She usually doesn't talk much but today as I passed her in the hall she glared at me and said, "I HATE white people!" I was shocked! I mean, she hardly knows me! Someone told me later that her professor had said something in class that made her feel bad. He was talking about this trip he took to Washington, DC. He said that when he drove past the Pentagon, you couldn't tell where that jet had slammed into the building on 9/11. Then he turned to the Muslim girl and stared at her for a few seconds, as if she was personally responsible for hijacking the plane. As soon as I found out what happened I went to her room to say I was sorry the guy was such a jerk, but she wasn't hearing it. She said all white people are racist and I was just like all the others, then she told me to leave her room!

How did I feel during and/or after this incident/interaction? Describe these emotions by up to three adjectives.

Hurt, Angry, Defensive

Why did I feel this way?

I don't like being attacked for something I didn't do, and would never even THINK of doing. I mean, I've never done anything bad to her, so why should she come after me?

If I talked to anyone else, describe who I spoke to and what they said.

I was so upset that I called my mom to talk about it. She said it's important to try to walk in the other person's shoes, etc. It was good to have someone to talk to, but I still felt kind of raw even after the phone call.

What do you think of this situation?

When someone accuses you of something you don't think you're guilty of, it's natural to feel defensive. But notice what this student does: she talks to the accuser and when that doesn't help matters much, she talks to her mom. I want to know who people talk to after a racial incident/interaction. (This student called her mother because she felt bad, but it can be any person for any reason.) And what did that person say? This student wrote down all I need to know.

Have you ever been accused of being racist?

Yes

No

Display This Question:

If Have you ever been accused of being racist? = Yes

Did you talk to someone about it? If so, who was it and what did they say?

SCENARIO #5: Unexpected friendship

Pseudonym: Rodneyta

Describe what happened:

When my dad dropped me off at college last week, it felt like I was on Mars. Everything was alien—the food, the way people dress, even the way they talk. The strangest thing was being around so many white people. I'm from a rural part of the state, and I never had to interact with many white people until I came here. When I walked into my dorm for the first time and realized that my roommate was white, I thought I...was...going...to...die. I'm thinking, I don't much care for football and I hate country music! What could I possibly have in common with this person? And what if she doesn't like black people? I was feeling apprehensive until I heard someone at Orientation say how important it is to not judge strangers until you get to know them. I decided to give the girl a break by inviting her to walk with me to a store off campus this evening since neither of us have cars. The more she talked the more I realized that we actually have a lot things in common. We both like to hunt, we're both interested in being pre-med, and she said she likes R&B music more than country. We talked about R&B artists the whole way home!

How did I feel during and/or after this incident/interaction? Describe these emotions by up to three adjectives.

Happy, Pleasantly surprised, Relieved

Why did I feel this way?

With all the stuff I've been reading about and watching in the news, I've been very cautious about how I am perceived as a black person by others. I know other people have stereotypes about black people, so I automatically assume that's what's happening. So it was a nice surprise to feel like I can just be myself around this person without worrying about being perceived as a representative of my race. I'm still a bit cautious, but overall feel pretty good about our friendship.

What do you think of this situation?

In these journal entries, I want you to write about any racial experiences—not just negative ones. Positive experiences are just as informative as any other type of experience and can tell me how colleges and universities might improve their campus environments. This student also talks about how things she had read and seen in the media influenced her apprehension about having a roommate of a different race. Sometimes things we read and see online or on TV can shape our reactions to different situations. I want you to write about these media influences in your journal entries, as well.

Have you had a memorable positive experience on campus with someone from a different racial or ethnic group?

Yes

No

Display This Question:

If Have you had a memorable positive experience on campus with someone from a different racial or et... = Yes

Tell me what happened and how you felt about it.

Congratulations! You've completed the tutorial. You can return to this tutorial at any time by clicking the link in your course module or by visiting [REDACTED]

Appendix D: Participant Diary Prompts for Phase One

1. My Pseudonym:

2. Describe what happened and where and when it happened. (*Describe events that took place today or within the past few days. Note the setting, time of day, and who was present*):

3. How did I feel during and/or after this incident/interaction? How do I feel now? Describe these emotions by up to three adjectives. (*Avoid using words like "good" or "bad." Use words that are more descriptive*):

4. Why did I feel this way? (*Who or what is the cause for these feelings? For example, did the incident remind you of past experiences, other current experiences, or something you expect for the future?*):

5. If I talked to anyone else, describe whom I spoke to and what they said. (*Do not use real names. Create pseudonyms for them or refer to them by their relationship to you, e.g., friend, roommate*):

6. Provide any other thoughts or comments (optional):

Appendix E: Essay Prompts for Phase Two

Prompt 1

In Phase One of this study, students mentioned feelings of **discomfort/awkwardness, anger, or confusion/conflict** in response to things they heard people say about specific racial groups. For this prompt, I want you to pick **two** of these emotional responses you have had to recent race-related interactions/encounters and respond to the following using at least 500 words (total):

1. Which race-related situations/interactions/encounters make you the most uncomfortable, angered, and/or confused/conflicted? Provide specific examples.
2. Why do these situations make you the most uncomfortable, angered, and/or confused?
3. What strategies have you used to cope with or resolve these feelings—either during the interaction/encounter or after (if any)? How have these strategies been helpful/unhelpful? (For example, many students talked about making light of the situation, changing the subject, confronting others about what they said, and speaking to somebody else about what they saw/heard)

Prompt 2

During Phase One of this study, many students talked about race-related content they saw online and race-related aspects of the current national climate. For this prompt, I want you to think about any relationship between your perceptions of the current U.S. racial climate and your emotional reactions to recent race-related interactions/encounters you've had *on campus*. Please respond to the following in at least 500 words (total):

1. How do you perceive the current racial climate in the U.S.? Do you view it positively, negatively, or a mix of both?
2. What has influenced these perceptions of the U.S. racial climate?
3. To what extent do your perceptions of the current U.S. racial climate influence your *perceptions of* and *emotional reactions to* race-related interactions/encounters you've had on campus? If your perceptions of the U.S. racial climate are unrelated to your race-related interactions/encounters on campus, please talk about why they are unrelated.

Appendix F: Debrief Document

College Students' Emotional Reactions to Racial Issues

Thank you for your participation in this research study. For this study, it was important that I withhold some information from you about some aspects of the study. Now that your participation is completed, I will describe the withheld information to you, why it was important, answer any of your questions, and provide you with the opportunity to make a decision on whether you would like to have your data included in this study.

What you should know about this study

In the consent form you reviewed prior to participating in this study, you were informed that data would be analyzed by participants' racial/ethnic identity. For the current study, I will only be analyzing data collected from self-identified white (non-Hispanic) students. Data collected from students of color will be analyzed later for a future study. This information was withheld because I wanted to encourage **all** students (regardless of race/ethnicity) to provide thoughtful responses.

Right to withdraw data

You may choose to withdraw the data you provided prior to debriefing, without penalty or loss of extra credit. If you wish to withdraw your data, please email me at Melvin.whitehead@uga.edu with your pseudonym and I will withdraw all of your information, journal entries, and responses from the study.

If you have questions

The main researcher conducting this study is Melvin Whitehead, a doctoral student in the University of Georgia's Department of Counseling and Student Personnel Services. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at Melvin.Whitehead@uga.edu or the Principal Investigator, Dr. Darris Means, at dmeans@uga.edu. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant in this study, you may contact the University of Georgia's Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chairperson at 706.542.3199 or irb@uga.edu.

If you feel upset after having completed the study or find that some questions or aspects of the study were distressing, talking with a qualified clinician or counselor may help. If you feel you would like assistance, please contact **[REDACTED]**.

Final Report:

If you would like to receive a copy of the final report of this study when it is completed, please feel free to contact me at Melvin.Whitehead@uga.edu