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White Women in Student Affairs: Navigating Race in a Complex Work Environment



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# White Women in Student Affairs:

# Navigating Race in a Complex Work Environment

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Education

by

Christine Jaqueline Mata

2018

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

White Women in Student Affairs:

Navigating Race in a Complex Work Environment

by

Christine Jaqueline Mata

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2018

Professor Cecilia Rios-Aguilar, Chair

The objective of this study was to examine the methods White women use to navigate race in a student affairs professional setting. White women have a unique lens in interpreting race due to their privileged status as White as well as their subordinate gender status. Using Bonilla-Silva's colorblind racism and Cheryl Matias' emotionality of Whiteness framework, this study sought to understand the methods, whether consciously or subconsciously, White women use in their daily encounters with race. A semi-structured interview method was applied to 23 participants at two public institutions of higher education. The interviews focused specifically on how they felt about racial issues in the workplace as well as how participants perceive themselves as White women in the student affairs profession. A commonality amongst all participants was that their origins of racial understanding began with a colorblind lens. The disruption of the colorblind lens for participants solicited emotional responses to racial discourse

and situations. Specifically, anger, avoidance, self-victimization and tears were revealed throughout this study. Additionally, content analysis was used to learn about the campus climate issues at each respective institution.

The themes that emanated from the study were emotional resistance to race, distance from racial terminology, identity as a minimization tool, evolution of awareness, as well as re-centering and challenging Whiteness. These themes describe mechanisms used by participants in professional environments when race was a focus. The emotional aspect of the data yielded examples of White women using emotions to uphold White supremacy through tears, anger, victimization or guilt. These responses refocus the racial conversation on White women and shift the focus away from the issues of People of Color. A maneuver used to avoid race was avoiding racial terminology altogether as well as using other identities such as gender, sexual orientation and ability status to minimize the racial focus. Additionally, several participants encountered racial dissonance and continued to grapple with race as Whites and a few recognize the power there is in being White women in a student affairs organization.

The findings indicate that there was growing awareness among the participants and this journey is highly contradictory. This is highlighted through participant views on affirmative action as well as a vacillation between guilt and self-victimization. This study did highlight the need for more in-depth professional training for student affairs professionals focused on the use of language centered on racial justice, emotions as well as colorblindness.

This dissertation of Christine Mata is approved.

Nolan Cabrera

Jessica Harris

Daniel Solórzano

Cecilia Rios-Aguilar, Committee Chair

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2018

# DEDICATION PAGE

This one is dedicated to my Grandmother, Socorro. Through your ability to endure you taught me perseverance. Through your courageous journey to this country you bestowed upon me an adventurous spirit. Through your financial savviness you taught me resourcefulness and through your unconditional love, you taught me to believe in myself and here I am.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Never did I believe I would be here writing this as my journey to the Ph.D. nears its conclusion. When I was sitting in that community college classroom I had no clue how far I would go. This was not a journey I traveled alone, and I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge those who supported me through this experience.

The journey to the Ph.D. has been a long journey full of challenges and triumphs. First, I would like to thank my wife who has been there to catch me, cry with me, encourage, laugh and celebrate with me. Thank you Elva for all your support and encouragement even when I doubted myself you believed in me and still do. Through this journey we have come to understand the importance of being women of Color who constantly question White supremacy in all its forms. If not for ourselves for future generations. I look forward to the next adventure life brings us.

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Lauren- The best sister I could ask for! You always brought some element of fun and silliness to this journey. I appreciate all your curiosity and late-night conversations. Without knowing it you made me laugh and reminded me to appreciate the simple things in life.

Rachel- Thank you for your encouraging words and long conversations about life. I hope you know that even our debates about politics motivated me to see this phase of my life through to the end. I look forward to visiting more often for our two-hour tea and coffee sessions.

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Dr. Rios Aguilar- Thank you for pushing me. Advisors are the core of success for graduate students and you are amazing and thoughtful. Thank you for the faith and investment you placed in me. You are an incredibly accomplished scholar, yet so accessible and down to earth. You have provided an example of what it is to be successful, accessible and humble. The professional I become from here on will be because of you as I hope to pay it forward and invest in students and their success.

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To all the girls and young women of Color. I see myself in you and you gave me inspiration time and time again. You remind me of where I came from and to never forget that. I hope in some small way you can see yourself in me. You got this!

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Claros, S. C., Garcia, G. A., Johnston-Guerrero, M. P., & Mata, C. (2017). Helping students understand intersectionality: Reflections from a dialogue project in residential life. *New Directions for Student Services*, *2017*(157), 45-55.

*Meeting Each Other Half Way,* Presented at the Student Affairs All Staff Institute. University of California Los Angeles, August 2015.

*Microaggressions and Whiteness*, Presented at Campus Dialogue on Race. Arcata, CA, October 29, 2016.

*Queering Interracial Intimacy while Advancing as Queer Women of Color in Higher Education,* Presented at the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity (NCORE). New Orleans, LA, May 31, 2018

## Chapter One: Introduction

There is little research available focused on the racial experiences of administrators in higher education. The studies that are in existence tend to focus on the experiences of administrators of Color or graduate students in Higher Education and Student Affairs (HESA) graduate programs (Linder, 2015; Linder et al., 2015; Robbins, 2012, 2016; Wolfe & Freeman, 2013). According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), women comprise 54% of all non-faculty staff positions and 48% of faculty positions at colleges and universities (Hussar et al., 2012). Furthermore, as 2015-2016 membership information from the Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA) indicated that out of a total of 8,336 members 46% were white, 28% Hispanic, 18% Black/African American, 5% Asian, 2% Multiracial, <1% were Native American or Alaska Native, and <1% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. These demographics demonstrate that White administrators are the majority in student affairs. In the realm of student affairs, White silence, which is the silence practiced by Whites during discussions of racial tension, is too common (DiAngelo, 2012; Kendall, 2006; Linder 2015) and concerning given the fact that according to Wesaw and Sponsler (2014), White Chief Student Affairs Officers are the majority and often drive the discourse on diversity on college campuses. Furthermore, the student affairs profession tends to be White, middle class and female (Taub & McEwen, 2006). Both these demographics and the concept of White silence are important because it is common for senior leadership in institutions of higher education to entrust student affairs professionals with responding to racial incidents on college campuses, working with students from diverse backgrounds and given the current racial climate of U.S. society, facilitate discussions on equity and inclusion. Silence by White professionals during challenging discussions focused on race can create an environment where troubling comments

and behaviors of fellow Whites go unchallenged and ultimately control the discussion. These dynamics occur regardless of intent. DiAngelo (2012) described this in the following way, “At minimum, the resistant participants receive no social penalty from other Whites, and silence effectively maintains White solidarity” (p. 5). The collective silence creates an emphasis on racial boundaries that negatively affect those not included in that bonding process (People of Color). As a result, this forms an us versus them dynamic within the workplace.

During discussions focused on racial issues, members of White culture may experience racial tension and emotions ranging from anger to despair and guilt to shame (DiAngelo, 2012; Tatum, 1992). These tensions and emotions arise from a collision of world views. White culture is the unquestioned standards of behavior and ways of functioning embodied by the vast majority of institutions in the United States (Gulati- Partee & Potapchuk, 2014). White culture is embedded and normalized making it difficult to identify. When the sense of normalcy is disrupted through a conversation focused on race, a range of emotions may manifest through the conversation. When these feelings are not addressed the result is resistance in engaging in topics of race and privilege. Additionally, others have to carry the weight of the conversation, and allows for explicit resisters to feel emboldened in discussions focused on race because White silence can imply agreement and establish the assumption that there will be no disagreement (DiAngelo, 2012). These dynamics can also be attributed to the socially prohibited topic of race or the White normative taboo. When these taboos are broken a sense of discomfort is created for many Whites (DiAngelo, 2012). This racial dynamic is an important one to examine because White women are increasingly occupying leadership positions within the field of student affairs (NASPA, 2017). Leadership in student affairs comes with the increasing responsibility of engaging colleagues and students in often difficult discussions on race. It is important to

understand how White women engage with the concept of race in the work environment and whether other factors affect their engagement. An understanding is critical to create a greater sense of self awareness for White women in professional roles. It is also critical to the environment for colleagues of Color and the overall campus climate for students.

According to Espinosa, Chessman and Wayt (2016), the senior administrators that college presidents lean more on when it comes to addressing racial diversity are the vice president of student affairs or dean of students and the chief diversity officer. The NASPA (2014) census of Vice Presidents in Student Affairs (VSPA) tells us that White student affairs administrators comprise majority of VPSA positions. These are the leaders who drive the discourse focused on diversity and equity on college and university campuses. According to NASPA (2014), White women are almost half of the senior leadership in student affairs and are over represented in the field in general (Robbins, 2012; Taub & McEwen, 2006). These factors describe a demographic that is under researched yet critical to the student affairs profession because of the ability White women have to craft policies, manage campus climate crisis and address issues of race on college and university campuses.

## Problem Statement

Over the course of the past decade, there has been a significant increase in women who hold executive and managerial positions at both private and public postsecondary institutions in the United States (Ford, 2014; Snyder & Dillow, 2015). Within the last decade the number of women who hold student affairs positions has increased (Ford, 2014). Although women dominate the field of student affairs at the mid-level, women are underrepresented in non-faculty senior and executive level positions in colleges and universities (Dale, 2007). Administrators and staff members are important actors within organizations of higher education. Nonetheless,

administrators in senior level positions (e.g., board members and university presidents) set the tone for the institution, prioritize institutional initiatives, allocate resources, hold other administrators accountable and provide overall institutional leadership (Chesler, Lewis & Crowfoot, 2005).

Further underrepresented in leadership roles in student affairs are women of color who are less likely to hold an administrative position compared to White women (Dale, 2007; Ford, 2014). Leadership roles from within higher education are critical because they lead the charge to challenge and overcome racism (Chesler et al., 2005). Privilege and identity are complex issues and certainly influence the interactions between White women and women of Color in the workplace. Accapadi (2007) describes privilege as complex and whether or not an individual has it positions them to "act in conflicting manners regarding oppression" (p. 208). The concept of privilege between White women and women of Color is further complicated by intersectionality. This refers to the overlapping or intersecting social identities along with related systems of oppression, discrimination and domination (Crenshaw, 1989). The experiences of the intersection of race and gender in colleges and universities is an under researched subject (Scott, 2016). As student affairs professionals, administrators are expected to create inclusive learning environments. In fact, social justice and inclusion are a core competency for student affairs professionals (NASPA & ACPA, 2015). In the process, they are often forced to confront personal biases based on race and gender.

This study attempts to explore Whiteness from the perspective of White women in student affairs. First, I will explore White women's racial ideology and their understanding of racial inequity. Next, I will address the intersection of gender and race and the conflation of these identities when faced with engaging in the racial discourse. Finally, I will explore how the work

environment in higher education may create opportunities to reinforce and challenge Whiteness. Specifically, their positionality in the racial discourse while performing student affairs work.

Institutions are microcosms of the larger society. Student affairs professionals, like all people, bring their worldview to the workplace. The worldview is developed within a society that encompasses unequal racial relationships that at times are unconscious and unrecognized (Kirshman, 2005). According to Frankenberg (1997) and Trepagnier (2005), White women tend to view racism as something that happens to people of Color and they have to struggle with it. Racism is not viewed as something that directly involves or implicates White women (Frankenberg, 1997). There is a distance in the perception of racism by White women. The distant view about racism comes with consequences of the approach taken to anti-racist work. Racial justice work can be viewed as a compassionate act for an "other" (Frankenberg, 1997) and optional but not intimately linked to one's life (Frankenberg, 1997). These dynamics found their way onto college campuses and the workplace in student affairs.

The role of student affairs professionals became crucial in assisting higher education to effectively address diversity (Dixon, 2001). Coincidentally, White professionals and specifically White women were also grappling with the discourse focused on race. As colleges and universities became more diverse, there was an increase in opportunities for cross-racial interactions and cross-cultural learning (Dixon, 2001). The learning process that resulted from an increase in compositional diversity also occurred at the professional level. Student affairs professionals had to gain the skill sets to understand and manage the racial discourse on college campuses. White women were challenged to examine their complex sets of identities through an intersectional lens. This process at times collided and occurred at the expense of colleagues of Color. Just as Frankenberg (1997) describes the multiple ways in which racism of the wider

culture reproduced itself in feminist spaces, White women reproduced racism in the workplace within student affairs. These dynamics conflict with professional expectations within student affairs that practitioners possess and often proclaim social justice values. This conflict often manifests itself in professional spaces while doing student affairs work.

White women in student affairs are often involved in equity and social justice work. The premise of their work often stems from the desire to "help" or address issues that affect colleagues and students from minoritized[1] communities. More often than not race is viewed as something that People of Color have to deal with in and out of the field of student affairs without real relevance to White lives (Frankenberg, 1997). Race is not viewed as something that shapes White women's lives. This results in White women addressing issues of race as an additive to their student affairs work. This approach to race may affect the understanding White women have of their Whiteness and the way it affects the dynamics of the workplace. Furthermore, there is an added identity layer of gender that may affect the how White women perceive their Whiteness and use gender in navigating their racial identity.

Studies have indicated that in order for White racial consciousness and practice to shift toward an anti-racist praxis, an understanding of the interconnectedness of racism, society and one's own situatedness is necessary (Cabrera et al., 2017; Perry & Shotwell, 2009). Thus, it is important to understand White women in student affairs as White women are often in positions of power in student affairs. They possess mid and high-level management positions such as Directors, Deans and Vice Presidents of student affairs. Along with these job titles comes the responsibility of crafting policies that affect students and colleagues of Color, addressing racial

[1] Minoritzed is used interchangeably with People of Color. This term signifies that minoritized people endure discrimination because it is enforced upon them and outside of their control. This term is used as a verb.

incidents on college campuses and assembling teams of professionals tasked to solve complex issues on college campuses. More than ever managers in student affairs need an understanding of the intricacies of White supremacy. To manage a student affairs department charged with addressing race on campuses necessitates the skill sets to examine Whiteness in society and how it shapes white lives (Frankenberg, 1997). It is urgent that White women understand their racial positionality within the racial discourse and the connection to other identities such as gender. According to [2]Trepagnier (2006), the stereotypical images White women carry with them manifests themselves into actions. White women have racial baggage shaped by their cultural framework. This racial baggage accumulates over the course of their lifetime in the form of emotions (DiAngelo, 2018; Matias, 2016a). As administrators in student affairs, White women are confronted with numerous opportunities to manifest their racial baggage in the professional environment whether it be through social justice trainings, campus climate discussions, or the overarching expectation of the student affairs field to engage in diversity at some level (DiAngelo, 2018; Robbins, 2012; Taub & McEwen, 2006).

It is also important to name the unnamed. Naming Whiteness dispels it from the unnamed, unmarked status that is an effect of its dominance (Frankenberg, 1997). Invisibility is not only harmful to People of Color, but it also harms White people because it normalizes the racial privileges and unmeritocratic advantages enjoyed by White people in various spaces (Cabrera, 2014; Frankenberg, 1997; Trepagnier; 2006). The invisibility of Whiteness creates the opportunity for White women to gloss over or deny altogether their role in the racial discourse. Speaking of Whiteness is to assign everyone a place in the relations of racism (Frankenberg, 1997). It is easier for White women to deny racism and say, “I am not racist” than to deny their

[2] The students Trepagnier studied were self-identified “anti-racists”.

Whiteness and say, “I am not White” (Frankenberg, 1997; Trepagnier; 2006). This emphasizes that dealing with racism is not only important for People of Color, but it is important for White people as well because their lives are shaped by racism. By studying Whiteness, my hope is to illuminate the role White women play in the racial discourse on college and university campuses. The way racism shapes White lives is not separate from the daily facets of life (Frankenberg, 1997).

In the context of student affairs, the naming and identification of Whiteness can illuminate the practices that lead colleagues of Color to feel targeted and invalidated. This is an opportunity to frame and uncover the historically oppressive practices in student affairs. Practice rooted in Whiteness can negatively affect colleagues and students. Whiteness is learned over the course of the formative years in an individual’s life. It is subtle and often goes on unquestioned and unexamined by White people themselves. McIntosh (1989), brought attention to White privilege a key component in understanding Whiteness. White privilege is the ability for White people to ignore the ways White racial identity benefits them (Alcoff, 1998). She described an invisible knapsack of White privilege where her daily experiences were universal, neutral, normal and accessible to all (McIntosh, 1989). Additionally, racism was something taught on an individual level that included deliberate hurtful acts and not invisible systems (McIntosh, 1989). In terms of professional practice, White administrators can enter the student affairs profession with a one size fits all approach. These practices can be identified and dealt with to improve the climate for professionals and students. Additionally, by connecting Whiteness to higher education there is an opportunity to connect Whites to the history of higher education. A history where access to postsecondary education was limited and has historically served White, Christian, heterosexual, able-bodied male dominated identities (Accapadi, 2007).

## The Purpose of the Study

One assumption in the professional world is that in order to fulfil the mandate for diversifying a profession, White women are often hired to meet the need for diversity (Kim, 2018; Nand, 2018). It is a question among student affairs professionals of Color whether or not White women understand their positionality as White people and White women (Bondi, 2012; Jasper, 2018; Linder, 2015; Weindling, 2018). All too often, the discourse focused on the management of complex issues that affect college campuses are controlled by White women (Accapadi, 2007; Vidal-Ortiz, 2017). In Trepagnier's (2006) study on White women, she found that White women use gender to mask their own racist tendencies and actions whether or not they are conscious or unconscious. This poses an interesting possibility of White women using gender in order to align with underrepresented communities in student affairs without recognizing the racial component of their identity. The purpose of this study is to examine how White women understand their own identity as White women in their daily professional lives. I plan to explore how White women in student affairs positions deal with and understand the concept of race and the affect it has on the work environment. My hope is to produce a study that can be useful to all student affairs professionals in their daily professional context. The questions guiding this study are:

*1.) How do White Women in student affairs navigate race in the work environment?*

*2.) What role do their various identities have in their overall understanding of race?*

*3.) How does their day-to-day professional practice reinforce or challenge White supremacy?*

According to the *NASPA and ACPA Professional Competencies Task Force*, "The social justice and inclusion competency area is defined as both a process and a goal that foster equitable participation of all groups and seeks to address issues of oppression" (p. 30). This competency

entails that student affairs professionals have a sense of their own agency and social responsibility (NASPA & ACPA, 2015). The level of awareness one has of their own racial identity can affect how well they navigate the work environment in higher education.

## Contributions of the Study

Although there are studies on White women and Whiteness, these studies are focused on graduate students in HESA programs. Very few studies focus on the racial experiences of professional White women in student affairs (Linder, 2015; Robbins, 2012, 2016; Svoboda, 2012). This study will contribute to the growing body of research focused on White women in higher education. This area of research is vital in our comprehension of White supremacy as institutional. As a result, the abstract concept of White supremacy becomes concrete and real. Events such as the White Nativists rally at the University of Virginia[3] (UVA) push institutions and administrators to develop responses to these blatant acts of racism but other forms of White supremacy go on unnoticed. Harper (2017) illustrated in his speech to UVA faculty and staff that White supremacy on college and universities reveals itself in many forms. Examples include the absence of racial dialogue for students, employment trends, and the majority White composition of the senior leadership positions (Harper, 2017). These practices are a part of the fabric in higher education and so much so that we fail to recognize and address them. As student affairs practitioners, it is our responsibility to build vocabulary that concretizes and assists us in the identification of systems of oppression that manifest in our practice. This research can help inform institutional practices in student affairs that shape students and administrators alike.

In order to address racial inequity, all groups must be cognizant of their place in the racial narrative of the United States. The focus of this study shifts the racial issue away from being an

[3] On August 11 and 12, 2017 hundreds of White Supremacists traveled to the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, VA to protest the removal of confederate statues.

issue for people of Color. Instead, it becomes an issue for all people including Whites to address racial inequity and join the racial discourse in the academy. White women in particular have a history of being complacent in upholding White supremacy (DiAngelo, 2012, 2015, 2018; Speller, n.d.). For example, a 2016 NBC voter exit poll indicates that 53% of White women overall voted for Donald Trump. Through this action, White women became accomplices to policies targeting undocumented individuals, affirmative action and normalizing racist narratives across the country. This study will illuminate the methods White women use (intentionally or unintentionally) to uphold White supremacy on college and university campuses. Whether it is through silence, tears or avoiding race altogether (DiAngelo, 2012, 2018), it is important that we understand White women and their engagement with race. This group can play a key role as allies to support the struggle against White supremacy in a field that is diversifying slower in terms of race and ethnicity than the face if its student population (Svoboda, 2012). Instead of being accomplices to White supremacy, White women must identify and engage in opportunities to become allies against racism.

## Relevant Definitions

It is important to acknowledge that not all readers of this study will be academic scholars. Furthermore, it is also important to acknowledge that the language used to describe racial dynamics in academic circles can be inaccessible to practitioners and individuals positioned outside of the academy. In an attempt to alleviate this issue, I have included a set of definitions of key terms in this study. These terms are not exhaustive but are used throughout this study to describe the phenomena of race, racism and gender.

Colorblind Racism- Bonilla-Silva (2003) asserts that colorblind racism is a subtle, insidious form of contemporary racism. It is based on the belief that good White people do not see color and

treat all people as individuals and equally, this form of racism has replaced the overt form of racism known as Jim Crow racism. This is a core concept of Whiteness and is composed of four frames 1. Abstract liberalism, 2. Naturalization, 3. Cultural and 4. Minimization.

Contemporary Racism- A subtle covert form of racism. This form of racism replaced the overt form of "old" fashion racism of the Jim Crow era (Bonilla, Silva, 2014).

Gender- According to Adam et al. (2007), gender is a social identity usually used interchangeably with biological sex in a binary system. Under this system the presumption is that one has either male and masculine characteristics and behavior, or female and feminine characteristics and behavior. Additionally, gender is a social status experienced by individuals as well as "a social institution" by which human lives are organized (Adam et al., 2007).

Hegemony- The process whereby the interests of ruling elites or dominant groups come to have the status of common sense. These interests come to be known as "the way things are" even among those marginalized by the very same status quo. Racial hegemony defies easy categorization and allows for advances for People of Color on a limited basis. The outcomes are not dissimilar from those that are a part of the long-standing pattern of racial inequity (Hughes, 2013; Gold, 2004)

Institutional Racism- Gusa (2010) describes institutional racism as unexamined historically situated White cultural ideology embedded in the language, cultural practices, traditions, and perceptions of knowledge that allow institutions to remain racialized. This is a macro-level concept that demonstrates that racism is more than the overt prejudice of individuals. This type of racism seeps into society through its institutions.

Intersectionality- Race and racism intersect with other identities and forms of oppression, and position individuals and groups differently in the system of racism by virtue of gender, race, class, sexuality and other social markers (Adams, Bell, Goodman & Joshi, 2016).

Race- A system of advantage and disadvantage that is based on the socially constructed category of race. This system is concurrently enacted on multiple levels such as Institutional, cultural, interpersonal and individual (Adams et al., 2007).

Racism- Individual, cultural, institutional and systemic ways by which differential consequences are created for different racial groups. The group historically or currently defined as White is being advantaged, and groups historically or currently defined as non-White (African American, Asian American, Latinx[4], Native American, etc.) are being disadvantaged (Adams, Bell & Griffin, 2007).

Racial Ideology- Racial ideology, or the racially- based frameworks used by actors to explain and justify (dominant race) or challenge (subordinate race or races) the racial status quo. (Bonilla-Silva, 2010, p. 65).

Reverse racism- A sense of victimization by Whites. Multiculturalism, race-conscious policies and any attempt to ameliorate discriminatory practices pose a threat to Whites (e.g., affirmative action) triggering White fragility.

Student Affairs- Student affairs professionals seize opportunities for teaching and learning. Professionals in this field, foster and promote these interactions with students outside of the classroom (NASPA, 2015). Student Affairs is also referred to as student services.

Whiteness- Although Whiteness does not have a consistent definition, the following definition aligns with the purpose of this study. Leonardo (2009) describes Whiteness as a racial discourse.

[4] I use the term Latinx in place of Latina or Latino as a gender-neutral alternative to Latina(o). see https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/word-history-latinx for more information.

Whiteness does not equate to White people or a constructed identity. It is not a culture but a social concept. Cabrera et al. (2017) outline three central components of Whiteness as a discourse: 1.) An unwillingness to name the ways in which systematic racism has shaped U.S. society. 2.) Creating distance from identifying with a racial experience or minority group, and 3.) the minimization of the U.S. history of racism. Whiteness shapes the climate and culture of institutions. Framing Whiteness as a discourse presents the possibility for People of Color to engage in Whiteness.

White Fragility- A state when even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves. These moves include the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation (DiAngelo, 2012).

White Hegemony- This concept describes the normalization of the privileges that White people enjoy based on their racial background (Omi & Winant, 2015). The hegemonic element of this concept allows White supremacy to be recreated and reproduced through the combination of consent from People of Color and coercion from Whites (Omi & Winant, 2015).

White Privilege- An institutional (rather than personal) set of benefits granted to those of us who, by race, resemble the people who dominate the powerful positions in our institutions" (Kendall, 2002).

White Silence- This form of silence functions to shelter White participants of racial discussions by keeping their racial perspectives hidden from exploration or challenge. Thus, White dominance is protected through the denial of the opportunity to have one's perspective expanded (DiAngelo, 2012).

White Supremacy- A system of racial domination and oppression that elevates White people over People of Color. Everyday practices and policies that are invisible because they are normalized and therefore are "normal" in everyday life. This is an often an invisible social structure that places the needs and interests of White individuals as a priority and it materializes on a day-to-day basis (Adams, Bell, Goodman & Joshi, 2016; hooks, 1998).

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. The first half of the chapter will provide a review of the literature to establish an understanding of the research that surrounds White women in higher education. There is a plethora of racial dynamics in the U.S. that frame the experiences of Whites. As discussed in chapter one, White women are confronted with their racial baggage while doing student affairs work. In review of literature, I attempt to illuminate on the background that contributes to the accumulation of racial baggage for White women. This is done through an overview of literature that is focused on Whiteness and White Women in higher education. It is impossible to provide a complete analysis of the literature and is beyond the scope of this study. I will attempt to provide an overview of the literature relevant to this study. First, I will provide a brief overview of White women in higher education. Second, I will provide a review of the literature focused on Whiteness and white privilege. Finally, I will conclude with a section on White women in student affairs.

### *White Women in Higher Education*

The history of higher education tells us a story of historical exclusion. Harper et al. (2009) provides a comprehensive overview of how African Americans have been denied access to higher education. The denial of access to People of Color spans the majority of the existence of U.S. higher education (Harper et al., 2009). Access to higher education has been denied through policies and practices of colleges and universities (Harper, et al., 2009; Yosso, Parker, Solórzano, & Lynn, 2004). Scholars point out that these practices are a form of White supremacy that is pervasive in our institutions of higher education (Gusa, 2010; Leonardo, 2009). Solomon (1985) provides us with a historical outline of the trajectory to access by White, cisgender,

Christian women. This author illuminated the connection between gaining access and leveraging White supremacy to achieve access to higher education.

It is well documented that the Civil Rights Movement set the tone for significant changes that took place in the 1960s and 1970s (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Omi & Winant, 2015; Thelin, 2011). Civil rights legislation and other federal mandates addressed racism by Whites. As a result, the issue of racism was not isolated to be a question of right or wrong, but it was now a legal issue. It became illegal to discriminate against People of Color. Dovido & Gartner (2004, 2008) point out that national surveys and polls demonstrated significant increases in support in racial equality and integration along with a decrease in "overt expressions of prejudice among Whites towards Blacks" (p. 267). These findings signified a change in the dynamic of race relations in the United States along with a shift in racial attitudes from totalitarian to hegemonic. (describe what hegemonic means, maybe an example) An important component to this shift is that the overt expressions of racism declined, privately held beliefs persisted and reflected negative racial attitudes (Dovidio, Gaertner & Pearson, 2008; Picca & Feagin, 2007). As a consequence, people began to manage public perception of their racial attitudes. The formal support for equality increased, but the racial animus was not gone.

Garcia and Johnston, (2015) point out that contemporary racism has been labeled in many ways (e.g., aversive racism, Dovidio & Gaertner, 2008; laissez-faire racism, Bobo, Kluegel, & Smith, 1997; symbolic racism, Sears & Henry, 2003; colorblind racism, Bonilla-Silva, 2014; racial formation, Omi & Winant, 1994, 2015). Scholars position contemporary racism as something that pervades daily life as a consequence of the racist structure in place. This form of racism is reflected in the policies and practices within institutions that advantage Whites as a group and disadvantage groups of Color (Bonilla-Silva, 2001, 2002, 2009; Bonilla-Silva &

Forman, 2000). Over the course of the last 20 years, the literature has focused on (but not limited to) topics such as policies (e.g., affirmative action), campus climate, racial microaggressions as well as a more recent focus on Whiteness in higher education (Cabrera, 2012; Cabrera et al., 2017; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Harper & Patton, 2007; Solórzano, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2000). The literature is overwhelmingly focused on race from the perspective of People of Color. Although this is an important angle in the examination of race in higher education, it is also important to frame the scholarship on race to reflect that these are important issues for Whites, race has implications for Whites and race is a White issue as well. The invisibility and insular nature of Whiteness often creates a barrier to understanding racial bias and creates a heightened sense of White fragility for Whites.

White women in particular hold a unique place within the literature of race. The sense of White fragility and privilege reveal themselves in professional spaces using highly emotional mechanisms (e.g., crying, deflecting, silence...etc.). Furthermore, the literature documents that the navigation between a racially privileged identity (White) and a target identity (women) creates a set of dynamics that complicate White women's interactions with race. This creates implications for higher education. Perhaps one of the most important questions is how White women reinforce White supremacy in higher education. Historically, White women have a role in being accomplices to racial hatred (DiAngelo, 2015; Speller, n.d.). What this looks like may have evolved over the years as indicated in the literature related to colorblindness, Whiteness and White supremacy (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Cabrera, 2009, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c; DiAngelo, 2012, 2015; Jayakumar & Adamian, 2017; Leonardo, 2004, 2005, 2009). One instance is provided by Ozias (2017) as she outlines the history of White women in higher education as a journey from the status of the protected to one of a protector. Institutions of higher education became sites

where White women were educated in areas that evolved into anthropology, social work, and education.

Colleges and universities evolved into places where "White Women were professionalized into imperialist White supremacist gender roles" (Ozias, 2017, p. 21) and the role of the protector of civilization and civilizers (Ozias, 2017) emerged. Solomon (1985) tells us that women became teachers that were respected for their work in religious conversion in the western frontiers and aiding in the assimilation of communities of Color. White women gained access to higher education during post-Civil War Reconstruction (Ozias, 2017), and during a period growing a nativist sentiment (Newman, 1999; Solomon, 1985). During this time, they increased their agency in most realms of society and they did this at the expense of communities of Color (Solomon, 1985; Newman, 1999; Ozias, 2017). Thus, White women became protectors of racial purity, perpetrators of colonization, preserved their status as the protected and continued to be accomplices of upholding White Supremacy.

Although this study is focused on White women in student affairs, race in higher education is a related topic that is intertwined with concepts such as Whiteness, White privilege and White women. Frankenberg (1993) was clear in her argument that race shapes women's lives. The author also mentions that White people and People of Color live racially structured lives. Frankenberg (1993) goes on to make the point that to live within this racialized structure means that those who live within this structure are shaped by the privileges and disadvantages that are granted to them. For White women in student affairs, race shapes their professional interactions with colleagues, students and even their professional trajectory. Whether or not White women accept Whiteness as an identity, their rejection of it does not negate that there are tangible effects on colleagues and students. In this chapter, my intent is to establish a foundation

for understanding the concepts that will frame and contextualize White women in professional student affairs settings. A complete examination of this subject is beyond the scope of this study, but I will provide an examination of key articles to set the foundation for the study. I will begin with an overview of White supremacy, followed by Whiteness, white privilege and white women in student affairs.

*White Supremacy*

bell hooks (1998) once wrote that the term "racism" was no longer useful. Hooks explained that the term "White supremacy" was more accurate in its description of the everyday experiences of People of Color (Applebaum, 2016; hooks, 1998). hooks does not use the term White supremacy to describe groups who overtly demonstrate their hate for People of Color or openly demonstrate their belief in their superiority of Whiteness (e.g., Klu Klux Klan, Neo Nazi Skin Heads...etc.). Hooks used White supremacy as systematic manifestation of racial oppression through practices and policies that are invisible because they are normalized and therefore are "normal" in everyday life. This concept places the needs and interests of White individuals as a priority and it materializes on a day-to-day basis (Adams, Bell, Goodman & Joshi, 2016; hooks, 1998). As Bonilla-Silva (2006) argues, White supremacy does not simply derive from the aggregate of White supremacist views. In fact, the modern-day KKK even rejects the label "White supremacists" (Benn, 2016). Instead, as Bonilla-Silva (2006) continues, we exist in a system of *racism without racists.* Thus, the term White supremacy describes these complex social realities of U.S. society.

As a result, White supremacy as a normative structure has nocuous effects on the lives of racially minoritized people while providing Whites with benefits and privilege (hooks 1998; Omi & Winant, 2015; McIntosh, 1988). Furthermore, to contextualize this concept Gusa (2010)

argued that Whiteness is the dominant worldview in the U.S. and it is not based on phenotype or complexion. Whiteness is "a socially informed ontological and epistemological orientation reflecting what one does rather than something one has" (Gusa, 2010, p. 468). This aspect of Whiteness referred to by Gusa highlights Whiteness as a method used to approach institutional practices that support the current structure of domination and oppression. Thus, this method supports and reinforces White supremacy. In the context of higher education, a college degree, or education in general, in the United States is often presented as a method to amend social inequities (Chesler et al., 2005). A review of the history of education, including higher education, will demonstrate a pattern of "exclusion, forced assimilation and domination" of People of Color (Chesler et al., 2005, p. 26). Although a review of this history would help contextualize White supremacy, this is beyond the scope of this study.

The problem of exclusion is rooted in history within institutions of higher education, but it is also rooted in the domination of one ideology over others (Gusa, 2010). From the beginning, Whites chose who gained access and who was excluded. The literature is clear that as organizations, institutions are often settings where racial inequities and hierarchies are reproduced (Adams, Bell, Goodman, & Joshi, 2016; Chesler et al., 2005; Geiger, 2005; Gusa, 2010). These dynamics are described by Cabrera et al. (2017) as the interplay of "Whiteness and space" (p. 50). This expression encompasses the organizational structure, policies, climate as well as the physical environment. Exclusion and barriers to access are in place using legal and social approaches. This aligns with Leonardo's (2009) concept of White supremacy in that it is embedded in daily life by a process of domination where acts, decisions and policies are carried out against People of Color. Thus, this makes specific positions, places and situations inaccessible to People of Color (Cabrera et al., 2017; Feagin, Vega & Imani, 1996; Gusa, 2010).

As a result, students, staff and faculty of Color are affected negatively both psychologically and physically (Solorzano, 1998; Sue, 2007). Additionally, the interplay between Whiteness and space affects decision making processes with outcomes such as who is hired or promoted within an organization of higher education.

*Whiteness*

Over the course of the development of the literature on Whiteness, scholars have developed concepts to corporealize Whiteness. Concepts such as *White privilege*, *White supremacy*, *White fragility*, and *White silence* (DiAngelo, 2011, 2012; McIntosh, 1989) have developed and are used to identify and critique Whiteness. These developments are important for several reasons. The invisibility of Whiteness is a source of denial for White people and contributes to the unfair treatment of People of Color (McIntosh, 1988; Lewis, 2004; Sue, 2004). The literature on Whiteness gained traction in the 1990s and further developed in the 2000s (Dyer, 2002; Frankenberg, 1993; Kivel, 2002; Lipsitz, 2006; Wise, 2005). As the literature expanded, various disciplines examined Whiteness and a subcategory known as Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) formed (Delgado & Stefanic, 1997,2001). A component of CWS is that this area of scholarship exposes the invisible structures that produce and reproduce *White supremacy* and *white privilege* (Cabrera, 2012; Leonardo, 2009). CWS scholarship aims to challenge the centrality of Whiteness as a standard for evaluation and shifts it to "the center of critique and transformation" (Leonardo, 2009, p. 90). One definition of Whiteness that is in line with this study is that of Cabrera et al. (2017) who describe Whiteness as an embedded social order that benefits Whites and marginalizes People of Color.

One consequence of the vast literature and analysis from multiple disciplines is that Whiteness has been defined several ways. According to Robbins (2012), because there are so

many definitions of Whiteness it allows for this concept to be slippery and this impreciseness is what some scholars (Lipsitz, 2006) insist strengthens Whiteness as a social structure (Omi & Winant, 1994). Cabrera et al., (2017) describe the imprecise nature of Whiteness as follows, "This malleable nature of contemporary Whiteness poses the following tension: Whiteness is real in that it has material impacts on people in U.S. society, but it also escapes precise definition" (p. 18). Although the literature indicates that the concept of Whiteness differs, there are consistent themes (Woodall, 2013). Many researchers are consistent in the belief that Whiteness is an evolving social construction, Whiteness is not constant, and it is connected to dominance and practices that are un-named (Manglitz, 2003; Woodall, 2013). Historically, Whiteness has demonstrated its adaptability to maintain dominance. Doane (2003) tells us that the meaning of Whiteness and race are closely interconnected. Over the course of U.S. history, the role of racial ideologies was to justify the deprivation of property, enslavement and counterpoise opposition from the racially oppressed (Doane, 2003; Omi & Winant, 2015). Omi and Winant describe for us, the process of racial rule as a lengthy historical process that evolved from dominance to hegemony.

*Hegemonic Whiteness.* Hegemony is the concept that was developed by Gramsci (1971) that explains how domination and control are maintained between the dominant and the dominated. Hegemony is accomplished through the forced, as well as voluntary consent, from both those who gain advantage through oppression, as well as the oppressed (Gramsci, 1971; Bell, 2007, 2016). This combination creates an invisible aspect to inequality through the reproduction of the advantage and disadvantage (Bell, 2007, 2016). Thus, normalizing and allowing for the reproduction of power relations between the dominant and dominated (Gramsci, 1971). Under hegemony, the ruled come to believe that the social conditions of their society are

natural and inevitable rather than created by people with a vested interest in social order. Gramsci describes hegemony as a phenomenon that permeates all of our lives. While the purpose of the concept of hegemony was to examine economic inequality, it has been used to examine other forms of social oppression such as White supremacy in the form of hegemonic Whiteness. This concept describes the normalization of the privileges that White people enjoy based on their racial background (Omi & Winant, 2015) as well as the hegemonic element that allows White supremacy to be recreated and reproduced through the combination of consent from People of Color and coercion from Whites. Thus, Whiteness is culturally hegemonic and is reinforced by seeming normal through societal institutions such as education, media, family and the law (Anderson, 2003; Doane, 2003; Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Omi & Winant, 2015). As issues of race and oppression evolve in society, so does Whiteness. White people challenge hegemony when they recognize and acknowledge the presence of Whiteness and the impact it has on structures and social interactions, including their own racial privilege (Johnson, 2006; Kendall, 2006; McIntosh, 1989). Additionally, Charben (2009) tell us that White people can challenge hegemony when they recognize and acknowledge the existence of a racial hierarchy in our society that positions whites above other racial and ethnic groups. This includes rejecting the assumption of equality or universality.

*Whiteness in Higher Education.* Institutions of higher education are microcosms of society and are not free from larger social trends. As a result, Whiteness permeates cultural institutions, such as colleges and universities, along with the campus racial climate (Gusa, 2010). Recently, research related to Whiteness in higher education began to focus on White male undergraduates and White women in graduate programs (Cabrera, 2009, 2014a, 2014b; Cabrera et al., 2017; Linder, 2015, Olsen, 2007; Robbins, 2012). Additionally, Cabrera et al. (2017)

developed a concise overview of Whiteness in higher education. In their monograph *Whiteness in Higher Education: The Invisible Missing Link in Diversity and Racial Analysis,* the authors identified key aspects of Whiteness. One aspect is *colorblindness* and that entails framing racial disparity as anything but racism (Bonilla-Silva & Foreman, 2000; Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Cabrera, et al., 2017). Bonilla-Silva (2014) posits that colorblindness is a *racial ideology* not a racial attitude. Colorblindness is a pathway for interpreting racial information in non-racial ways. This process serves to sustain structural racism and White supremacy. In the context of higher education, Lehman (2010) and Harper, Patton, and Wooden (2009) point out that resistance to affirmative action and other race-conscious policies is "rooted in colorblind racism" (Cabrera et al., p. 21). The colorblind lens dictates that all people are equal and deserve the exact same opportunities, approaches, policies and so on. This ideology dismisses the lived history of minoritized populations. The colorblind rationale is one basis used to challenge race neutral policies because this racial framework rationalizes that race neutral policies provide meritocratic and fair access to higher education (Yosso, Parker, Solózano & Lynn, 2004).

Another example is provided by Lewis, Chesler, and Forman (2000); they acknowledge that the long history of racism in the U.S. has created segregated living spaces. As a result, White students have lived in racially insulated spaces. As it pertains to higher education, White students enter colleges and universities without exposure to People of Color beyond what they experience in their racially insulated environment. The literature indicates that as a result of racial insulation, White students enter colleges and universities with a lack of racial awareness and limited skills to identify racial bias (Cabrera et al., 2017; Foreman & Lewis, 2015; Jayakumar & Adamian, 2017). The societal consequence of racism is that White students are afforded a privileged existence that entails increased chances for success (Tatum, 1997). White students often treat

these dynamics as a matter of coincidence than a consequence of "deeply embedded patterns of social dominance" (Lewis et al., 2000, p. 87). The benefits that racial privilege affords Whites over a lifetime provides a sense of satisfaction and can make them complicit in the reproduction of racial injustice (McIntosh, 1988; Kincheloe, 1999; Lewis, 2004). For instance, in a study of 12 White male students, Cabrera (2012) found that participants of the study continued to live in racially segregated sub-environments that left their racial ideologies unchallenged. Participants of the study tended to minimize the effects of *racism* unless it was *reverse racism*. Cabrera (2012) notes that the misunderstanding of racism was related to an individualized understanding of racism. Participants displayed the inability to understand racism in a broader context and structurally. This demonstrates participants were not aware of their positionality as Whites in a racialized hierarchy.

*Whiteness and the Connection to Emotions.* The connection between Whiteness and emotions is an emerging area in the literature. Matias (2015, 2016) and Cabrera et al. (2017) point out, that the majority of racial analysis tends to examine race from a cognitive framework with few studies focused on emotions Whites hold in regard to racism. Emotions are an important piece of the equation in the realm of the literature of Whiteness because emotions drive an individual's actions (Cabrera, 2014c). Cabrera and Spanierman (2015) underscore the notion that emotions are a central component of racial attitudes and may have consequences for the behavior White people exhibit towards race. In their work the *Emotions of White Racism and Antiracism*, Cabrera and Spanierman outline emotions of White racism and antiracism. Emotions include White apathy, White fear, and White melancholia, White rage, White guilt and shame, and White empathy. Although the authors focus on university students, they acknowledge that their conceptualization of the emotions of racism are applicable to Whites other than students.

Matias and Zembylas (2014) argue for the importance of questioning good-natured emotions (e.g., expressions of care and pity can be hidden expressions of disgust for People of Color). The authors demonstrate how White ideology can mistakenly convert feelings of disgust for People of Color into feelings such as sympathy, pity or caring. As the authors point out, these emotions are commonly expressed by White women in the teaching field. Matias and Zembylas (2014) focus their analysis on teaching candidates who are exploring Whiteness during their training process. They find that the reactions to this process exhibit the tendency to profess pity, love and caring for Students of Color are rooted in feelings of disgust. This finding underscores Matias' later work where she emphasizes that White women need to critically examine their own Whiteness if they are to be charged by the default of their profession to be masters of cultural competency of Students of Color (Matias, 2016).

In her reflective and theoretical paper "*Why do you make me hate myself?": Re-teaching Whiteness, abuse and love in urban teacher education,* Matias demonstrates an instance of this problem by using an example provided by a participant of her study. Although all of her candidates acknowledged that they were White and had White privilege, they articulated the benefits they accumulated over the course of their lifetime using the list provided by McIntosh (2001). The problematic nature of this answer is that White women in this study tended to apply the examples of this list to larger systematic issues such as police brutality towards communities of Color. As Matias (2016) phrases it, "Clearly, the emotional and racial contexts of my White teacher candidates were skewed by their inoculation of Whiteness" (p. 199). As a result of their Whiteness, these White women could not understand their privilege on systemic level. Matias outlines emotions such as White guilt, denial, rage, anxiety and loss White women default to when confronted or delve into race on a deeper level. Perhaps one of the most valuable aspects to

Matias' work on emotionality is the focus on the series of emotions exhibited by White women as they grapple with race. Instead of critically engaging racism and exploring how White privilege can be used to address racism, White teacher candidates resort to White guilt. This occurs after they are challenged about their surface level understanding of racism and forced to delve deeper in their understanding of racial issues. The authors point out the problematic nature of this issue as these teachers will be responsible for educating students of Color.

Cabrera et al. (2017) outline another approach to Whiteness, racism and emotions by Miguel Unzueta. His analysis focuses on White college students and finds that racial beliefs support the function of ego maintenance (Unzueta & Lowery, 2008; Cabrera et al., 2017). This is demonstrated by examining how White men frame affirmative action as "quotas" and distance themselves from aligning in any way with affirmative action. This allows for the establishment and preservation of a positive view of the self (Unzueta & Lowery, 2008). Cabrera et al. (2017) point out that if White men are hired in the job market, they can attribute that success as "being the best candidate". If they are turned down, they can attribute that to meeting "quotas" administered in hiring People of Color. Continuing with the theme of affirmative action, Unzueta, Gutiérrez and Ghavami (2010) found in a similar analysis of White women that their approach to affirmative (belief that it is a quota) also serves to maintain their ego. The difference is that White women are beneficiaries of affirmative action and the dynamic is subtler than that of White men. Alternatively, Unzueta et al. (2010) found that White women who perceive themselves as beneficiaries of affirmative action may report a sense of negative self-image. The maintenance of the White ego is a common theme with both White men and White women.

*Whiteness and Identity.* From an identity development perspective, Helms (1997) recognized the importance of individuals accepting the implication of their Whiteness. White

students use their insulated upbringing as a reference to determine who People of Color are and use their experiences as a tool to measure students of Color against (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Tatum, 1997). This plays out on college campuses in the form of Whiteness as normative. White students on college campuses tend to "experience themselves as White reflectively or reactively, rather than proactively" (Chesler, Lewis & Crowfoot, 2005, p. 83). The experiences of White students as the majority fuels the sense of racial invisibility. Race becomes invisible to these students and leads to a lack of understanding of their racial identity and their position within racial relations. This dynamic leads to a minimization of race in a general sense (Chesler et al., 2005). Thus, a sense of colorblindness develops, and the inability to see race leads Whites to perceive themselves to be free of racism or racist activity.

The road to racial awareness for Whites is a lengthy process and this process is the core of the literature focused on racial justice ally development. Theorist argue that in order to reach the advanced stages of racially identity development, Whites must learn to be comfortable with themselves as White people and People of Color (Helms, 1990). The term racial justice ally refers to White people who use their White privilege to join the struggle to end racism and racial oppression (Broido, 2000). Reason, Millar, and Scales (2005), presented a model that demonstrates the development of racial justice allies to promote ally development. The purpose of their research was to provide a mechanism for student affairs professionals to effectively encourage the development of racial justice allies. It is important to mention that the majority of the literature in this area focuses on students and does not address faculty and staff on college campuses (Cabrera et al., 2017). However, it does provide student affairs professionals with frameworks to guide the ally identity development process. While doing racial justice ally work, Rankin and Reason (2008) indicate the importance of sharing a common language to enable

dialogue. This is important as students grapple with what it means to be White and search for a definition for Whiteness in a world where the meaning of Whiteness shifts over time (Robbins, 2012; Omi & Winant, 2015). Thus, the long road to awareness as mentioned earlier.

The term ally is often used to illuminate the position of those in a dominant group who work with oppressed communities or individuals to be an ally. For instance, White individuals being allies to People of Color (Broido & Reason, 2005). A phenomenological study conducted by Broido (2000) examined the development process of students as social justice allies. The author found three components that aided participants in their social justice ally process. The three components are increased information on social justice issues, engagement in meaning making process and self-confidence (Broido, 2000). Broido expanded on earlier work (Washington & Evans, 1991) to define the concept of social justice allies. The term ally began to surface in the field of student affairs in the early 1990s (Broido, 2000) and since that time student affairs professionals have aimed to develop social justice allies as a key component of working towards social change within the profession. Spanierman and Smith (2017) point out that being an ally is challenging and emotional. A consequence of the challenging nature of allyship is that Whites can escape from the challenges of racial justice work unlike People of Color. Additionally, Whites can also claim to engage in social justice work and consider themselves to be decent people fighting against racial injustice while participating in systems of White hegemony and maintaining the status quo (Spanierman & Smith, 2017). For instance, it is common for those from a dominant group to attempt to impose predetermined ideas about what the community they are attempting to help needs. This is an instance of re-enforcing the unequal distribution of power and the “savior” approach to supporting marginalized communities. It is also important to note that the literature focused on allyship is mainly divided into two groups.

One in the area of racial allyship and the other is focused on social justice allyship with social justice allyship literature not necessarily focusing on racial justice (Cabrera, et al., 2017). These differences are an important aspect of the literature because this separation of allyship creates the opportunity for Whites to avoid addressing White privilege under the guide of the broader framework of social justice.

*White Privilege*

Peggy McIntosh (1988) provided the widely used definition of White privilege. McIntosh is one of the most cited authors on the subject of White privilege. Prior to McIntosh, studying Whiteness and White privilege was mostly abstract and intellectualized (Kendall, 2006). White privilege became more tangible through McIntosh's 26 examples from her own experiences. McIntosh (1988) described White privilege as "an invisible package of unearned assets" (p. 1). Individuals who possess this package are unaware that it exists but benefit from its contents (McIntosh, 1988). McIntosh likens White privilege to male privilege in that "Whites are carefully taught not to recognize White privilege, as males are taught not to recognize male privilege" (p. 1). The author further describes the interconnectedness of privilege using gender and race. Just as male privilege bestows male dominance, White privilege asserts and maintains White racial dominance.

Over the years McIntosh has added to her original list of examples of White privilege (McIntosh, 2004). Additionally, other authors have also added to McIntosh's observations of White privilege. For instance, Neville, Worthington and Spanierman (2001) describe White privilege as follows, "White privilege results from an identifiable racial hierarchy that creates a system of social advantages or 'special rights' for Whites based primarily on race rather than merit" (p. 261). This creates the assumption that White people are entitled to more than their

equitable share of resources and opportunities. Wilderman (2005) describes White privilege as an assertion and maintenance of White racial dominance. It is granted to White people through a relationship between systems, groups and individuals (McIntosh 1988; Neville et al., 2001; Bonilla-Silva, 2006). I will take this opportunity to distinguish between White privilege and White supremacy as they are not synonymous. Leonardo (2004) described the relationship between White supremacy and White privilege as "The conditions of White supremacy make White privilege possible" (p. 134). On a localized level, White privilege is the myriad of ways White people are bestowed benefits that emanate from the system of White supremacy. White privilege grants inherent racial dominance from birth (Gusa, 2010; McIntosh, 1988; Wilderman, 2005). Leonardo (2004), describes the relationship between White supremacy and White privilege as connected "the conditions of White supremacy make White privilege possible" (p. 137). In short, just as racism in its systemic form confers disadvantages to People of Color, we can conclude that White privilege confers advantages to White people (McIntosh, 1988).

*White Privilege on College and University Campuses.* Although there is a gap in the literature connected to White privilege in the student affairs work environment, examples of White privilege have universal application. As it pertains to this study, I believe it is important to place White privilege in the context of the workplace within a college campus. White people are often in positions of authority and have the power to make decisions that affect everyone without seeking input (Kendall, 2006). Another example is related to conversations and verbal interactions, White people receive more respect and status, and their comments are not discredited, limited, or acclaimed (Kivel, 2006). Wildman (1995) describes the sense of the workplace as defined by dominant cultural norms with an emphasis on neutral values and evaluations based on merit. As a result, the neutrality of the workplace masks the values that are

privileged in that environment. This idea aligns with Gusa's (2010) WIP presented earlier in this chapter because it underscores the normalization of Whiteness within a physical space meaning the institution. Whiteness becomes a "social and environmental norm" (Cabrera, et al., 2017). Ahmed (2007) tells us that an outcome of the normalization of Whiteness is that these spaces and institutions provide comfort for Whites. As it pertains to higher education, this sense of White comfort allows White students to avoid any type of racial discomfort and these environments are become spaces where Whites thrive. Cabrera, Watson and Franklin (2016) argue that within institutions of higher education the privileges afforded to White students allows them to ignore the emotional toll racism has on Students of Color on their campus. The authors examine campus ecology literature from the perspective of Critical Whiteness. Cabrera et al. (2016) explained that the issue of White social comfort and avoidance of racial turmoil "reinforce the normality of White space" (p. 130). As a result, White students reinforce the concept of ontological expansiveness (Sullivan, 2006) through entitlement to safe spaces. Thus, leaving students of Color feeling marginalized on their campus. Additionally, the reinforcement of White space does not allow White students to develop their racial selves and according to Cabrera et al. (2016), "keeping them in racial arrested development which continues to reproduce the existing racial hierarchy" (p. 130). This scholarship illuminates the limits of traditional campus ecology literature where this framework values comfort for all students equally. The authors call for an assertive pedagogy of racial agitation (Cabrera et al., 2016) to initiate racial dissonance for White students.

Patton and Bondi (2015) conducted a rare study that included administrators. The authors focused on the experiences of White male faculty and administrator. The authors explored how meaning was made of the realities of being an ally. The authors found that participants

positioned ally work on an individual level instead of investing energy and engagement in action that changes systems (e.g., policies, classroom practices...etc). Meaning that the focus was on the interpersonal exchange of being an ally. For instance, addressing daily exchanges such as derogatory comments would suffice as "action" but addressing systemic issues would be less of a focus or not at all. This results in the exclusion of ally work on an institutional level. An example of ally work on the individual level is addressing a fellow colleague or a student on pejorative language or advocating in hiring committees, incorporating readings in class focused on social justice issues or advising/mentoring students (Patton & Bondi, 2015). Overall, participants viewed themselves as working toward social justice in self-selected situations often ignoring the importance of disrupting structural inequities. The authors also pointed out that individual level ally work tends to garner immediate gratification such as feedback and validation (Patton & Bondi, 2015). These are the rewards for engaging in ally work on a micro-level. It is important to note that there is a need for White people to understand how White privilege manifests on an individual, institutional and systemic levels (Kendall, 2006). Failure to address oppression on a macro-level leaves the status quo in place.

*White Women and Privilege.* Trepagnier's (2005) study of well-meaning White women underscores the importance of racial self-awareness in White people. The author found that participants who reacted negatively to the expression "That's so White" lacked an awareness of their racial privilege. This phrase was perceived as racially demeaning to Whites and equated the phrase to "That's so Black". The understanding that Whites were over privileged in comparison to People of Color (Trepagnier, 2005) was not fully developed and fueled a sense of White victimization. The literature is clear in the historical description that although whites have historically played a fundamental role in the construction of race and racial categories, they often

claim to be beyond race and are colorblind (Bonilla-Silva et al., 2003; Frankenberg, 2003; Lewis, 2001, 2004; Trepagnier, 2005). Slatton and Feagin (2012) describe colorblindness from a structural perspective. The literature in this area examines the problematic tendency of the individualized approach to race without historical context and ignores that racism is embedded in social structures. Thus, this creates an environment where racial discrimination in its contemporary form continues to enable White privilege and White supremacy. The racism of the Jim Crow era rationalized the minortitized population's standing in society as a result of their biological inferiority, colorblind racism rationalizes minoritized population's standing in society in terms that Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich (2011) describe as, "the product of marketplace dynamics, naturally occurring phenomena, and their alleged cultural deficiencies" (p. 191). The omission of history and social structures reflects a failure to bring visibility to forms of racism that are embedded in everyday life through policies, communication and professional practices.

*White Women in HESA Programs*

The literature indicates that there is a distance between White people and race. White people do not view their daily experiences through a racial lens, therefore race is not their issue but the issue of People of Color (Lewis, 2004). This idea is supported by Frankenberg's (1993) finding that White people perceive race to be political and the concept of race can be pushed back into the sub-consciousness. Whereas for People of Color, racism is usually pushed into their consciousness as "a construct that organizes hardship and discrimination" (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 57). In Robbins' (2016) study of how White women learn about racism and White privilege in Higher Education and Student Affairs (HESA) Programs, Robbins found that participants encountered racial dissonance. Robbins and Jones (2016) describe racial dissonance in the following way, "When an individual's schema for making meaning of racial interactions no

longer makes sense or violates a moral principle" (p. 633). Meaning that White women were confronted with the racial reality of being White in a racial hierarchy. This experience often collides with the perceived racial reality held by Whites and results in an uncomfortable feeling of being a "bad" person (Boatright-Horowitz et al., 2012). While some White women in Robbins' (2016) study engaged racial dissonance by actively seeking out more information, others did not seek out active conversations on White privilege or actively avoided such conversations. Additionally, the diversity and multiculturalism experiences of participants in the study were not consistent (Robbins, 2016). Some HESA programs tended to give more attention to diversity education than others. Robbins (2016) underscores the importance of increased exposure to diversity education for White women in HESA programs.

The limited experience with complex issues related to diversity and identity is not enough to develop a deep racial consciousness and an action oriented anti-racist perspective into their work as student affairs professionals (Ortiz & Rhoads, 2000; Bowman, 2009; Robbins, 2016). The pitfall to this approach in graduate curriculum is the failure to center power, privilege and oppression in diversity education. This creates the risk of reproducing oppressive structural systems in the field of student affairs (Bondi, 2012; Robbins, 2016). The literature indicated that there is an inconsistency in the multicultural preparation of budding student affairs professionals in HESA programs. The profession would benefit from a comprehensive and consistent approach of multicultural education of new professionals. HESA curriculum is an important aspect of the literature and provides one angle that the role of White women in higher education has been explored. An insight into the HESA curriculum also provides an opportunity to understand how White women are prepared to deal with issues of campus climate and equity in students affairs.

While there have been numerous inquiries into White privilege, White college students and White male college students in higher education (Cabrera 2009, 2011, 2014a, 2014b and 2014c) there is a gap in the literature focused on White women and racism but this area of inquiry is growing. Authors (Frankenberg, 1993; Gillespie, Ashbaugh & DeFiore, 2002; McIntosh, 1988, 1989; Trepagnier, 2006) have focused on the role of White women in a racist system. In Trepagnier's (2006) foundational analysis of 25 self-proclaimed "non-racist" White women, the author found that passivity is common in well-meaning White people. There is a detachment from race issues that leads to inaction in the face of racist acts. Furthermore, passivity is a result of a fear of being viewed as racist as well as a confusion of what is racist (Trepagnier, 2006). This finding is underscored by Robbins (2016) in her study that explored how White women learned about racism in in HESA master degree programs. Robbins (2016) found that when confronting uncomfortable racial ideas in the classroom, White women often resist racial discourse in the form of silence. This finding aligns with Trepagnier's (2006) results that underscores the role of passivity in reproducing oppressive practices in society by describing that well-meaning White people reap the advantages of passivity (e.g., institutional racism and a racial divide) as Whites who intentionally engage in racist acts. Collins (1995) added a gender socialization component to this through her observation that women tend to be socialized to avoid conflict and voicing an opinion that might result in negative responses is intimidating.

In her examination of the experiences of six White feminist undergraduate women, Linder (2015) found that participants described grappling with guilt, shame and fear as obstacles to engaging in anti-racist behavior. Additionally, Linder (2015) found that the phase of guilt and shame in the White identity process often led White women to engage in an over-analysis when attempting to become racially self-aware. A fear of "hurting" People of Color, working toward

presenting oneself as an ally and inauthentic behavior towards People of Color were all results of overthinking their role in "racial" situations. However, Spanierman and Cabrera (2015) demonstrate, sometimes guilt can be productive in that it leads to anti-racist actions. In this study, guilt resulted in inaction in engaging authentically with People of Color due to a fear of appearing racist (Linder, 2015). This form of White guilt is an obstacle to critical reflection of racism because Whites feel personal responsibility for racism, become concerned with the "perception" that they are racist and avoid the development of an understanding of structural racism (Leonardo, 2004). Failing to act because of fear of appearing racist can be exhausting but for People of Color it is viewed as a reinforcement of White privilege, racism and White supremacy (Linder, 2015). The findings of these studies can have implications for White women in the professional environment in student affairs.

The fear of acting or addressing racism can affect the relationship White women in leadership positions develop with colleagues of Color. The literature demonstrates that White guilt and silence can affect the work and focus on diverse populations. Silence in the workplace due to fear of appearing racist or an over analysis can yield negative perceptions of White female administrators by colleagues and students of Color. Tatum and Knaplund (1996) conducted a study of eight White women educators who assumed positions of leadership in their school districts as part of an anti-racist initiative. They found that in the process of making social change White women did experience some changes in their relationships with family, friends and colleagues (Tatum & Knaplund, 1996). The literature also indicates that White women are engaged in more anti-racist work than White men potentially because of an understanding of sexism (Tatum & Knaplund 1996). The experience of one target identity may influence the tendency to be involved in racial justice work or support the formation of liberal racial

ideologies. The binary approach to racism does not capture the essence and many ways racism manifests on a daily basis. Racism is more complex and can manifest itself on a spectrum. Even the most liberal self-proclaimed "anti-racist" feminist can be racist on a spectrum.

Gillespie, Ashbaugh, and DeFiore (2002) further underscore the various areas of racism in that passivity is not the only method that leads to the institutionalization of racism. Gillespie et al. (2002), studied White women's in-classroom resistance to the study of White privilege, they found that White women often identify with a personal level approach to addressing racism. The authors described a subtle process where there is action to address family members and friend's racist language but not enough engagement in larger anti-racist activity. The authors state "The dwelling in the personal can inadvertently devalue the need for White middle-class women to undertake and participate in larger social reform movements" (Gillespie et al., 2002, p. 246). This dynamic is a result of what Leonardo (2004) describes as "A society that denies whites access to a sociological and critical understanding of racism" (p. 140). Meaning, Whites are not able to examine race as a structural issue. Instead, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, Whites remain static at the individual level.

*White Women in Student Affairs*

There is little research examining the racial identities of White women as student affairs professionals. As mentioned in Chapter 1, White women are overrepresented in comparison to People of Color in student affairs and hold almost half of all senior student affairs leadership positions (NASPA, 2015). Therefore, it is important to examine this growing demographic as the role of White women in student affairs expands into the role of VPSAs and other upper level positions. Studying the role of identity in student affairs is important because how professionals understand themselves and their racial role in society affects the work they do on colleges

campuses (Ashe, 2012). Thus, how White women in SAA perceive their role in the national racial discourse is of utmost importance to the future of the student affairs field.

Svoboda's (2012) study focused on the impact a working-class background has on White female student affairs professionals in higher education. The findings of this study indicate that social class of origin affect career advancement in student affairs. Additionally, class of origin also affect ideas White women have of work, labor and private relationships. Many participants in this study worked well over 60 hours a week because of the perception that student affairs work was not "real" labor (Svoboda, 2012). As a result, some participants reported that establishing a life-work balance was difficult for them. Additionally, participants reported being "out of step" with peers in graduate programs and their profession. This was a common feeling because most White women from lower social class backgrounds did not follow the traditional trajectory into student affairs. This means, they were usually older students when they enrolled in a HESA program, studied alongside peers without full-time work experience, and sometimes worked second jobs (Svoboda, 2012). These findings are relevant to this study because this finding underscores the idea of the masking of White privilege with class. Woodall (2013) states that White privilege can be "clouded by one's class position" (p.1) This is idea of masking White privilege is also addressed by Svoboda (2012) as she described that White women have navigated professional spaces in ways that are impossible for women of Color. A White woman can navigate away from class and use White privilege to her advantage. Thus, a subordinate identity does not eliminate the racial privilege enjoyed by Whites.

Accapadi's (2007) work is a rare example of an examination of White women in student affairs. She employs a case study approach in the examination of a difficult dialogue among student affairs professionals. The finding of the study unveiled how White women's reactions to

racism, even when well-intentioned can reinforce the marginalization of Women of Color. Thus, reinforcing White supremacy in the workplace. This reaction by White women to uncomfortable racial dialogues has been identified by DiAngelo (2011) as *White fragility*. White people in U.S. society have been living in environments that protects them from race-based stress (DiAngelo, 2011). This is what is referred to by scholars as racial insulation.

DiAngelo points out that racial insulation does two things; 1.) It builds the level of racial comfort for Whites. And 2.) It lowers White's ability to tolerate racial stress. According to Cabrera, Franklin and Watson (2017), racial insulation supports the unawareness in White people in regard to their Whiteness because the privileges associated with Whiteness are normal aspects of their day-to-day experience (Cabrera et al., 2017; Lewis, 2004; Tatum, 2000). This underscores what DiAngelo (2011) described as "Protective Pillows". This phrase refers to "the insulated environment of racial privilege" (p. 55) that provides racial comfort and protection from race-based stress for Whites. When confronted with inter-racial dialogue White women often use tears as a defensive move (Accapadi, 2007; DiAngelo, 2011). As mentioned earlier in this section, the work of Cheryl Matias (2016a) provides us with emotional identifiers used by White women to mask White shame. Matias outlines denial, rage, anxiety, loss, and guilt as emotional behaviors that underscore the various ways White women refocus the conversation away from the uncomfortable topic of race and focus the attention on their status as helpless, thus soliciting sympathy from peers.

In a professional setting, Accapadi (2007) demonstrated the concept of the one up/ one down identities and White women have White (one up) and women (one down) identities. White women's power comes from their Whiteness they are able to navigate in out of the gender identity. White women navigate womanhood differently from woman of Color. These

experiences are shaped by internal expectations from each woman's racial community as well as the external perceptions of womanhood (Accapadi, 2007; Palmer, 1983). The norms upheld by society allow White women to "toggle" their identities (Accapadi, 2007, p. 210). This is evident in work settings where White women can evade racial discussion and gravitate toward predominately White spaces. Both Palmer (1983) and Accapadi (2007) make it clear that women of Color cannot navigate between gender and racial identity in the same manner. For women of Color, all that they do is considered to be a representation of their respective racial community. This idea also underscores previously mentioned findings by Woodall (2013) and Svoboda (2012).

Accapadi's (2007) study also revealed the tendency of White women to dominate dialogue space. This emphasizes Frankenberg's (1993) finding that racism manifests in subtle ways such as dominating space. DiAngelo (2012) provides an example of this dynamic in the form of a workshop. In this instance, an African American man was in the midst of grappling with expressing his thoughts when a White woman interrupted him. DiAngelo (2012) points out that the White woman reinforced the idea that she could speak for the African American man. When the issue was addressed with the White woman she began to cry, an example of White fragility. Then most participants rushed to comfort her, leaving the Black man behind to watch this dynamic. This example is one of a microaggression (against the African American man) and a clear instance of racism manifesting itself in a setting similar to one that would take place in a student affairs work environment. This example also highlights the idea that as a system of structured relations, racism is something we are socialized into and intent is irrelevant (DiAngelo, 2011, 2012). Cheryl Matias (2016a) describes the emotional dynamics as "This hegemonic emotional domination renders People of Color as subordinate to the emotions felt in

Whiteness" (p. 69). Matias described the hegemonic power of Whiteness and its power to undermine racial dialogues from reaching their full potential when White emotions are valued above emotions of People of Color. Accapadi's work encompasses a rare focus on professional White women's role in reifying White privilege within setting. Her work fills a gap in the study of White women in student affairs from a professional perspective. Matias' work delves Both Accapadi and Matias establish a much-needed foundation for this study.

## Conclusion

One area of growth for the literature is a continued focus on the emotions that Whites and specifically White women exhibit as a result of grappling with race. The research in existence indicates that emotions are tied to action and may determine whether or not a White person engages their Whiteness. From a professional standpoint, behaviors such as communication styles, dress, and "professional demeanor" could be explored further. Another area is that there is not enough focused on professionals. It would be beneficial to examine how White women learn about race in mid and senior level positions in student affairs. Robbins (2012) observed that depending on what position White women have (senior or mid-level) their learning process may look different. It is critical to understand the influence of White women in the student affairs profession and their influence over an institutional campus climate. As professionals in student affairs, their level of influence surpasses that of undergraduates, graduates and depending on their professional positionality, their influence may surpass faculty in setting the tone for an institution. As professionals, White women have professional interactions that are different than students, they are usually older, may find it more difficult to unpack racial baggage and as administrators these women craft policies, supervise People of Color, and by the nature of their

roles they may address campus climate issues in student affairs. White women in these positions are critical in shaping the racial discourse within institutions of higher education.

## Chapter Three: Theoretical Frameworks

The purpose this section is to establish the theoretical framework to understand White women as student affairs professionals who navigate race in a professional environment. I will give an overview of Bonilla-Silva's colorblind racism framework as well as Cheryl Matias's work on deconstructing the emotionality of Whiteness as the theoretical lens for this study. The colorblind framework originates in the sociological discipline and is focused on examining the language used by Whites to express contemporary racial views. Although this framework has emerged from the sociological discipline, it utilizes components from social psychology and discourse analysis to analyze language and phrases used to describe racial phenomena. The emotionality of Whiteness uses a feminist of Color approach to deconstruct what Cheryl Matias called the emotionality of Whiteness in urban teacher education. This framework emerged from the examination of White teachers in the K-12 urban teaching profession who engage in culturally responsive teaching without questioning their own Whiteness. In this section, I will provide a brief historical overview of the frameworks, introduce the four frames that compose the colorblind racism framework and conclude with the introduction of the emotionality of Whiteness.

### Colorblind Racism

Before the Civil Rights Movement, legalized segregation in the form of [5]Jim Crow laws kept African Americans and other communities of Color subordinate during this period. This encompassed legal restrictions that kept People of Color in the in unskilled occupations with few opportunities for upward economic mobility. Racism was direct and unfiltered both in

[5] Jim Crow refers to the formal codified system of racial apartheid that was reinforced by local governments and acts of terror. This system dates back to the 1890s and enforced the racial order of segregation.

interpersonal exchanges as well as institutional structures that blatantly kept People of Color "In their place". After the Civil Rights Movement, the norm surrounding expression of racial viewpoints has evolved into a carefully crafted, indirect coded form of language (Bonilla-Silva, 2001, 2009, 2014). Discussing race directly can come across as shocking because it violates an increasingly rigid norm that race should not be discussed openly and freely (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Harper, 2012). The overt expressive form of race was driven underground in the Post-Civil Rights era but still very much a part of the discourse in terms of perceptions of White racial victimization. Within the contemporary racial balance in U.S. society, the foundation for White racial comfort is built upon norms of inequality and one of these norms is to avoid open discussion of race, particularly in cross-racial groups (DiAngelo, 2012). Now that it is less acceptable to discuss race openly, the language and manner of addressing race in the U.S. has evolved into a more nuanced approach.

There are several empirical studies and academic discussions (Edsall & Edsall, 1992; Feagin & Vera, 1995; Lopez, 2015) that place the social dynamic of race in context but that is far beyond the scope of this study. What is important to understand is that when the norm of avoiding open racial discussion is broken, especially through the challenge of racial inequities, it becomes uncomfortable and destabilizing for many Whites (Bonilla-Silva, 2012; DiAngelo, 2012). Whites will work to regain a sense of White racial comfort in a discussion by avoiding the topic of race, minimizing it, rationalizing or distancing themselves. This dynamic has been labeled colorblind racism by Bonilla-Silva (2001, 2014). Colorblindness refers to the distortion, denial and minimization of race and racism in the U.S (Bonilla-Silva, 2003, 2014; Thompson & Nevill, 1999). This term is used to describe the ideology used by Whites to justify and describe racial inequality in contemporary society. The sociological relevance of colorblindness is that the

focus of treating everyone as equals without regard to race is that White people who are not likely to experience disadvantages due to race can more easily ignore racism. On the contrary, People of Color who experience disadvantage due to race, experience colorblindness differently. The colorblind ideology creates a society that ignores the racial struggles of People of Color. Furthermore, colorblindness invalidates People of Color's unique perspectives and dismisses their racial heritage (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). As a result of this colorblind dynamic, any mention of Whites as a racial group from People of Color creates a jolting reaction from the public (Lopez, 2015). It is important to remember that social dynamics of race manifest on college and university campuses through the work of administrators, staff and students (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Omi & Winant, 2015). My purpose is to use the colorblind racism framework to identify hidden racial expressions and defensive moves used during racial discourse. As I indicated in the previous chapter, the subject of race has evolved into a more nuanced form of White supremacy. The colorblind frame work will be useful in detecting nuances and hidden discursive practices. I will now focus describing the conceptual framework that guides this study.

*Overview of Colorblindness Framework*

In order to frame this study, I rely on both Bonilla-Silva's (2014) four frames of colorblind racism as well as Cheryl Matias' concept of emotionality of Whiteness. The colorblind racial framework is a sociological framework that consists of four frames *(abstract liberalism, naturalization, cultural racism, and minimization of racism*) and it was developed by sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva in the early 2000s. Together with elements from the social psychological discipline and discourse analysis, Bonilla-Silva developed the four frames of the colorblind framework to form a tool to examine discourse that can be referred to as an interpretive repertoire (Bonilla-Silva & Embrick, 2001). This refers to systems that convey

meaning and are composed of groups of "terms, descriptions, and figures of speech often assembled around metaphors or vivid images" (Wetherwell & Potter, 1992, p. 90). Interpretive repertoires are a way of understanding the content of discourse and it is focused on language use not linguistics.

The first element is common frames, and this refers to topics that are fundamental to maintain or challenge the racial order. The second element is style or racetalk and this refers to individualistic methods of using language and semantic moves that are used to articulate viewpoints on race. The third element is racial stories, and this refers to narratives used repeatedly in justifications or criticisms used to maintain or challenge racial privilege (Bonilla-Silva, 2001; Bonilla-Silva Embrick, 2001). Since ideology is expressed through communication, this framework will be useful in identifying subtle uses of language used to express views on race and privilege among a sample of White females who are student affairs professionals. Bonilla-Silva uses the colorblind racism framework on examples of data excerpts from studies he conducted in the late 1990s. The first survey was called *Survey of Attitudes of College Students,* which was conducted in 1997 and *Detroit Area Survey (DAS*) which was conducted in 1998 both are used to demonstrate colorblind race talk. This type of rhetorical approach to a discussion focused on race avoids racist terminology while employing semantics that maintain the racial order.

Colorblindness is a result of the evolution of racism from an overt form into a more nebulous practice that is institutional, subtle and "non-racial" (Bonilla-Silva, 2001, 2014; Reason & Evans, 2007). Race, as it is framed through a colorblind lens, is a thing of the past. As a result of this ideology, current inequalities among racial groups are attributed to other factors such as class or cultural deficits and are not systemic. In colleges and universities, colorblindness can be

subtle and manifests itself through attitudes and behaviors from White students, staff and faculty. Examples include the expectation that students of Color assimilate to predominately White university (PWI) environments, the expectation that students, faculty and staff of Color will be responsible for addressing "multicultural" issues on college campuses and the assumption that all students are provided an equitable opportunity to succeed in higher education. Past research indicates that a higher level of colorblindness among White students is related to higher levels of modern racism, a belief in a just world (Awad, Cokley, Ravitch, 2005; Neville et al., 2000), negative attitudes against affirmative action and greater fear of racial minorities (Awad et al., 2005). Additionally, a higher level of colorblindness has been associated with lower levels of openness to diversity, less engagement in campus related diversity activities and diversity curriculum (Spanierman, Neville, Liao, Hammer, & Wang, 2008). Furthermore, a higher level of colorblindness is also associated with a more positive view of campus climate than those with lower color-blind racial attitudes. (Worthington, Navarro, Loewry, & Hart, 2008). The findings just described serve as clear evidence for the need to identify and address color-blindness on college campuses. Albeit these findings are from studies examining students, the result of these studies can be transferable to White administrators in higher education (Chesler et al., 2005). As mentioned earlier, colorblindness has emerged as a dominant racial ideology in the United States (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Crenshaw, 1997). In this era of contemporary racism, the dominant culture has stigmatized the old-fashioned racism from the Jim Crow era. Yet, it concurrently discourages efforts to raise racial issues and mobilize racial consciousness (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Chesler, et al., 2005). Furthermore, colorblind racism creates a tool for the dominant culture to challenge social policies and programs that redistribute social resources to ameliorate the historical impact of institutional racism. These policies and programs include efforts to increase access for People

of Color to attend and thrive at selective institutions. One instance of structural colorblindness is the diversity rationale. The diversity rationale is the argument that a diverse student body provides the conditions that broadens the viewpoints to promote creativity in thought that leads to analytic thinking skills (Chang & Ledesma, 2011). The diversity rationale was used to support affirmative action in higher education by Supreme Court Justice Lewis Powell. The rationale does not consider racism in admissions but rather it is allowed because it improves the educational experience for all students.

The subject of race is palpable in public discourse. The media, pop culture and the current political climate all serve to frame contemporary racial discourse in a dominant manner. We read, watch and listen to racial topics focused on police brutality and the failure to prosecute officers, free speech, and politics. As People of Color voice their opinions and speak about their experiences in this racialized society, they are met with resistance from White people. White resistance in recognizing racial inequalities is expressed in different forms such as using logic to distance themselves from the topic of race, nuanced language indicating disagreement or refuting the lived experiences of People of Color. Additionally, narratives that propose everyone has an equal opportunity to be successful and failure or success are based on our individual merits leads to rationalization, and denial about the obstacles People of Color face and the privileges enjoyed by Whites (Chesler et al., 2005). As I turn to examine the four frames of colorblind racism, I focus on them as a lens to decipher and identify White racial discomfort and colorblindness.

*The Frames of Colorblind Racism.* The four frames of colorblind racism are abstract liberalism, naturalization, cultural racism, and minimization of racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). Abstract liberalism is at the core of colorblind racism. This frame involves ideas associated with political (equal opportunity) and economic (choice and individualism) liberalism. Under the

frame of abstract liberalism, racism is an individual and is used by Whites to emphasize the "pull yourself up by your bootstraps" myth. An example of this is the belief that People of Color just need to work hard to achieve their aspirations without any special support such as affirmative action or other "special" services. The idea of reverse racism can fall into this frame as well. Reverse racism (or reverse discrimination) developed in the 1970s. Reverse racism gives racial actors the ability to refer to racially inclusive policies as racist (Omi & Winant, 2015). The logic that is employed to support reverse racism is that policies such as affirmative action support the racist tactics they are meant to address. The result is the idea that Whites are punished simply because they want access to the same resources as historically marginalized groups.

The second frame is the naturalization frame and this centers around the justification that racial inequities are a result of natural occurrences. An example is the idea that racial groups segregate because people gravitate toward their own racial group and it is a natural occurrence. Under this frame, the myth of non-racialism is reinforced by the insertion of phrases such as "that is the way it is" or "its natural" to describe actions that "could be otherwise interpreted as racially motivated (racial segregation) or racist (preference for Whites as friends and partners)" (Bonilla-Silva, 2014, p. 85). This frame contextualizes racial dynamics as "choices". Individuals may choose to live in predominantly African American or White neighborhoods. The naturalization frame allows Whites to claim that segregation and preferences are a result of a normal social process and not discrimination. Although segregation on a several levels (residential, education, relationships...) are attributed to "choice", social scientists have recorded how racial considerations affect segregation (Bonilla-Silva, 2015). Bonilla-Silva (2015) gives a clear example of the affect this dynamic has on housing:

> "residential segregation is created by White buyers searching for White neighborhoods and aided by realtors, bankers and sellers. As White neighborhoods develop, White schools follow an outcome that further contributes to the process of racial isolation" (p. 87).

The underlying motivation of these "choices" is race. Under this frame of colorblind racism, choice then becomes a mask for race. It is not a natural occurrence but a conscious choice to live with other Whites in a racially insulated area.

The third frame is the cultural racism frame and this framework frames minoritized group's cultural and family values as dysfunctional. This framework relies on culturally based arguments such as "Asians are good at math" or "Blacks do not value education" to explain racial inequities as resulting from assumed group characteristics. This framework has superseded the biological racism ideology in importance and can be thought of as a revision of the biological framework. Biological racism asserts that minoritized people's standing in society is a result of their biological inferiority. Under the cultural racism framework People of Color's cultural practices are a fixed feature. For example, one may not believe that Mexicans or African Americans are no longer biologically inferior, but they are criticized or attacked for their assumed lack of hygiene, lack of discipline, violence or laziness. People of Color are inferior because of their culture. Due to the nature of colorblind racism, Whites may not realize that racism is rooted in the discourse of cultural deficiency. Under this frame, Whiteness and White supremacy are conveyed through representations of negative characterizations of cultures. These representations affirm Whiteness while simultaneously subordinating People of Color. Bonilla-Silva has referred to this framework as dangerous because of the extensive nature that mirrors what biological racism used to be in the past. As a result, it allows Whites to safely express

resentment and hostility towards People of Color by blaming them for their current social situation.

The fourth frame is the minimization frame and under this frame racism no longer plays a significant role in the U.S. and described as follows, “it suggests discrimination is no longer a central factor affecting minorities’ life chances” (Bonilla-Silva, 2014, p. 77). Under this frame discrimination is overt and contemporary racism is disregarded. The minimization frame advances the assumption that racism only involves “abnormal” or “unacceptable” acts that are not socially acceptable. Only a true racist such as someone from a hate group would commit a racist act. This allows Whites to deny racial prejudice by assuming that they do not hold racist viewpoints because their actions are not overt in nature. Thus, when People of Color allege racism they can be accused of being “hypersensitive”, “playing the race card” or being too race conscious. Furthermore, it is difficult to include most racially motivated actions by individual Whites because the threshold of considering an act racist is high. Thus, the denial of racial inequities expressed by People of Color. The dominant group perceives racism as an issue of the past and ceased to exist after the Civil Rights Movement. The minimization frame invalidates the existence of discrimination in society and discredits the impact race has on the lives of People of Color.

A recent development within the colorblind framework was made by Jayakumar and Adamian (2017). The authors utilized Bonilla-Silva’s (2003, 2014) four frames of colorblind racism in their study focused on White undergraduate experiences at HBCUs. The findings of this study produced what the authors refer to as a fifth emerging frame of colorblind racism. Jayakumar and Adamian (2017) coined the fifth frame as the disconnected power analysis frame and this frame fell outside of the scope of the four frames of colorblind racism. It is important to

clarify that this added finding by the authors may not have the explanatory power of the other four frames. This emerging piece of research has yet to be interrogated vigorously by other scholars. Yet, I believe that it will be helpful in interpreting some of the data that falls outside of the scope of the original frames.

The essence of the disconnected power analysis frame is that "it aligns with Whites ability to align with racially progressive theoretical understandings of structural racism, Whiteness, and counter narratives that challenge racial hierarchy while disconnecting from a critical analysis of their own positionality, personal narratives, experiences and/or actions" (Jayakumar & Adamian, p. 918). This suggests that there is a sophistication to navigating race by Whites. The authors noted that their data revealed an evolved (Jayakumar & Adamian, 2017) form of Bonilla-Silva's (2003, 2014) four colorblind frames. As noted by Jayakumar and Adamian (2017), White students entering HBCU's enter an environment where there is historical commitment to decentering Whiteness. These students are in an environment where they must address race through the curriculum, compositionally, and symbolically (e.g., images of African American scholars, artists, and scientists on campus). One potential outcome could be a heighted sense of White fragility (Jayakumar & Adamian, 2017). The participants of this study may not experience the same historical commitment to decentering Whiteness in their respective institutions, but it would be helpful to identify whether or not they navigate the work environment with the level of sophistication suggested by this additional finding related to the colorblind framework. As I mentioned earlier in this section, although this framework is not a part of the original framework (Bonilla-Silva, 2003, 2014), I kept the fifth frame in mind as I analyzed the data. This new development pertains to the student population, but I believe it is

important to be open to the possibility that the disconnected power analysis frame may emerge within the findings of this study.

These frames are not linear and are used in combination as White's express their racial ideology. All frames within the colorblind framework protect White hegemony by deflecting attention away from the systemic nature of racism and in a sense, insulate Whites from racial reality. Additionally, Bonilla-Silva (2014) described these frames as expressed by Whites in "various emotional tones" (p. 78) ranging from anger, disgust, and sympathy. Furthermore, the flexibility of these frames allows Whites to navigate different contexts such as family, social and professional settings. This allows individuals to build different representations (images) of themselves in different settings. This is similar to what Picca and Feagin (2007) describe as "front door" and "back door" racism. Where Whites are politically correct in front of peers of Color but in predominately White groups they articulate offensive racial viewpoints. One potential shortcoming of Bonilla-Silva's colorblind racism framework is its reliance on twenty-year-old data from the *Survey of Attitudes of College Students* and *DAS.* Overall, its strength lies in the flexibility and recognizing otherwise "neutral" language. Along with the colorblind framework, Cheryl Matias' emotionality of Whiteness framework is used as a theoretical lens for this study.

## The Emotionality of Whiteness

Cheryl Matias' framework focuses on the racialized state of emotions. The emotionality of Whiteness framework stems from her focus on White urban teachers in the K-12 education system who according to Matias (2016) make up 90% of the U.S. teacher workforce. Another focus of this framework is to provide an understanding of "the underlying sentimentalities and emotionalities that resist socially-just concepts" (p. 6). Matias' approach to emotions is to focus

on the social institutions that structure our emotions. For instance, White supremacy in regard to racism, heterosexism in regard to same sex relationships, patriarchy in regard to sexism and so on. The emotions we experience are both innate and social (Matias, 2016). The research that framed the emotionality of Whiteness focused on the fact that the majority of teachers in the K-12 field are White women and the majority of the teachers who educate teacher candidates are also White women (Matias, 2016). This dynamic is an important aspect of this framework because it highlights how hegemonic Whiteness occurs with this racial structure in place. In other words, the dominant racial ideology of Whiteness is reproduced within the field of teacher education. It is when colorblind racism is interrupted that Whites resort to emotional defense mechanisms.

Figure 1.0 (At the end of the chapter) demonstrates the emotionality of Whiteness is in the middle surrounded by colorblindness with various emotional responses present. Colorblindness with the four frames surrounds the emotionality of Whiteness. The frames are not linear, and the image is meant to demonstrate that they are present within the outer circle. When White women use the colorblind framework to address racism, most often there are emotions attached to their responses or to the disruption of the colorblind frame of thought (Matias, 2013, 2016; Matias & DiAngelo, 2013). The inner circle is meant to show the residual effects of interrupting colorblind racism which are but not limited to denial, self-victimization, helplessness, guilt, disgust, anger, defensiveness and blatant disrespect. The outer circle represents the colorblind racism framework. It is important to point out that the emotionality of Whiteness may also drive the use of the colorblind framework. This image is not meant to illustrate a static relationship but rather illustrate how these frameworks fit within one another. On the outer circle are the four frames of colorblind racism (abstract liberalism, naturalization,

cultural, and minimization). The components of both the colorblindness and the emotionality of Whiteness (inner and outer circle) overlap and feed into one another to uphold the White supremacist racial structure.

In her article *On the "Flip" Side: A Teacher Educator of Color Unveiling the Dangerous Minds of White Teacher Candidates*, Matias (2013) began to outline the foundation for the emotionalities of Whiteness framework by examining the narrative of the well-intentioned White women who enter urban schools to save People of Color from themselves. Matias focuses on the concept of White saviority as White teachers who are "willing" to sacrifice themselves to "save" or as Matias (2013) puts it "humanize" students of Color. One concept of White diss-course is used by Matias in relation to colorblindness and is rooted in the work of Bonilla-Silva and Embrick (2006). This refers to the discursive maneuvering Whites engage in when engaging in "normative discussions of race without ever uttering the word race" (Matias & DiAngelo, 2013, p. 3). The authors point out that while engaging in this type of discourse, Whites reuse racist discourse. The "diss" aspect of the term refers to the insulting nature of the concept. This Matias uses it to equate the concept of "dissing" or insulting People of Color in the form of racial ignorance. This allows Whites to assume the position of racial experts despite claiming not to see race. Thus, hurting People of Color in the process engaging White diss-course. By avoiding White as a racial identity, Whites are exercising their White privilege because People of Color cannot opt out of being raced or marked as a race (Matias 2013). Matias focuses on addressing feelings as part of doing anti-racist work. Her rationale is that there must be an investment in emotions to create change within the racist structure. Matias highlights the importance for Whites in her specific situation, White teacher candidates, to understand the dehumanizing effects of racism so they can re-learn the hurt connected to racism (Matias, 2013, 2016).

Matias highlights how behaviors, rhetoric, attitudes, emotions and philosophical stances can be mechanisms used to exert Whiteness. This can come from well-intentioned liberal Whites. Matias frames these mechanisms as traumatic, passive aggressive, violent (Leonardo & Porter, 2010) and contrary to the goals of racial justice for People of Color. The author draws out the colorblindness embedded in her training as an urban K-12 teacher to address the tears this framework draws from students of Color (Matias, 2013b). Matias also uses Leonardo and Porter's (2010) application of repressed violence to frame the notion of White violence. Within this framework of symbolic violence, the author is clear in that a sense of safety is false for People of Color while engaging in race dialogues (Leonardo & Porter, 2010; Matias, 2013b). This upholds what Matias refers to as the narcissism of Whiteness. White dominant policies, curricula as well as teacher education pipeline maintain this form of violence. When White supremacy is disrupted Whites exhibit "anger, avoidance, guilt, dismissal, and repression" (Matias, 2013b, p. 188). In turn, students of Color must learn to create a sense of safety by navigating these racial dynamics by going along with the program or as Leonardo and Porter phrase it "become masters of deflection" (p. 151). These dynamics frame the status quo of education that leaves so many students of Color in tears. Teacher candidates are trained to be masters of cultural competencies, but they are not trained to question their own Whiteness (Matias, 2016b). These conditions allow for the hegemonic positionality of Whiteness as the focal point of racial discourse. Thus, White hegemony reconceives race in favor of White interests (Matias, 2016). One outcome of this is the creation of an environment where Whites emotions are unrestricted. They are able to exert their emotional dominance over People of Color in an environment that values White emotions. Although the emotionality of Whiteness

framework stems from Matias's K-12 teaching experience, it is applicable to this study as the focused is White women in higher education.

*Emotionality and White women*

Although Matias uses the emotionality of Whiteness lens to interrogate Whiteness in the K-12 field of education, there is a focus on White women. This theoretical lens aligns with the subject of this study as it highlights the series of emotions displayed by Whites as they confront race. Within the scope of this framework the focus on emotional responses to race as a necessary process to the progress toward racial justice will support the examination of data that fall out of the colorblind racism framework. The literature demonstrates that White women use emotions as deflections and shields while engaging in racial discourse or confronting their own Whiteness. Matias (2016) emphasizes that emotions are always present in work focused on race and they are both innate and defined by social forces. Thus, the emotional reactions exhibited by both Whites and People of Color during race work. The author describes this as follows, "If White supremacy, upheld by the ideological beliefs in Whiteness continues to maintain racial power structure, then the emotions subjected to such a structure will also be impacted by it" (Matias, 2016, p. 5). To demonstrate this Matias addresses the response to White women crying in comparison to women of Color. The socialization of Whiteness becomes racialized when one person of one race (White women) have more right to shed tears than the other (Matias, 2013, 2016). The tears of White women are portrayed the result of well-intentioned attempts to save People of Color from themselves and receive much deserved sympathy because of their "strength" to tolerate People of Color. As a consequence, the tears of White women are perceived as an aspect of their innate goodness while the tears of People of Color are not recognized in the same vein.

The emotionality framework unlocks the feelings of Whiteness and the reasons for the emotionalities of Whiteness. Matias and DiAngelo (2013) delved into emotionality and described it as the "interplay between cognitions and emotions" (p. 3) using the term emo-cognition. The authors explain that although these behaviors are generated by Whites, they hold implications for People of Color. The emo-cognitive responses to the disruption of colorblind racism are conceptualized by Matias and DiAngelo. The authors also underscore recognizing the predictability of White responses when Whites uncomfortably discuss race (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Matias & DiAngelo, 2013). Yoon (2012) alludes to the changing nature of Whiteness as 'Whiteness is elastic because it is contextually nuanced expressions of Whiteness have changed over time in public imagination, discourse and social climate" (p. 590). This "elastic" quality if you will, allows Whiteness to maintain itself as the dominant ideology. Yoon (2012) illustrates this through an examination of a study group made up of White women teachers whose intent was to address equity issues in the classroom. One finding is that well-intentioned White women in this study engage in the normalization and reinforcement of Whiteness through a pedagogy of politeness. This can manifest itself through the silencing of racial discourse by forcing White and DiAngelo (2013) connect the politeness to their concept of White neurosis. This encompasses White responses to the disruption of colorblind racism and can take the form of silence, denial and incomprehensible discursive expressions to name a few.

## Conclusion

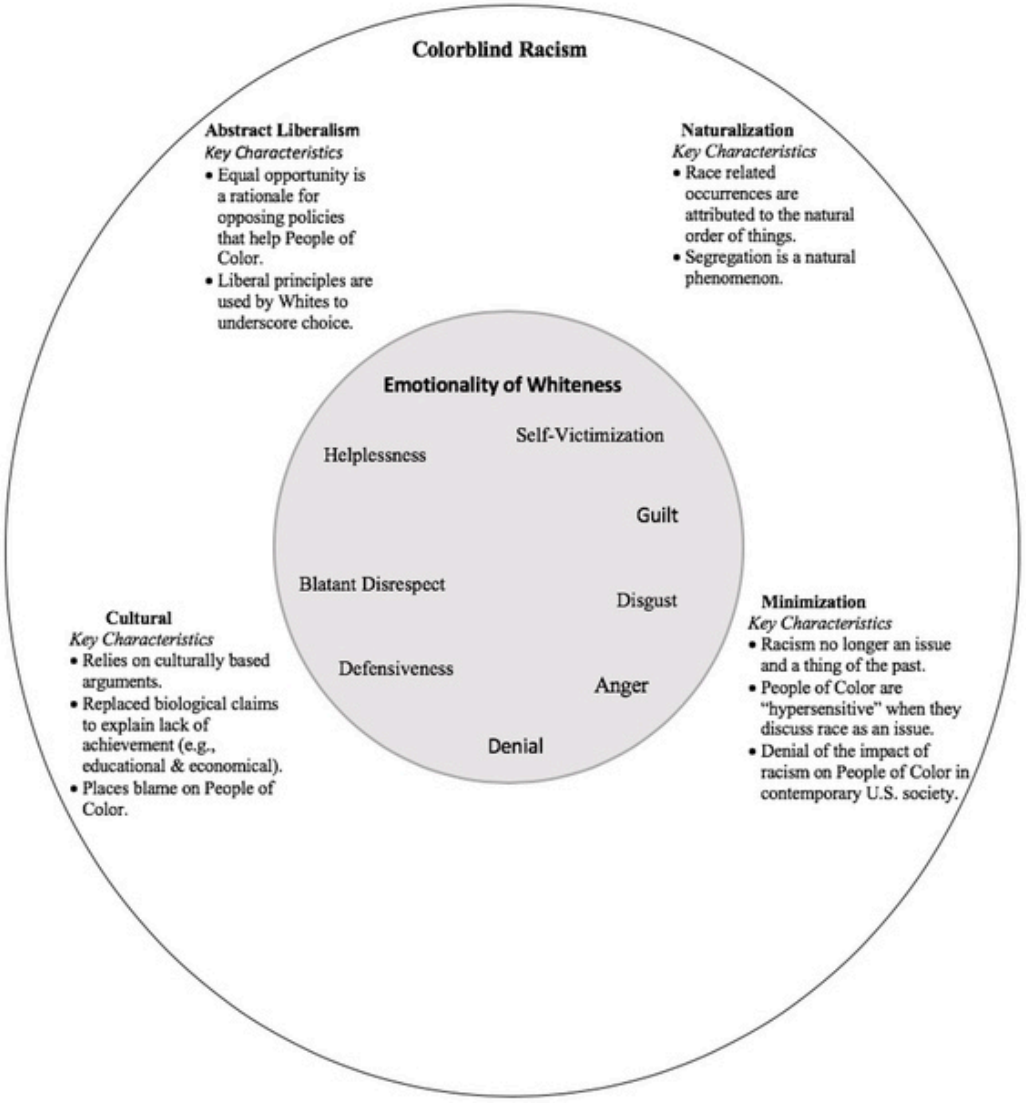
Harper and Patton (2007) describe colorblindness as "Instead of tackling realities of race, it is much easier to ignore them by embracing colorblind ideologies…it creates a lens through which the existence of race can be denied, and the privileges of Whiteness can be maintained without any personal accountability" (p. 3). As a result of this tendency to avoid race, White

people have developed a subtle and hidden method of expressing racial views. Bonilla-Silva argues that Whites use colorblind racism to absolve themselves from addressing racial differences (Bonilla-Silva, 2009, 2014; Harper, 2012). When colorblindness is interrupted there are emotional reactions that do not necessarily fall within the framework of colorblindness. Reactions expose the emotional aspect of racism as demonstrated by Whites. When the process of racial avoidance is disrupted, the subtle method of expressing racial views is brought to the forefront through emotional reactions. Matias (2013, 2014, 2016) unpacks these emotions for us in the form of a framework designed to capture the emotions and analyze their meanings. Adding the emotionality of Whiteness will take the analysis beyond the discursive.

The dynamics between colorblindness and emotions are present in the professional environment in student affairs. It is well known that the professional field of student affairs is tasked with responding to issues of race on college campuses (ACPA_NASPA, 2015). Furthermore, it is expected that student affairs professionals are exposed to training focused on multiculturalism and racial identity to "Effectively facilitate dialogue about issues of social justice, inclusion, power, privilege, and oppression in one's practice" (ACPA_NASPA, 2015, p. 31). Despite the focus on multiculturalism, student affairs remain a predominately White profession with White women holding almost half of all senior level positions in the field (NASPA, 2015; Robbins, 2012). White women in student affairs who participate in this study may not exhibit overt racist tendencies. Rather, some responses collected in this study are expected to align with the style of colorblind racism and the emotionality of Whiteness. This idea is supported by Bonilla-Silva's (2002; 2014) analysis of language and Matias' analysis of emotions.

Figure 1.0

The Colorblind Racism and Emotionality of Whiteness Circle




Adapted from Bonilla-Silva, E. (2014). Racism without racists: Color-blind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in America. (4th ed.) Rowman & Littlefield.
Matias, C. E. (2016). Feeling white: Whiteness, emotionality, and education. Boston, MA: Sense Publishers.

## Chapter Four: Methodology

In this chapter, I outline my methodology for this study on White women in student affairs. I introduce my research design and describe my analysis process. Bonilla-Silva (2014) argued that without a qualitative element to his research, he would not have been able to extract the stylistic and narrative components of colorblindness as well as the central components of contemporary racism. For this reason, I utilized qualitative methods with a multi-site case study design. The strength of qualitative studies is that they "account for and include difference - ideologically, epistemologically, methodologically and most importantly humanly" (Merriam 2009, p. 52). This approach allowed me to capture the experience White women in student professionals have in navigating race within their professional environment. These experiences varied based on age, racial self-awareness, sexual orientation and length of career. The multi-site case study approach provided an opportunity to examine these differences between institutions.

Although the body of literature focused on how the racially dominant contribute, reinforce and sometimes work against racism is expanding, examination of White women in higher education is less common. Given this context, I chose the following questions for this study:

*1.) How do White Women in student affairs navigate race in the work environment?*

*2.) What role do their various identities have in their overall understanding of race?*

*3.) How does their day-to-day professional practice reinforce or challenge White supremacy?*

### Research Design

The case study method has been in existence since the beginning of history (Flyvbjerg, 2011). Contemporary qualitative case study research methods is said to be rooted in the

disciplines of anthropology, sociology, history, and psychology (Merriam, 1998; Simons, 2009; Stewart, 2014). This methodology appeared in the early twentieth century and was used to investigate other cultures and gave way to the emergence of field studies (Johansson, 2003). Other disciplines such as social work and medicine also utilized the case study method and helped fuel the first generation of case studies. In the early part of the twentieth century, sociologists at the University of Chicago utilized the anthropological approach to this method to study society within the university's surroundings (Johansson, 2003). Other disciplines that began to utilize the case study approach is Law and Psychology. Case study research is the study of a case within a real-life context or setting (Yin, 2009). A case study design is found in many fields of study and is bound by time and activity. In this methodological approach, the researcher explores a current bounded system (a case) over time, through detailed, in depth data collection such as observations, audiovisual material, documents and reports (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Yin 2009). Case studies are similar to other qualitative approaches in that the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis (Merriam, 1998). A case is the study of a bounded system meaning a unit with boundaries (Merriam, 1998) and it could be a person, community, program, group or policy. The investigative strategy is inductive with a detailed description of the data (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). In this research approach, the researcher focuses on one phenomenon to explore and aims to uncover related characteristics.

In order to explore the experience of White women with race along with their perception of the role they occupy within the racial discourse in the student affairs profession, I used a multi-institution case study approach for this study. Yin (1994) describes the case study methodology as a useful approach to investigating contemporary phenomena. Case study research calls researchers to investigate a problem within a real-life context and answer questions

of “How?” and “Why?” instead of “What?” (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009). Although case studies are filled with thick descriptions, this approach pushes the researcher to study the case(s) beyond description (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009) and venture into asking in depth questions. The issue of race is a central focus of this study and this complex phenomenon is affected by the context and setting. The multisite case study allows for greater variation across cases and allows for more convincing interpretation of data (Merriam, 1998). According to Yin (2003), the multi-site case study approach provides the researcher with the opportunity to explore differences within and between cases. As a result of this approach, I will be able to compare and contrast the data across institutions. The evidence created from this approach will be considered more robust and reliable by strengthening the validity, external validity and generalizability of the study (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009). This specific study will focus on two institutions of higher education.

University X is a selective research one institution and University Y is a comprehensive university. Both institutions are located on the west coast of the United States. As mentioned earlier, the focus of the study is race and this approach is also the preferred method to investigate contemporary events and subjects (Yin, 2003). The subject of race evolves with society and it is important to approach this subject with a flexible approach. An additional strength of the case study approach is that it can deal with a variety of evidence such as both participant and direct observations, artifacts, archival records, documents, and interviews (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2003). For these reasons, I will collect data from two institutional sites with different settings and surroundings that will allow me to compare and contrast data. Additionally, a complex phenomenon such as race is affected by the institutional culture, student affairs focus on equity as well as the surrounding community. The differences will allow for cross-case analysis that can

illuminate what areas of similarities and differences lie within the data. Within the context of this study, the multisite case study allows for consideration of whether a rural setting v. an urban setting can affect how participants think about race in the professional setting. Additionally, the structural diversity of these institutions will provide the opportunity to examine whether participants' cross-racial interactions affect their attitude towards race (e.g., prejudice and or bias).

*Strength and Weaknesses of Case-Studies*

There are strengths and weaknesses in the case study research design. One strength of the qualitative case study method is the ability to examine multiple sources of data and develop an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. Yin (2009) indicates that there are six data sources of evidence in a case study and they are documentation, archival records, interviews, direct and participant observations, and artifacts. For the purpose of this study, I used documentation, interviews and artifacts as data sources for this study. This gives the researcher the ability to triangulate data from multiple sources. The goal of triangulation is to corroborate the facts and or the phenomenon (Yin, 2009). The case study method is designed to understand a phenomenon in depth. The issue of race is complex, but the selection of this design will allow me to cross analyze findings between institutions to identify commonalities in how White women engage in race in the workplace. A multisite case study approach will make an interpretation more compelling. Additionally, the particularistic[6] feature of the case study design will be an asset to this study. As Merriam (2009) describes, "This specificity of focus makes it an especially good design for practical problems- for questions, situations, or puzzling occurrences arising from everyday practice" (p. 43). A deeper understanding of this issue will allow for the articulation of

[6] Case studies focus on a particular situation, event, program or phenomenon.

harmful practices and identification of best practices in engaging with race in student affairs. Erickson (1986) points out that what is learned in one case can be applied it in a similar one. Although I am using a multisite approach to the case study design, both institutions are grappling with the same issues. What these cases reveal about the phenomena (race and White women) will be similar enough to yield a strong transferability of findings. Furthermore, another strength is that I will be able to connect the findings of the study to important current events in U.S. society. Finally, case studies are contextual, and our experiences are rooted in context (Merriam, 2009). In this research design, data yields knowledge that is more concrete than other research designs. In dealing with the abstract phenomena of race and Whiteness it is important to have data that is "distinguishable from the abstract" (Merriam, 2009, p. 45)

One weakness of this research design is that the researcher is the primary collector of data and analysis. It may be possible that the researcher may present findings in a manner that may miss other aspects of the data. The lengthy process of conducting a case study is often mentioned as a weakness. Additionally, case studies are often referred to as too lengthy, detailed or involved to produce policy recommendations. This depends primarily on the decisions of the researcher in regard to how much detail will be included, how much of a story to tell, and much of the report will be generalizations (Merriam, 2009). Although these case study characteristics are often cited as weaknesses, Shields (2007) argues that these can be strengths in that qualitative studies describe and include differences and does not oversimplify the issue of study. Another weakness is the lack of generalizability of a case study. The logic behind this critique is that one cannot generalize from a single case and a case study does not add to scientific development (Flyvbjerg, 2006). As response to this critique, Flyvbjerg (2006) restates the generalizability issue by indicating that "formal generalization is overvalued as a source of scientific

development: the force of a single example is underestimated" (p. 219). As described, the case study method has its strengths and weaknesses. A phenomenon as complex as race in student affairs should be examined from multiple points of data to tell us the story to further our understanding. The qualitative case study design gives us the elements needed to capture a complex issue in higher education.

## Recruitment and Setting

I recruited participants from two institutions on the West Coast. University Y is classified by the Carnegie Classification of Higher Education institutions as a four-year master's granting comprehensive institution. University X is classified as a doctoral granting research one institution. Additionally, the difference in institutional classification strengthen the transferability of this study's results (Creswell, 2014). Both institutions are public and located in the Western United States and have been grappling with issues of race and free speech. Issues such as institutional ineffectiveness in addressing racism, professional staff and faculty microaggressing colleagues and students, as well as controversial expressions of free speech and racial ethnic themes parties have plagued both institutions. The student affairs division at both institutions have been working through racial incidents within the past five years. Bias incidents targeting African American students, Asian American students, and an off-campus murder are just a few challenging issues administrators on both campuses had to address in the recent past. The campus dynamics and the work within the student affairs divisions on both campuses assure that administrators have had ample opportunities within their professional environment to reflect on race and identity.

*University Y*

University Y (UY) is a public master's granting institution and it is located in a predominately White rural setting in the western region of the United States. In the fall of 2017, the institution was composed of 43% male and 57% female. There was a total of 8,525 students with 92% of the student population identified as undergraduates (National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 2017). This institution is a historically White Institution with 42% of the student body identified as White but has been designed a Hispanic Serving Institution with 35% of the student body identified as Latinx (NCES, 2017). The remaining student body is composed of 1% Native American, 3% Asian, and 4% Black (NCES, 2017). The student demographics have continued to diversify over the course of five years. This demographic change has affected how the surrounding predominately White rural community has responded to students, staff and faculty.

UY's staff and faculty demographics have yet to diversify to reflect the student population with 73% of the faculty identifying as White and 55% of [7]student services staff identified as White (Institutional Data, 2017)[8]. UY recruits heavily from urban areas and often attracts low-income first-generation college students of Color. The institution is situated in a small town known for its progressive politics. The surrounding community is predominately White with conservative pockets of the population. Students, staff and faculty of Color face the challenge of securing housing in a community where housing is scarce. Stories from students, staff and faculty illuminate discriminatory practices in the rental market. Over the course of five years, the institution has been forced by student, staff and faculty protests to play a critical role in

[7] The term student affairs and student services are used interchangeably. This is a common practice in the field of student affairs. Another that is used but less frequently is student personnel services.
[8] To protect the institution's identity this reference is used in this study.

addressing housing discrimination in the surrounding community. Additionally, campus community members of Color often report experiences of microaggressions and overt racism in the community while shopping, walking down the street and at times on campus. UY is known to be a bastion of White liberalism where well-intentioned whites are at the forefront of anti-racism and environmentalism work. Students, staff and faculty of Color often express frustration with colorblind racism on campus. An additional component of UY is the racial and gender composition of senior level administrators. The senior leadership in student affairs is predominately White with White women occupying senior leadership positions.

Student newspapers indicate that the topic of race is a dominant campus climate issue on the UY campus. Situated within a community that is 80% White[9], there is a sense of heightened awareness of race-based issues on campus. The topic of safety is a reoccurring topic among students, staff and faculty of Color. The topic centers on whether safety can be guaranteed by the university to all members of the campus community (Institutional Newspapers, 2017). UY is situated within a forested area and the campus does become extremely dark at sunset. The topic of safety is also connected to the racial discourse on campus. As campus community members live within the surrounding predominate White community, the topic of safety is not limited to on campus (Institutional Newspaper, 2018).

Another campus climate topic at UY is the struggle of meeting enrollment goals. The topic of enrollment and retention give way to the suggestion by several campus groups that UY's predominantly White leadership is insufficient to lead the diversifying campus (Institutional Newspaper, 2016). The campus has a growing first-generation low-income demographic along with a growth in the attendance of students of Color. Furthermore, the campus community have

[9] County data

overwhelmingly indicated that there is a lack of transparency in the leadership as well as a breakdown in communication between senior leadership and the community on the UY campus (Institutional Newspaper, 2017, 2018).

Finally, Institutional Newspapers (2018) indicate that housing and food insecurity are highly visible issues on campus. Unless students live on campus, there is difficulty in securing housing off campus. Sparse housing in the rural community along with student reports of housing discrimination mentioned earlier have played a role in housing shortages. This issue of housing is not exclusive to students but affects the campus community and specifically staff and faculty of Color.

*University X*

University X (UX) is a public, doctoral granting and highly selective institution. Out of the entire student body 27% identify as White, 28% Asian, 22% Latinx, 3% Black and 0.2% Native American (NCES, 2017). As of fall 2017, the student body was composed of 57% female and 43% male with a total enrollment of 44,027 with 70.4% undergraduates (NCES, 2017). Additionally, 66.1% of faculty and 40.6% of student services staff identified as White (Institutional Data, 2017). UX is located in an urban city environment in the western region of the U.S. and is surrounded with various ethnic enclaves (Refer to figure 0.1). UX has a history of highly publicized racialized incidents over the last six years. For instance, an incident occurred where the Vietnamese student association was targeted with anonymous posters filled with derogatory terms (Institutional Newspaper, 2014)[10]. Although campus authorities were involved, no one was held responsible. This incident initiated a conversation focused on the racism against Asian Americans on campus. Another incident was focused on faculty. An audit on the

[10] To protect the institution's identity this citation is used in this study.

discrimination grievance processes yielded results that indicated negligence by UX in utilizing established processes to address discrimination. Faculty and staff began to voice concerns over racial incidents in several academic departments as well as the low visibility of bias reporting options for professionals. This created a sense of "no confidence" in the institution's ability to address racial grievances and illuminated the need to diversify faculty across UX (Institutional Newspaper, 2014). This specific incident affected the division of student affairs as administrators began to examine the diversity of division. During this time, administrators of Color voiced the tendency of hiring committees in student affairs to hire White women as a means of expanding diversity in upper level leadership positions. Steps were taken by the senior leadership in student affairs in the form of training and forums to address racial climate within the division and on the broader campus. My final example for UX is one that involves the Greek community. Over course of five years, the Greek community has been actively engaging in cultural appropriation and off campus parties that involve Black face (Editorial Board, 2015). These incidents have initiated debates among student affairs administrators regarding "Hyper-sensitivity" and whether these expressions are protected by the first amendment.

Student newspapers indicated that there were struggles with first amendment rights between conservative and liberal students as well as between students and administrators throughout this study's progress. One topic that was trending at UX was the topic of White feminism and intersectionality. This conversation was sparked by a campus visit from a high-profile actress (Institutional Newspaper, 2017) who identified as a feminist. The campus was at odds as to whether or not this brand of feminism ignored the sexism faced by women of Color. According to marketing materials (e.g., flyers), the discourse on White feminism was further

explored through dialogues sponsored by specific academic departments that contained expertise in critical race theory, gender and sexuality as well as various ethnic study departments.

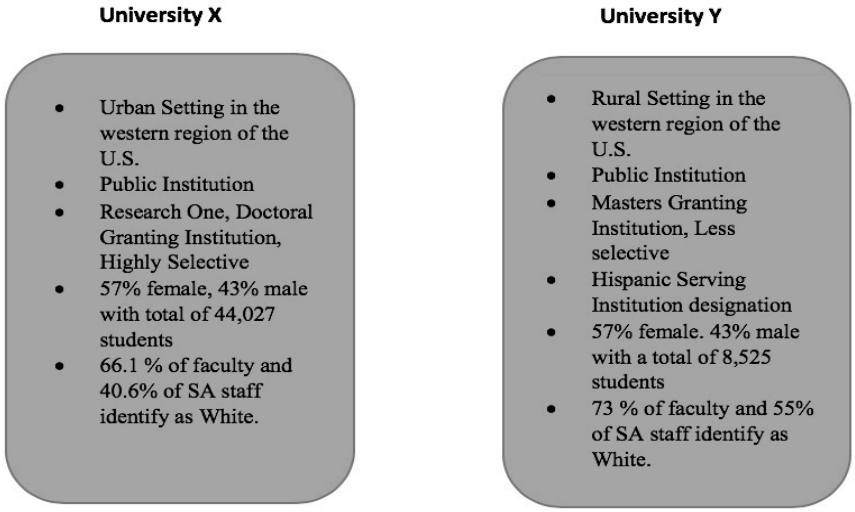
Another campus climate topic that was illustrated by campus newspapers was the tense relationship surrounding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. According to the Institutional Newspaper (2018), a protest was organized by students to address the rise of non-resident tuition. During the demonstration there were chants such as “Free Palestine” and “No peace on stolen land” (Institutional Newspaper, 2018). Jewish students charged that these chants were not linked to the original focus of the demonstration. As a result, pro-Palestinian students charged that pro-Israeli students were attempting to dismantle any oppositional rhetoric against Israel while pro-Palestinian students where creating an environment filled with anti-Semitism. This topic was a theme on the UX campus for over a decade and is still a robust campus climate issue.

Finally, the ripple effects of the 2016 election were a robust aspect of the campus discourse at UX. The Office of Equity addressed these issues through campus forums using the expertise of leading scholars on campus. One forum focused on free speech and another on life after the elections. These forums were recorded and were accessible to the public via the department website. The fate of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) was a hot topic on the UX campus as well as the question of safety for undocumented students on campus. The Institutional Newspaper from early 2017 indicates that there was faculty involvement in taking the election discourse into the classroom. A series of courses were designed to incorporate topics that dominated the election of 2016. In addition to academic seminars, UX’s Office of Equity explored new methods of gathering information on the pulse of campus. The office worked with faculty and students to design an app for mobile devices to randomly send questions to the student body to gain data about particular subjects. It was evident that UX has a bustling

campus climate full of complex issues with student affairs occupying a central role as responders.

Figure 0.1

Institutional Setting Highlights




Similar to UY, UX's student affairs division has been expected to act as initial responders to racialized incidents on campus (NASPA, 2014). Although these incidents are often highly publicized nationally, they did not have a significant impact on the immediate community. The institution holds various community partnerships such as community learning schools, community service projects and as a research one institution, a strong research relationship with the community. The difference may be that UY is the only major campus within a four-hour driving distance and the community may look to UY to help respond. Additionally, UY is often perceived as the source of diversity in its respective community. This perception carries an additional expectation by both on and off campus community members for UY to respond. Due

to its urban location, and the presence of other institutions in the community, the university is not expected to respond as frequently to off campus incidents.

*Institutional Rationale*

I selected these institutions for several reasons. First, the variation in the structural diversity coupled with vastly contrasting community settings yielded unexpected differences and commonalities. UY has a lower Asian American population at 3% with Whites and Latinx as the majority student demographic. This institution has achieved HSI status within the last five years. UX has a majority Asian American student population followed by Whites and Latinx. This difference may affect how participants express their racial point of views and relate to colleagues. Although the structural diversity varies on both campuses, the surrounding community at UY is not as diverse. This factor affects the level of cross racial interactions White women have off campus which in turn may affect their viewpoints. Additionally, UY and UX have student affairs areas that are actively striving to train management and staff on issues of race and equity. This focus creates an environment where race is a topic of discussion and is present in the professional lives of student affairs administrators, albeit at different levels. Furthermore, both institutions have grappled with the question of White women occupying leadership positions in student their respective student affairs division. Meaning that White women are often advanced within the organizational structure at accelerated rates in comparison to women of Color and they are often hired to satisfy diversity through gender composition. Furthermore, these institutions are currently working to address racialized incidents on campus.

These institutions have been grappling with responses to racialized incidents over the course of six years. World events such as the racial unrest in Ferguson, Missouri and the current debate over kneeling during the national anthem are also at the forefront of response for both

universities. This priority has led both institutions to restructure the equity and inclusion offices and establish new leadership in these areas. Finally, the senior leadership in student affairs for both campuses is composed of predominately White women. UY is a less selective institution in a rural White community and the level of engagement with race may be affected bases on the diversity of the community these women navigate.

*Anticipated Institutional Differences*

By selecting two different institutions I anticipate a few differences within the findings. First, UY and UX vary in selectivity and missions. UY is a less selective institution with a less robust research mission. This also entails that institutional funding is significantly less than UX. Due to the strong research mission and higher funding level, UX may have more professional development opportunities for SA staff. Additionally, UX has access to prestigious experts focused on equity and racial justice. These resources and professional development opportunities may affect how participants respond to race in the professional environment. Second, since UY is located in a small town, participants may exhibit an overly polite approach to race. Furthermore, less funding may also indicate that there are less opportunities for professional development. Both institutions are grappling with different campus climate issues, yet the intensity of racial climate issues may be experienced differently sure to location. For instance, a rural location may produce a setting where climate issues on and off campus are experienced with increased intensity. On the contrary, climate issues on an urban campus may not be as intense for participants because it may be easier to separate work and life. Finally, since the rural setting is 80% White, I anticipate that the colorblind lens could be more prevalent with participants who have less cross-racial interactions. Participants located on the UX campus

should for the most part experience more cross-racial interactions if not on campus then off campus in the diverse setting.

## Pre-dissertation Pilot Study

A set of questions along with a semi-structured approach was piloted in the winter and spring quarters of the 2015-2016 academic year. A total of 10 participants were recruited for interviews. Participants included five full time student affairs professionals of Color and five full time White student affairs professionals. The study was conducted in a doctoral granting research one institution located on the west coast. The focus of the study was racialized work environments in student affairs. The gender representation was equal and consisted of three women of Color, two men of Color, three White women and two White men. Most participants grew up in homogenous neighborhoods and were first exposed to diverse environments as college students. The results indicated that although White participants often viewed themselves as progressive and engaged in anti-racist work, they engaged in microaggressions and racism in the workplace. Furthermore, White women were found to shift the focus of a racial conversation to one of their targeted identities and for the most part, react in a visibly emotional manner during the racial dialogue in comparison to participants of Color and White males. Although participants of the pilot study were not included here, these findings led to the development of the criterion used for the selection of White women for this study.

The themes from the study included organizational disconnect, communication differences, and the replacement of race as a focus by a shift to diversity and inclusion. The theme of organizational disconnect referred to the emotional detachment between organizational practices and the affect they have on staff of Color by White participants. Staff of Color described a personal connection to organizational processes because of the daily

challenges faced in the work environment. The theme of communication refers to all but one participant of Color who all described a process where their method of code switching. The code switching occurred through their tone when addressing White colleagues. Three reported that they have a White colleague examine their email tone before sending them. Finally, participants of Color described the uneasiness White colleagues felt when the subject of race became a focus of conversation. In contrast, the subject of diversity and inclusion established a comfort zone for White participants.

The pilot study yielded a few insights in relation to the interview approach. All interviews were 45 to 60 minutes in length and cold have taken up more time. I was able to progress through all of the questions and concepts. Yet, all participants requested a follow up to reflect on race in a professional environment to elaborate on examples provided during the first interview process. This step in the process made it evident that an optional follow up interview may be necessary to include. The optional interview would be helpful if conducted in an informal format with a focus on concepts instead of structured questions. Next, the semi-structured approach worked well with participants because it allowed them to use personal examples freely. There was enough format to guide the conversation but not enough to make participants feel disconnected. This was evident in the end of each interview because nine out of 10 participants commented how the process felt like a conversation. This experience also informed the recruitment process for this study. The importance of building an understanding early about participants would help me craft better questions and move through the interview process in a timely manner while gaining insightful responses.

## Study Data Collection

Unlike quantitative sampling, the purpose of sampling in qualitative studies is not to be statistically representative or draw generalizations (Richie, 2003; Merriam, 2009). Qualitative researchers usually select non-probability samples for selection of participants for a study. In this type of sampling, participants are identified and selected to reflect particular features of groups within the sampled population (Ritchie, 2003). The characteristics of the population sampled are used as the reason for selection (Richie, 2003). It is this characteristic of sampling in qualitative inquiry that makes them acceptable for in-depth and small-scale studies (Patton, 2002; Ritchie, 2003).

Purposive sampling is the most common form of non-probability sampling (Merriam, 2009). Other terms used to describe this method include purposeful and criterion-based selection (Merriam, 2009). In this method of sampling participants are "purposely" chosen to represent a criterion. Participants are chosen because of their specific experience (Merriam, 2009; Creswell, 2014). I employ purposive sampling to ensure that my sample consists of White women who have four or more years of student affairs experience. An additional criterion for the sample will be that participants must have had some supervision experience of two or more years. After four years in student affairs, it is highly likely that professionals have had some supervision experience and involved in the development of professionals as well as working with others in an intimate setting (Barham & Winston, 2006). Additionally, supervision is an underdeveloped skillset in student affairs and experience with supervising others indicates that the participant has had the ability to make decisions that affect the livelihood of other professionals including professionals of Color (Barham & Winston 2006; Holmes, 2014). Specifically, I utilized snowball sampling. This is a type of purposive sampling used to build a base of information rich

cases (Merriam, 2009). The first round of recruitment was attempted through personal networks. After I completed the first round of interviews, I asked participants for referrals to anyone whom they believe would be interested in participating and fit the criterion I established for the study sample.

In purposive sampling, the size of the sample is "determined by informational considerations. If the purpose is to maximize information, the sampling is terminated when there is no new information is forthcoming from new sampled units" (Merriam, 2009, p. 80). There is a point where increasing a sample size will not yield any new information and redundancy is reached. Data from a few participants who are able to describe the phenomenon studied in detail maybe able to yield sufficient data (Merriam, 2009; Starks & Trinidad 2007). Sample size recommendations for case study research is not consistent. For this reason, I did not identify a specific sample size.

The recruitment process consisted of two phases. The first phase incorporated a set of five questions with the purpose of screening potential participants for experience in the student affairs profession, whether they self-identified as White women, a sense of diversity training received, their current functional area, and length of career. Other questions were focused on gaining additional information about participants' additional identities. This will help me assess the experience interview candidates have engaging in issues related to race in the work environment and additional identities that may arise during the interview process. Next, I used professional networks associated with both institutions. I also relied on referrals from participants and professional colleagues who able to identify colleagues who self-identify as White women. All of my outreach was initiated through email (Appendix A). I interviewed 23 participants to ensure saturation of data. Since my sample was a reasonably homogenous sample,

I expected to collect a sample that yields information rich data in the data analysis phase (Merriam, 2009; Richie, 2003). This assumption came to fruition as the data yielded was rich and include themes that are beyond the scope of this study.

## Participants

This study focused on the experiences of White Women in the field of student affairs. Participants self-identified as White women with supervision responsibilities that have been in the student affairs profession for at least four years. The length of their experiences ensures that participants have had a plethora of opportunities to engage in race and have at some point in their career reflected on their identity as White women. Data collection occurred across student affairs functional areas (See Table 1.0). Participants represented a variety of educational backgrounds and professional experiences. Long (2012) describes student affairs professionals as coming from a wide variety of educational backgrounds. The trajectory into the profession of student affairs is not linear and attracts individuals from a wide variety of age ranges, educational backgrounds and skill sets. The ages range was wide spanned from early mid-twenties to mid-sixties. A few participants began their careers in student affairs in their mid-thirties while most began in early adulthood. These factors ensured that participants contributed varied professional perspectives. In order to capture participant's demographic data, I distributed a demographic form designed to capture any additional information in regard to additional identities (Appendix B).

### *Context and Participants*

At times throughout the interview process, participants struggled with the racial dialogue. It is important to note that the majority of participants came from homogeneous neighborhoods. Some from birth up until their mid-twenties. This form of racial isolation

provides insulation from racial stress (DiAngelo, 2018). The seldom feeling of racial discomfort lends to the development of the feelings of entitlement to the racial advantage experienced by Whites (DiAngelo, 2018). That is the White racial reality is not challenged and when it is Whites become highly fragile (DiAngelo, 2011, 2012, 2018; Matias, 2016). Almost half of the participants for this study did not even think about race until they were in graduate school and many did not engage race until they were student affairs professionals. This was evident at times when the focus shifted to Whiteness and participants fell silent. They struggled with the content until they found a way to redirect the conversation toward a subject unrelated to race. For instance, I asked a participant to describe a time when they were involved in a race related interaction and the participant responded with an example cloaked in reverse racism. Then the question was refocused to address age. Race remained unnamed for many participants unless refocused to address race with pointed questions. This and other instances of White hegemony continued to surface throughout the process. As the interview process unfolded, it elicited new ways of thinking about behavior in connection to race and systems of oppression. Redirecting participants to address the racial component of the interview created some "ah-ha" moments. The majority expressed post-interview that they had never really thought about race in this complex way. As participants shared their life stories and experiences, I learned about their personal narratives and career paths. Surprisingly, participants were open and eased into their role as interviewees with stories to share. The awkward racial moments manifested but I was able to re-direct these women using follow up questions or pulling from their stories.

Participants in this study were left to self-identify and all participants identified as [11]cisgender women with ages ranging from mid-twenties into their mid-sixties with a variety of

[11] When the term "woman" is used in this study, it indicates cisgender women and the privileges associated with this identity (Nicolazzo, 2016).

student affairs functional areas represented in this study (See Table 1). Other self-disclosed identities were focused on religion/ spirituality, sexual orientation, and disabilities. Most participants held mid-level positions with one in a senior level position. Most had direct contact with students on a daily basis through supervision, mentorship or working with student advisory groups. Career length in student affairs ranged from four years to thirty years in the field and none of the participants reported stopping out for any portion of their careers. Participant interviews provided the main source of information for this section of the study.

The interviews took place in a variety of settings. Half were conducted in person using a mixture of sit-down interviews and the walking interview approach. Participants chose interview method because it became evident in the beginning that some may not be as mobile due to hidden physical disabilities. The walking interview or go-along interviews is an in-depth interview method that is conducted by accompanying participants on a short excursion within their familiar surroundings (Harris, 2016). This qualitative interview process encompasses the advantages of the sit-down interview and observations. The added benefit of this method is that the environment evokes thoughts and memories making the data rich and detailed (Harris, 2016). Participants who opted not to walk were given a choice to meet at their favorite place off campus with the hope that we could somewhat provide the benefit of an inspiring environment. Walks took place on and around campus. When I met with participants, their favorite places usually tended to be cafés or casual diners. The walking interview process provided the ability for participants to relax and draw from their memories to discuss difficult situations with more ease. Regardless of whether the approach chosen was to walk or to meet up somewhere, this was very useful in soliciting detailed data. Participants who participated in the interview process using Zoom or Apple Facetime tended to tell structured stories from their past and at times continued

to discuss their professional environment post-interview for some time. The majority of these interviews took place on weekends from my home. The remaining interviews were conducted over phone on weekend from home. Although interviews were conducted in a variety of ways, the data and themes across participants remained consistent throughout this process. All modes of data collection were tracked on an excel spreadsheet to keep track of the variety of interview methods along with memos written right after each interview to record reflections and key phrases.

## Interviews

Interviews were administered in a semi-structured design and were conducted throughout the winter and spring of the 2017-2018 academic year. The average length of an interview was one hour and ten minutes with the shortest in length lasting 50 minutes. The semi-structured interview is a less rigid interview method than structured. This allows for open-ended questions while providing flexibility to explore concepts and questions without a specific order (Merriam, 2009). This interview approach proved to be flexible enough to capture the description of experiences from participants. According to Creswell (2014), an online interview format may inhibit less articulate participants from conveying their ideas clearly. Instead of relying solely on online interviews, I followed up with phone interviews for clarification. I use online formats such as Skype and Apple Facetime to add a personal approach with face to face contact. I was able to conduct almost half of the interviews in person totaling 10 in total on the UY campus. The interview questions were based in part on Bonilla-Silva's colorblind racism framework as well as questions from the pilot study. I examined the questionnaire from the *DAS* and *Survey of Attitudes of College Students* to craft a set of semi-structured questions. The themes from the survey assisted in the development of the questions based on affirmative action and reactions to

colleagues of Color. It is important to note that at this stage, the colorblind framework was the exclusive framework for this study. Matias' work was integrated during the analysis phase of the study.

Since identity development is not a linear process (Torres, Jones & Renn, 2009), the semi-structured method is ideal for this study because it is structured enough to ensure that I explored necessary ideas and concepts but flexible enough to investigate emerging ideas. Student affairs professionals grapple with questions of identity such as does identity development progress differ between minoritized students and White students? (Long, 2012). These important questions require a sense of self awareness that is important for student affairs professionals. A professional who is not self-aware of their own identity and cultural values will experience difficulty with the perception of how colleagues and students are shaped by their own identities and cultural values (Sue, 2003; Long, 2012). Identity work is at the core of student affairs work and may foster self-reflection and development on identity for administrators, faculty and students alike.

## Document Analysis

Document analysis is another form of data collection in which documents are used to provide a sense of campus climate, important events and campus incidents (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). Student newspapers were used to examine context specific issues such as public racial dialogues, programmatic feedback and descriptions of campus protests. Campus newspapers are often available in an online format and were accessible. It is important to note that world events affect the racial campus climate for institutions across the country. For instance, the Southern Poverty Law Center released two reports on hate-motivated incidents that indicated a rise in reports of hate crimes since the 2016 presidential election (Dreid &

Najmabadi, 2016). The center documented an estimated 900 incidents, and many were on college campuses within 10 days following the election (Dreid & Najmabadi, 2016; Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), 2016).

I examined local newspapers for information about racialized incidents and discussions that may have impacted the campus climate. These environmental conditions were an important indicator of the level of racial discourse on the UY and UX campuses. In response to world events, both UY and UX have a well-established database of public forums, dialogues and discussions available to the public dating back three to four years. Information is available in the form of video, events and meeting minutes and articles that accompany these events. I examined these sources and took note of the themes produced from on-campus forums there were posted via an online archive. These notes were a part of my field notes and I reviewed and coded them accordingly to aid in the description of both institutions, make note of any impressions or any alignment of specific on campus themes that may have been exhibited by participants throughout the interview process.

My employment at UY enhanced my ability to directly observe events. I kept memos and field notes of my experiences and observations. As it pertains to UX, my plan was to visit the campus twice and keep field notes with my observations. I was unable to travel to UX and kept my observations secondary. All field-notes were dated and tagged to correspond with my observations. Additionally, observations allowed me to follow up with participants in the event that bias incidents occurred on each campus.

## Data Analysis

The purpose of this analysis is to understand how White women experience Whiteness and navigate race in the work environment as well as reinforce and challenge White supremacy.

Identity is complex and multifaceted depending upon the context and situation (Accapadi, 2007; Starks & Trinidad. 2007). As I collected and analyzed data, new findings emerged. The analysis began with the first interview. Merriam (2009) summarized the process as a concurrent process in qualitative research design. It coincides with the collection of data and in this case, campus newspapers, archival data that documents public forums and meetings as well as interviews. In order to analyze the data, I employed the qualitative content analysis method. This process began with examination of public documents (e.g., student newspapers and online documents) followed by interviews. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) describe qualitative content analysis as a method used to interpret text data through "….the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns" (p. 1278). I chose this method because of its flexibility to focus on the content or contextual meaning of text data. This analytic method is useful for a variety of textual data such as observations, interviews, and print media such as articles, manuals and books (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Qualitative content analysis aligns with the case study design of this study in that it supports the coding and organization of multiple data sources. Furthermore, I used field-notes and memos to summarize key themes, and insights during the document reflection analysis process and post-interview reflections (Merriam 2009; Richie, 2003). I organized documents by category and analyzed them for common themes. As a result, I was able to develop a better sense of events, past incidents and the overall environment of each campus. Next, all interview transcriptions were organized according to campus. I then utilized the software program Dedoose to code data. I chose Dedoose because it is versatile enough to code documents, transcripts, videos, and audio in various formats. Dedoose is password protected, audio and transcriptions

was kept on two USB drives for backup. The USB drives will be in a locked office drawer in my home.

Content analysis dates back to the 18th century when it was used to examine biblical texts in a comparative content analysis approach (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Words and phrases were reported as frequencies making content analysis a quantitative method. Mayring (2014) describes the earliest systematic newspaper analysis that occurred in 1893. In this analysis, articles were themed, coded and compared across newspapers. By the 20th century, the approach to content analysis developed from a primarily quantitative approach into a qualitative approach. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) describe three approaches to qualitative content analysis and they are conventional, directed and summative. The main difference between these three approaches lies in the initial coding development process. In a conventional approach, codes are developed during the analysis phase. In a directed approach, the coding method is developed from theory or existing research findings. The codes in this approach are predetermined (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Lastly, in the summative approach, text is analyzed as single words and key words developed from the investigators interest. This approach differs from the three because of the focus on single word coding.

I used a mixture of the conventional and directed approaches of qualitative content analysis. The conventional approach allowed for the emergence of codes and themes as I analyzed newspapers, and notes of recorded public forums. Additionally, I used this approach for the first coding cycle for the interview data. I utilized the directed approach to analyze the remaining interview data. This approach was based off of existing literature and theory. I was able to predetermine the codes I used to analyze data based on Bonilla-Silva's (2014) colorblind racism framework. It is at this stage that I formulated predetermined codes by aligning key

characteristics of each colorblind frame with specific colors to assist in the development of these codes within a coding software. This was developed before the emotionality of Whiteness manifested within the analysis. As a result, the emotionality of Whiteness framework was not a part of this phase and entered this study during the later phase of analysis. The qualitative content analysis approach was helpful as I integrated the emotionality frame because it is flexible enough to use within a case study design. The flexibility became apparent as the findings tied to emotion emerged during the analysis phase. It was at this phase that I integrated the emotionality of Whiteness framework into the coding process. I was able to review the data and recode using the conventional approach. The next aspect of data collection to be discussed is the interviews. This process is a bit more involved and I will spend more time describing that process.

Coding is a short phrase, color, or numbers assigned to data to make sections of data retrievable (Merriam, 2009; Saldaña, 2013). The coding process is an important link between collecting and making meaning out of data. Starks and Trinidad (2007) describe the analytical process in terms of decontextualization and recontextualization. Decontextualization refers to the process where the data from the original context of individual cases is separated and assigned codes to units of meaning in the texts. In recontextualization, codes are examined for patterns and the data is reintegrated and reorganized. This reduces the data around central themes and assists in identifying relationships across all cases (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). I used a systematic coding process that allowed me to categorize the data into clusters of meaning that represent Whiteness (Creswell, 2012; Saldaña, 2013). I used an initial coding approach, In Vivo coding and Axial coding approaches for this study. After unexpected findings connected to emotion emerged, I recoded for an additional cycle using the In Vivo approach. This type of coding allowed me to analyze data from an emic perspective. Saldaña (2013) describes In Vivo coding

as applicable to practitioners conducting analysis because this approach aims to frame the researcher's interpretations in terms that participants use in their everyday experiences and not terms derived formally from the academy or professional practice (Saldaña, 2013). This also aided in mitigating any biases I bring with me as a researcher by concentrating on the participant's experiences not mine.

The coding process was administered in four cycles. I began with detailed line-by- line initial coding for the first coding cycle (Charmaz, 2006). This stage of the coding process allowed me to become familiar with the data as themes emerged and produce codes that are grounded in the experiences of participants of the study. The initial coding process reduces the data into separate parts that allows for examination and comparison (Saldaña, 2013). This open-ended approach allowed for reflection and identification of the nuances in the data. In this phase of the coding process, I began to identify elements of the colorblind framework. For instance, during the first stage of analysis phrases such as "I have black friends but..." or "I am not a racist..." begin to emerge from the data. This allowed me to begin to identify the semantics used in expressing race. This approach was flexible as I used it concurrently with the data collection process. It helped provide analytic leads for further investigation and aided in the decision-making process in regard to the next phase of the study (Clark, 2005; Saldaña, 2013). This particular feature in the coding process set an important foundation for the next two cycles of the coding process. In the second coding cycle, the goal is to develop a sense of "thematic, conceptual, and/or theoretical organizations from your array of first cycle codes" (p. 207, Saldaña, 2013). At this stage, I expected to be able to identify the four frames of colorblindness. The codes produced from the first cycle are then recoded as needed and re-categorized and an assessment of how everything fits together is made (Merriam, 2009; Saldaña, 2013). In this

phase of the coding process, I used In Vivo coding. This second cycle coding process extended the work done in the initial coding process. According to Saldaña (2015), this method of coding refers to language found in the qualitative data. Meaning the codes are generated by participants. This method was useful in capturing participant voices that go beyond the phrases and terms rooted in academia. I coded line by line using Dedoose. This allowed the process of using quotations to generate codes from interviews and tracking them much easier. This approach was useful in further identifying language embedded in colorblind racism. The Axial coding method was used for the third cycle of coding. This method of coding assists the researcher in the identification of more dominant and least dominant codes in the data (Saldaña, 2013). At this point, I was able to group the codes into categories. As a result, I was able to identify how interview data codes intersect with the frames of colorblindness. An additional finding began to emerge at this stage and I began to consider a fourth cycle. This Axial process yielded relabeled conceptual codes and allowed me to refer to what Saldaña describes as:

> properties (characteristics, or attributes), and dimensions (the location of a property along a continuum or range) of a category refer to such components as contexts, conditions, interactions, and consequences of a process-actions that let the researcher know if, when, how and why something happens. (p. 218, Saldaña, 2013)

Finally, for the fourth and final cycle of coding, I decided to revisit In Vivo coding. I believed that is was valuable to capture the emotional data using participant voices. This proved to be a positive choice because the emotional nature of White women's responses to racial dialogue yielded powerful quotes. Ultimately, the coding process yielded more nuanced patterns and categories of how language is used within and in between frameworks. This allowed me to identify tactics used in responding to racial discussions and the overall discourse.

## Trustworthiness

There are various interpretations and labels used to describe validity. Credibility, trustworthiness and dependability are just a few names given to this process (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Creswell, 2014). Creswell and Miller (2000) describe validity as a process to assess how accurately the narrative collected by the researchers represents "participants' realities of social phenomena and is credible to them" (p. 124). This is done by applying certain procedures such as triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing. Use of multiple validity procedures is recommended to assess the accuracy of findings (Creswell, 2014; Lincoln & Gruba, 1986). As I entered the findings phase of this process I used peer debriefing and member checking as methods to ensure the reliability of my findings.

I used two professional peers to debrief. These colleagues were unrelated to the study to review my findings. This will afford the peer de-briefers the opportunity to question the content in order to ensure that people other than myself will resonate with this study (Creswell, 2014). One de-briefer was a White woman and the other was a woman of Color. Both are involved in student affairs and are familiar with the focus of this study. This provided a balance to the feedback I received. Additionally, I utilized member checking as an additional tool for validity. Creswell and Miller (2000) describes member checking as one of the most reliable methods to ensure validity. I provided participants with themed data along with direct quotes I planned to insert into the study. This approach made the data more digestible and allow for reviewers to provide feedback in a timely manner. Most participants engaged in the process and provided useful feedback during this process.

## Researcher Positionality

One element of quality in qualitative research is acknowledging who you are and what you bring to the work (Goodyear, Barela, & Jewiss, 2014). It is important for a qualitative researcher to bring a clear understanding of their own personal identity (Creswell, 2014; Goodyear et al., 2014). Self-reflection is also an important aspect of quality in qualitative design. An understanding of the biases researchers bring illuminates how their interpretation of the findings is shaped by their background, history and origin (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009). This is my attempt to illuminate my background and positionality.

The origin of my interest in this subject stems from my identity as a dark skinned Mexican-American queer woman of Color with over 10 years of professional experience in student affairs. It has been challenging in that there is no guidance offered to women of Color studying White women. This sentiment is echoed by Cabrera (2016) from the perspective of a man of Color studying White men. Over the course of my career, I have witnessed the significant role that self-awareness of one's identity has in crafting equitable policies, inclusive campus climates and work environments in higher education. I have witnessed the impact White women have on the field of student affairs and I have felt the impact personally. In my time as a professional, I have worked with White women who gravitate towards their Whiteness in one context, while distancing themselves and embracing gender in another. I have witnessed White women navigate between race and gender strategically and at times without self-awareness of their ability to step into racial privilege and out into a target identity such as gender. Additionally, based on my observations and interactions with White colleagues, I have come to realize that White women often do not have a space to discuss race or their perception of their racial selves. It is my hope that this study will illuminate the level of racial self-awareness that

White women bring to the student affairs profession and how identity affects the work done on a professional level.

Racism and White supremacy often operate through coded language. This is true in the media, at home, in schools and in professional spaces. In my various professional roles, I have witnessed how coded language is used in search committees to communicate that a candidate of color is "not a good organizational fit" or "not warm enough" by White colleagues. I have witnessed well intentioned Whites attempt to "save" highly qualified professionals from themselves. It is in my interest to identify and name (whether we use the term racism, Whiteness or White supremacy) the coded language and methods used to perpetuate White supremacist ideologies in a profession where White people are leading institutions of higher education.

As a woman of Color, my interaction with White women in the student affairs profession has varied not by "racist" or "non-racist" but on a spectrum of how racist. All too often I have addressed statements such as "Oh they will hire people like you…" or "You are different from them…", and "I understand your struggle because as a woman..." in professional spaces. My encounters with White female colleagues have often ended with their failure of owning their Whiteness and retreating behind the shield of other identities when addressing race. Race as an issue is discounted or ignored. As a result, I am categorized as "hypersensitive" or informed that racism is a "thing of the past" because it is "illegal" in the workplace.

Initially, I expected my phenotypical presentation as a dark-skinned woman of Color to affect the presentation of participants as their authentic selves. On the contrary, participants were willing to share their perspectives through story-telling and discussion of the concepts presented in this study (Cabrera, 2016). One helpful interview exercise I employed to create rapport was to ask participants to present a cultural artifact. The artifact had to remind them of race in the

United States. I in turn, presented and this exchange resulted in conversation about race in the U.S. before delving into the interview questions. This method proved useful regardless of the platform (in person, Zoom, Facetime or phone) I used to interview. Participants overwhelmingly shared that they found the interview more enjoyable than intimidating. I found myself in the middle of a balancing act between being appreciative of the openness participants displayed and at times fighting the desire to respond to assertions. Most participants commented that they felt surprisingly comfortable with me whether it was via Zoom or in-person despite being a woman of Color. Although participants expressed that they felt comfortable throughout the interview process, many expressed biases against African Americans. As a result, in hindsight I am left wondering if participants would have been more reserved had I been an African American woman.

I have dealt with the White discomfort of acknowledging White racism and the self-categorization of "good" Whites or "not those kind" of Whites because "I grew up with Mexicans…". I have been among those professionals of Color who are casualties of White colleagues who determine that my voice is too loud, my identity as a person of Color is too present in my work or my advocacy (for myself and students) is perceived as too insubordinate for promotions or new career building opportunities. In many instances, confrontation often ends with White denial of racism and often a masking of privilege with subordinate identities. These experiences fuel my interest in unmasking White supremacy in its subtle forms in order to create an equitable professional environment for myself and my colleagues of Color.

Additionally, the sense of comfort found in the participants of this study may have been connected to my professional experience with both campuses. My insider status may have given me credibility with the women in this study. My positionality as a former staff member gave me

access to current campus climate issues and responses. My access to each institutional narrative afforded me the opportunity to facilitate the interview process with a familiarity of the campus climate issues at each institutional setting. My experiences assisted me as I examined participant interviews and reviewed documents as a data source.

*Limitations*

There are a few limitations to this study. First, the sample was focused exclusively on White women in student affairs. It would be worth exploring how undergraduate student or faculty respondents would describe their navigation of a racialized campus or workplace. Would they use emotions and subordinate identities in the same way? Would findings differ based on academic discipline for faculty? It would also be complimentary to explore how White men view race in contrast to White women in a professional environment. These are questions that have yet to be answered. Another limitation is that both institutions are public four-year institutions located in the western region of the United States. As a result, this study is focused on race as it manifests on the western coast of the United States. An examination of White women in student affairs that reside and work in the Midwest, South, Southwest and East Coast would add greater depth to this area of study. All regions in the U.S. possess a unique racial history that may affect how participants rationalize race as well as their own Whiteness. The women in this study identify as cis-gender. Would gender non-conforming women navigate race different? And how would they use identity in comparison to the participants in this study? An exploration of these questions can expand the literature focused on White women.

Participants in the study were unexpectedly enthusiastic to participate. If I had known how comfortable the interview environment would turn out to be, I would have structured my interview design to delve into more personal in-depth questions to link participant's private and

professional life. My sense is that this could have yielded a more complete picture of each participant's racial awareness. Another limitation related to the interview process is not all interviews were conducted in person. In person interviews give the interviewer social cues, body language signals to communicate with the interviewer when the participant maybe feeling uncomfortable or even willing to explore a question in more depth. These signals can lead to follow up questions that are a result of body language. Although Zoom provided me with a visual alternative, I was not able to employ the walking interview method (Harris, 2016) with all participants.

## Conclusion

Research focused on racism, Whiteness and colorblindness has revealed the effects of White people's inability to see race (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). As a consequence, Whites are not able to understand how their actions are sustaining and reproducing inequity. Thus, this allows for the reification of racism and White supremacy. Until this issue is addressed, People of Color will continue to suffer racial inequality on and off colleges and universities. Higher education will continue to produce leaders that reproduce White hegemony. Institutions of higher education were founded on a history of exclusion and racism (Harper et al., 2009; Yosso, et al., 2004). These legacies are deeply embedded in the day-to-day operations. These dynamics manifests themselves in different ways within these institutions. Accapadi (2007) demonstrated how White women crying during a professional interaction is tied to Whiteness and gender socialization. The author also demonstrated how such an interaction can derail productivity in meeting spaces. Until we can both demonstrate the existence of White fragility and confront it in student affairs, it will continue to serve as an obstacle to facilitating the necessary dialogues that will lead to change. White privilege, Whiteness, and White fragility are all forms of the normalization of

Whiteness. These are some of the standards we uphold as we hire, promote, and define leadership. As professionals, we become (often unintended) complicit in reifying White supremacy and continue the legacy of exclusion through our practice.

## Chapter Five: Findings

This chapter presents findings yielded by the analysis of the data. I begin with a section to describe the context and participants to provide more insight for the findings and quotes produced by participants shared in the chapter. Participants express world views and racial philosophies that need a bit more background information for the reader to make some sense of the data presented. This is my attempt to provide such context. This section is not so much about the interview process itself, but it is focused on the dynamics between the researcher and the participant during the interview process. An overview will illuminate my interactions with participants which were filled with racial nuances such as pauses, body language and tone. Additionally, I follow with a thematic separation of the findings such as navigating race with emotions, distance from racial terminology, identity as a minimization tool, and evolution of awareness, re-centering and challenging Whiteness. I will delve into these themes that manifested during the analysis phase of the study and present findings within these themes.

### Summary of Findings

Five main themes that emanated from this study are: (1) Emotional resistance to race, (2) distance from racial terminology, (3) identity as a minimization tool, (4) evolution of awareness, as well as (5) re-centering and challenging Whiteness. These themes describe the mechanisms used by participants to navigate race in the professional environment. The emotional component of the data also demonstrates how White women use emotions to reinforce White supremacy through crying, victimization or guilt. These responses refocus the racial conversation on White women and maneuver away from discussion focused on the issues of People of Color.

Table 1
*Participant Demographic and Career Information*

| "Name" | Functional Area | Career Length | Approx. Age | [1]First Time Thought About Race | [2]Self-Disclosed Identities |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Abigail | Student Conduct | 5 Years | Mid-Twenties | Graduate School | Jewish |
| Barbara | Financial Aid | 16 Years | Early Fifties | Student Affairs Professional | Lesbian, Not Feminine |
| Becca | Residential Life | 25 Years | Early Fifties | Undergraduate Experience | Hidden Disability, Interracial Relationship |
| Believe | Registrar & Admissions | 20 Years | Late Fifties | Student Affairs Professional | Omnist, Irish |
| Beverly | Graduate Student Services | 7 Years | Early Forties | Graduate School | Hidden Disability |
| Blue | Recreational Sports | 13 years | Early Fifties | Student Affairs Professional | Lesbian |
| Brittany | Research and Assessment | 15 Years | Mid-Forties | Graduate School | Agnostic |
| Denise | International Students Services | 7.5 Years | Late Thirties | Undergraduate | Gender Fluid |
| Donna | Admissions | 10 Years | Early Forties | Graduate School | Irish |
| Francine | Clubs and Activities | 6 Years | Late Twenties | Graduate School | Czech American, Heterosexual Leaning |
| Harper | Residential Life | 4 Years | Mid-Twenties | Graduate School | Christian |
| Jordan | Veterans Services | 34 Years | Early Fifties | Graduate School | Spiritual |
| Kelly | Peer Mentoring & Academic Advising | 15 Years | Late Fifties | Student Affairs Professional | Agonistic |
| Maggie | Residential Life | 4 Years | Mid-Twenties | Graduate School | Lesbian |
| Margaret | Case Management & Disability Services | | | | |
| Marie | Dean of Students | 26 Years | Mid-Sixties | Student Affairs Professional | Catholic |
| Nancy | Academic Advising | 25 Years | Late Forties | Graduate School | Disability |
| Queenie | Student Clubs & Activities | 30 Years | Mid-Sixties | Early in Life | Jewish |
| Rebecca | Residential Life | 22 Years | Mid-Forties | Graduate School | Jewish, Disability |
| Rita | Admissions | 13 Years | Early Forties | Student Affairs Professional | Disability |
| Sally | Student Health Education & Promotion | 20 Years | Early Sixties | Student Affairs Professional | Jewish, Human |
| Sarah | Learning Center | 11 Years | Early Fifties | Student Affairs Professional | |
| Suzie | Career Services & Graduate Student Services | 13 Years | Early Fifties | Student Affairs Professional | Catholic Atheist, Disability |

[1] The original question: When was the first time you thought about race in student affairs? Note: This initiatied conversations with some participants about when they began to think about race in their lifetime.
[2] Particpants were given the opportunity to self-disclose identities and additional information on a demographic sheet as well as throughout the interview process.

Distance from racial terminology and the emotional aspect of the data illuminate how White women in this study avoid race. In using identity as a minimization tool, White women use their subordinate identities to dance around their Whiteness and refocus attention away from race (e.g., gender, religion, sexual orientation…etc.). Additionally, this theme also illustrates how participants minimize the affect racism has on People of Color. The evolution of awareness demonstrates that White women can engage in a process that leads to greater racial awareness. The re-centering and challenging Whiteness theme contain examples that demonstrate how White women in this study re-center Whiteness using emotions, language and terminology. Additionally, this theme includes examples of challenging White supremacy and what this action may resembles antiracist action. Additionally, participants reveal how the field of student affairs has affected how they perceive themselves as White women and what this means to them as professionals. In addition to interview responses, my researcher memos also yielded data that aligned with the five themes. The quotes selected for this chapter represent common themes and the variety of ideas expressed by participants. This also suggests that there are quotes and themes that were not included in order to represent a variety of examples and remain within the context of the research questions presented in this study.

## Emotional Resistance to Race

Most participants indicated that there is an emotional response when discussing race in the workplace. These emotions ranged from tears, anger, frustration, and guilt to victimization. Several participants cried during the interview process and several became angry or frustrated. These emotions surfaced when responding to questions such as “What does being a White woman in student affairs mean to you?” or a few described a distance from race and indicated that unless the racial conversation was connected to them personally, they did not have a strong

emotional response because they did not have “racial baggage”. This signified a sense of indifference as they progressed with the interview process. One example comes from a participant who expressed frustration as she described race she states,

> I think that when we start talking about diversity, it's almost a no-brainer. This group (veterans), it's the most diverse group you could possibly be engaged with, and their ability to see past race is almost innate. I've adopted that, I really have. I do not ... what I see is I see veterans and I see civilians. (Jordan, UY)

Jordan was describing her experience working in Veteran Affairs for the past 34 years. This participant began working with veterans out of high school and described the veteran population she worked with within a racial colorblind framework. She further states, “When I started working with the population, there wasn't any, for me, there was absolutely zero thought process I guess around race because veterans are blind to it.” In this instance, Jordan uses the veteran population as a shield to hide behind in order to avoid race altogether. As this participant described her engagement with veterans, her voice rose, and she became agitated as she described race. Jordan like other participants indicated to me that it is necessary to see past race. For most participants who expressed this sentiment, there was a sense of self-victimization embedded in their responses. It was as if speaking about race made participants of this study targets of racism or exclusion.

Donna who has 10 years of experience in admissions underscores Jordan’s sense of racial victimization and the tactic of hiding behind a professional mask to avoid race.

> When I was working through my graduate program in sociology, I realized how often I felt personally targeted as a White person when discussing race. I guess I did not get that it is bigger than me. It is embedded in our society. (Donna, UY)

As Donna described this process, she admitted to feeling guilty about this and sometimes shut down because of the guilt. Both Donna and Jordan have felt victimized as a result of unpacking race. The difference is Jordan is comfortable not engaging and using her professional "mask" to avoid it. Donna also described this phenomenon as a professional in the admissions department, "I have also used my profession to justify avoiding racial conversations or addressing policy changes when I felt uncomfortable. This was wrong but it happens not just by me but I have witnessed this in others as well" (Donna, UY). Donna's focus on admissions is often intertwined with colorblindness. The focus of admitting a student cannot be racialized because affirmative action is against the law. This becomes a tool that can be used by Whites during race-based conversations. This participant has fallen back on the colorblind framework to "neutralize" the conversation when the topic turns to race. Both Donna and Jordan expressed that at times a focus on race rattled their comfort zone. These as well as other participants indicated to me that there is no reason for the lack of civility in these conversations. There was a desire to be treated "well" meaning nicely and supported if they engaged in race focused interactions. I found Jordan to be driven to remain in her comfort zone without attempts to engage racial climate conversations. When prompted as to whether her sentiment towards race has evolved over her career, Jordan expressed this sentiment further as follows, "I think that there's almost such an emphasis on the race thing here, and diversity, I almost feel estranged from it. I almost feel as if it's being pushed down your throat to be able to think about it" (Jordan, UY). As Jordan described her sentiments regarding race and diversity, she became frustrated and almost angry. When I questioned whether she was experiencing strong emotions, she admitted to frustration not anger. As I continued to ask her about race throughout our conversation, she would reply with "Veterans are not focused on race therefore I am not" or "It is not necessary because vets are not looking at

each other racially and we are blind to race" and "when I see veterans I see civilians." Jordan aligns herself to the veteran identity even though she is not a veteran but her professional identity seems to create a shield she can use to deflect race conversation.

Jordan describes the diversity and race discourse in her work environment as something that she is force fed and avoids it as much as she could. The emotional connection for Jordan is anger and frustration. I did find it interesting that Jordan usually avoided race through her refusal to attend racial dialogues or anything that is labeled diversity. Jordan also felt attacked when the subject of White privilege surfaced because as she mentioned "they play the blame game" (Jordan, UY). As a result, this participant would fall back into a colorblind lens to avoid any concept of race and reinforced this with her profession. When we discussed race throughout our interview she experienced strong emotions and ultimately a sense of victimization. Another example aligned with Jordan is Rita who describes her engagement with race as, "Something that frustrates me. I think at times that I am damned if I do and damned if I don't engage. I leave it for when I have to at work." (Rita, UX). Like Jordan, Rita who has been a student affairs professional for 13 years began her career in admissions and now serves in a management role within financial aid. She describes a sense of being forced to engage in racial interactions and reflections. She described the professional interactions as mandatory trainings, dialogues and an overall environmental saturation of racial engagement in the professional environment. When I asked whether she thought it was important to engage she responded, "Yes (pause) but I hope we can get to a point where we no longer have to. I mean I have a biracial son-in law and I have no problem." (Rita, UX). I found that this response was a typical discursive shield indicating that Rita is attempting to distance herself from being perceived as racist.

Barbara has been a student affairs professional for 16 years. The majority of her career has been spent working in the financial aid functional area. She is in her early fifties and expressed that at times she can become passionate about race. When I asked her if she becomes emotional when discussing race in the workplace she says, “I do tend to get ... I get theatrical and passionate about things. In that way, yes. Yes, emotional in that ... I'm feeling passionate about this and I don't necessarily know what to do or what to say, but not emotions such as feeling hurt or vulnerable. Those emotions are not frequent.” Although Barbara expressed her passion, she also admitted that she doesn't like confrontation. In response to a follow up question regarding discussing race in the workplace and confronting racist comments she indicated,

> I'm really good at talking about race with people I agree with. I'm really not good at talking about it with people that don't agree with me. That's my thing that I want to get better at is not wanting to shut down and shut it out. I'm going to do the same thing at the grocery store or on Facebook or whatever, unfriend, rather than engage, which is what I want to do. I'm not very good at it. I don't like confrontation in any part of my life. That's part of my personality too. (Barbara, UY)

Barbara describes her passion but also admits that she avoids confrontation. This approach to racial discussions indicates that there may be a void in holding colleagues accountable for offensive practices or silence in the professional environment when a racial microaggression is witnessed or reported. This was confirmed when I followed up with a question about confronting racism in the professional environment. Barbara responded, “I am mostly guilty of deflecting or getting so angry that I just walk away.” (Barbara, UY). She goes even further to state that she would disconnect from others who do not share her point of view instead of engaging with them. I found it interesting that Barbara considered herself passionate about racial issues, yet she

struggles with building a stamina that would lead to in depth conversations about race with individuals who do not agree with her views. Barbara's emotions and White fragility were palpable throughout our interview. Nancy was also explicit in her desire to avoid conflict. This participant states, "I am not confrontational so I kind of just nod me head and walk away from confrontations. Race is one that although I am not racist I do not want to offend" (Nancy, UY). In comparison, the participants from UY tended to admit that they did not like confrontations and usually placated their peers by walking away or nodding their head without response.

A few participants expressed a sense of emotional distance from race. For instance, Rita expressed, "I don't usually get too emotional about race because I do not have all the history with it. I feel like People of Color are more likely to have emotions because of what they experience." (Rita, UX). I found this statement conflicting with Rita's earlier statement of having race forced on her in the professional environment. It was as if she was getting rattled in her earlier statement but attempts to become emotionless and indifferent in this later statement. Rita was not alone in her sentiment of race as "their" problem. Blue also expressed distance from race. She said, "I feel like I'm a privileged White person that doesn't get emotional about race because I don't have a lot of baggage with race. But if they compare their race, oppression to what I've been through, with my lesbian oppression then, I could get emotional about it." Blue not only expresses distance from race specifically, she compares her oppression as a lesbian to that of racial oppression. In this example, she is beginning to use another marginalized identity to relate experiences she had as a lesbian. This is also an example of using other identities to navigate the racial conversation. Blue also indicates that if oppression or in this case racism, is not perceived to have a direct impact on her as a White Lesbian women, then it is likely to be treated passively unless interacting with Person of Color.

Emotions occupy a prominent role in how White women navigate race in a professional student affairs environment. Within institutions of higher education, emotions are provided with a strong foundation of White supremacy. Emotions are not only innate, but they are also reflections of the power structure in society. Matias (2016) describes socialization of emotions as follows, "…dependent on the social hierarchies of who is expressing the feeling, who is receiving the feelings, the surrounding structures, and the power relations within that structure" (p. 72). White women hold a prominent place in the hierarchical racial power structure. Their emotional responses to race can be used to deflect race and even shield themselves from addressing race. White women use emotions whether consciously or subconsciously to reinforce the image of goodness and powerlessness they have amassed over the course of history. Accapadi (2007) tells us that the White woman's reality is acknowledged, visible and even legitimized because of her emotions including her tears. While the woman of Color's reality is invisible and unacknowledged.

Emotional responses differed between institutions. Participants on the UY campus came across as more emotionally intense than participants on the UX campus. Participants on the UY campus exhibited anger, tears and anxiety more freely than UX participants. Barbara uses humor to deflect and walk away from discussions with differing points of view. Jordan on the other hand blatantly expresses that she avoids racial conversations altogether when possible. Responses from UY participants exuded intense emotional reactions when compared to those on the UX campus. Suzie is on the UX campus and she is an example of a participant using data to inform the conversation. Suzie states, "If you look at higher ed White women are overrepresented and the data shows that we give good jobs to White students and hourly jobs to students of Color" (Suzie, UX). Suzie's responses often include data or a sense that the topic of

discussion is cerebral. This could be attributed to the research one status of UX where staff often have access to scholars at the forefront of the Equity scholarship. Additionally, UX is located in a diverse urban environment where there is access to an array of cultural experiences. In contrast, UY is isolated and located in a predominately White location where race may not the topic of discussion as often as it is on the UX campus. Therefore, when race is the focus it stirs emotions and reactions from participants in an intense manner.

### Distance from Racial Terminology

Several participants displayed distance from racial terminology throughout the interview process. Bonilla-Silva (2006) described the avoidance from racial terminology as one of five elements that compose the new racial structure in the United States. The avoidance of racial terminology is connected to the ever-growing claim of reverse racism by Whites (Bonilla-Silva, 2014) and a more insidious method of racism without referring to racist terminology. In many instances, participants avoid race while discussing social justice work. Instead of mentioning specific issues related to racial justice, many used terms such as “multicultural”, “social justice” or “equality”. Several participants in this study exhibited an avoidance of racial terminology. For instance, when the interview focused on describing a racial incident in the professional environment, Believe, whose career in student affairs spans a little over twenty years in admissions, responded to the question in two ways. First, she never mentioned racial terminology. Second, she portrayed herself as the victim throughout the whole description. She described the incident as follows:

> We had a group coming in from Asia who were taking tours of the campus and meetings with various departments and they wanted to come and learn about the U.S. educational system. So, it was a delegation of 25 from Korea. I gave the presentation, and partially

was crucified because I was young. So, we had not put the most senior person in the room on respect thing, but then when it was time to go and do the tour and take pictures, they all stood around me and touched my head because I'm blond. (Believe, UX)

Believe never mentions race in this response yet the question was completely focused on race. This was not the first time this participant avoided racial terminology. She would use phrases such as ‘low-income communities” or “they” to describe People of Color. In the above response, she positioned herself as a victim of racism aligned with how a Person of Color may experience racism in regard to an invasion of space and exotification such as inappropriate touching of hair. Believe went on to describe,

> I had been so dismissed during the conversations either because of my age and hierarchy or also because I'm female, so there's a bit of like, "Why are you not having a male give this presentation?" So, I had been already kind of dismissed on so many levels, but I just found it was weird that it just was like, "And you feel like you can also touch me too? It was a bit racist. (Believe, UX)

In this response, there is no reference to race in either of these descriptions. The participant did not hesitate to use terminology that describes her gender or age at the time of the incident. In fact, what I found intriguing about this participant is that she would maneuver through describing racial interactions without using racial terminology and substituting it with other identities while positioning herself as the target of the incident.

One element that I found in common between Believe, Jordan and Rita, is the sense of victimization that is presented when these participants discuss race. Jordan and Rita felt that they were force fed racial discussion in the professional environment and felt targeted as a White people. Jordan’s expression of pressure to engage in racial dialogues or any diversity

programming and Rita's philosophy of engaging in race only when she is obligated in the professional environment are instances that lead these women to feeling force fed racial issues. Both Jordan and Rita feel targeted when race is a focus of conversation. From their perspective, discussing Whiteness is not perceived as a structural issue but it is perceived as an interpersonal issue. Meaning they cannot separate the structural from the interpersonal association of race and Whiteness. This leads to the feeling of being targeted as a White person. Additionally, Jordan felt that she had no place in the racial discussions that took place in the professional environment. She felt left out and in turn distanced herself from anything that was connected to race. Believe took a different angle by substituting the place a Person of Color would have in a response with herself. When asked to describe a racial incident in the workplace, Believe, portrayed herself as the victim (recipient) of oppressive behavior. She replaced race with age and reverse racialized the situation by describing the interaction between the group from Asia and the color of her hair. It was almost as if she told the story to align with well documented descriptions of African Americans dealing with an invasion of personal space due to other people invasively touching their hair. Another example of this form of victimization came from Blue when she describes a racial incident with a Student of Color, "A student was screaming and yelling. And she looked at me and she said, "You have blue eyes. I don't want to talk to you." (Blue, UY). Here Blue never uses racial terminology but responds to my question about providing a description of a racial interaction and uses herself as the target. Blue also continues her response to the question by referring to her identity as a Lesbian to connect with the student. Blue states, "You don't know who I am. And even though I have blue eyes, it doesn't mean I haven't gone through something similar to what you're going through." Blue minimizes the Student of Color's feelings by using another targeted social identity to align herself with the student's experience instead of taking

into account the experiences of this Student of Color apart from herself. Furthermore, out of all of the examples Blue could have shared, she chose to use this example in her response to my question. Several other participants used similar methods to avoid the usage of the word race or racial terminology in their descriptions. This is an important section to note that this is an example of the difference between how women of Color and White women navigate womanhood. Many participants recognized that a privilege in being a White woman was to be able to navigate away from race towards other marginalized identities. For instance, Maggie describes this as follows, “White women tend to gravitate away from race when we feel uncomfortable. In those moments, we tend to gravitate toward gender or if we have a disability that or like I tended to do more in the beginning my sexual orientation” (UY). What Maggie describes is the alignment with comfort zones. She framed it as the difficulty people have with being uncomfortable, so they grasp at whatever comfort they have access to in the moment. In this instance it is a relatable identity that is also subordinate.

### Identity as a Minimization Tool

Most participants at one point or another used another identity to minimize race. They honed into other marginalized identities to navigate through a racial conversation. Identities used included sexual orientation, gender, and religion. Francine who is in her late twenties has been a student affairs professional for 6 years and holds a position in Student Life. She outlines this practice in her following statement, “I think oftentimes, White women especially White women in student affairs, we often only see our underrepresented identity of being a woman, and so it's really easy for us to compare our experiences to those of our colleagues of Color and say, "Oh, I've had to deal with the same thing." (Francine, UY). Participants often recognized that this discursive maneuver was used by themselves at times and generally recognized it as a common

practice for White women across the board. Francine indicated that White women used gender to attempt to relate to People of Color and place themselves on the same level of oppression. I found that Francine had a high level of self-awareness juxtaposed with a level of guilt for using these discursive maneuvers herself in certain contexts. She is aware of the maneuvering White women engage in when it comes to addressing race as well as aligning with a comfortable component of their identity that can be used to attempt to relate to oppression. Additionally, Francine expressed guilt when we discussed professional dynamics between People of Color and Whites. She described herself in the following way, "I take up too much space sometimes and I know it. It is not until after the fact that I feel bad because I am not always conscious when it is happening. I feel like I am programmed to do it" (UY). Francine is aware of her spatial dominance but feels regret after the fact. It is as if her Whiteness takes over in the moment until she has some time to reflect on her actions and perhaps the reaction of colleagues that surround her in the professional environment.

In Francine's first example she focused on gender, but Rita maneuvered her way around race while pointing out that she has a disability and she is a woman. This makes discussing race easier for Rita. She addressed this in the following description, "I too have to navigate between being a woman and having a disability. I think skin color is something we can get past and its better now than it was in the past" (Rita, UX).

Blue illustrated this method in her response to the question, how often do you discuss race in a professional environment? Blue's response was,

> We discuss race during trainings, we talk about just, everyone has differences, and that we should appreciate them, seek them out, and celebrate them. And we really emphasize that to our students, and they know that we come from a place of ... John (coworker,

identifies as gay) comes from a place of oppression and I come from a place of oppression, and we really want to teach our students that we are open to all walks of life, all colors. Everybody is welcome here. So, we really try to stress that. (Blue, UY)

In this response, Blue uses her identity as a lesbian in an attempt to establish a common understanding with students and level the conversation with her marginalized identity. She also emphasizes that differences are celebrated and introduces a surface level celebration of racial differences while avoiding the difficult conversations and questions that come with a diverse environment. This level of racial celebration focuses on the equality aspect of race without acknowledging the deeper level of equity. This aligns with Blue's comments such as "I am not racist obviously" or "I come from oppression too" throughout the interview. By comparing her experience as a lesbian, Blue is denying that People of Color have unique experiences and different obstacles to overcome than she does as a lesbian. Furthermore, I found it conflicting that Blue often presented herself as racially conscious but exuded a racial boundary throughout the interview process. She would explore race to a certain depth and would not allow me to take our conversation deeper. This participant also establishes a tone in her professional environment that may communicate to People of Color around her that they are not able to discuss race beyond the light version this participant utilizes in her professional practice. Yet, she establishes a cushioned impact by retreating into her own marginalized identity while establishing the racial boundary. Additionally, Blue expressed that she did not discuss race at home nor did she think about it often. This makes her claim that she is not racist or has a high level of awareness questionable.

Another instance comes from Sally who has been in the field of student affairs for twenty years and holds a role in Student Health Education. Her programming focuses on wellness for

students and staff. Sally identifies as Jewish and is clear throughout the interview that for her, when she thinks of her racial identity, she is perceived as a White woman on the surface by society, but she gravitates towards being Jewish. She describes her experience as follows, "I have been told I am a White woman." and "Society's label of me as a White woman does not get to who I am but it focuses on how I look." Sally also states, "Collective trauma has informed who I am and the pride I feel in being Jewish" (Sally, UX). The interview with Sally was enlightening because she was balancing between acknowledging that society recognizes her as a White woman and she recognized all the privileges that accompany that categorization. While simultaneously pulling from her religious and ethnic identity as a Jewish identified individual to complete her racial identity. The "collective trauma" Sally makes reference to is associated with her grandparents and other relatives she lost in the Holocaust. When I followed up with the question, do you think the historical trauma deeply affects how you view your racial identity? Sally affirms that without that trauma she may view herself as just a White woman with cultural Jewish ties.

What makes Sally so intriguing, is her description of how her identity plays out in her work. She states, "I have a lot of African American males connect with me on campus. We discuss our history and we connect. Many times, I also find that a few of them have Jewish mothers and then it makes sense" (Sally, UX). Sally indicated to me that she uses her history to connect with Students of Color. In particularly, African American males. Sally also uses her Jewish identity to attempt to align herself with African American culture. She does this in the following quote,

> I have to say two things like in what used to be called the black power movement in the 60s when women, men too, but women it was more impressive, were not straightening

> their hair. And they were all wearing afros and let their hair grow out naturally. That gave a lot of permission to a lot of Jewish girls, who just started letting their hair go also around that time. That was influential even though it wasn't me because my hair wasn't like that. (Sally, UX)

Throughout our interview Sally used references like this to describe how she connects with students of Color and attempts to understand race in the United States.

Most participants channeled other identities to develop their understanding of race. In some instances, I found this practice to be oppressive but in other instances, I witnessed well intentioned White women using their marginalized identities to grapple with the racial realities that exist on their campuses. This aligns with what Accapadi (2007) refers to as one up (White) and one down (women) identities. White women can deflect and evade racial discussions on the one hand and use their identities to align with the aspects of racial discussions that they find comfortable on the other. One common theme throughout the data collection process is that the majority of these women describe using their identities in an evolution of their racial consciousness as they progressed in age, education and careers.

Participants at both UY and UX use identity as a minimization tool. The only difference between UX and UY is that religion is used to minimize but it is not used by participants at UY. My notes and observations indicate that the UY campus has less religious activity than UX. On the UX campus it is common to observe an array of religions and religious programming. My observations on the UY campus indicate that religious life is quiet. The small amount of religious activity that does exist is protestant centered and homogenous. The religious composition can be attributed to the low level of diversity in the surrounding area and the reputation of the campus as a progressive bastion of liberalism may deter a robust religious life.

## Evolution of Awareness

One common thread among all participants is the description of the evolution of their racial consciousness. There was a common description of an initial level of racial awareness as colorblind. Initially, participants described this stage of their racial consciousness as a blissful time in their lives because the awareness of racial realities created a dissonance that was at times too painful to confront. Others describes ah-ha moments in their development. The majority of participants all agreed that the field of student affairs shaped their racial consciousness.

Marie has been in the student affairs profession for 26 years and holds a senior leadership position. She has experience in different functional areas of student affairs including student conduct, case management and advising. The in-depth discussion of race throughout our interview gave the experience an emotional tone. Marie exhibited an awareness of her racial identity in many instances throughout the interview. Additionally, she also gave a clear trajectory of her growth process throughout her career. She states,

> I will tell you very briefly how ignorant I was in '85-'86 I transitioned from academic affairs to student services. A round table to discuss the findings of our first Campus Climate Survey was held, particularly focusing on the experience of students of Color in contrast to White students. As I sat in that room and as the facilitator discussed the experience of students of Color, and how they felt oppressed, or what they faced, I became A, incredibly defensive. I spoke up and said, I have to object. We are all equal in this country! (Marie, UY)

Marie went on to describe this incident as the first uncomfortable racial discussion of her career. I found that for most women in this study, moments like Marie's where the initial introduction of difficult conversations, ignited a process of racial consciousness development or at least

reflection. This is not surprising since all but one participant grew up in predominantly White neighborhoods and never thought about race until they found themselves in an institution of higher education as a student or professional. Marie entered this journey to awareness with a colorblind lens focused on equality as most of these women. She described her defensiveness at the thought of the existence of racial disparities, “I guess I did not think about these issues because I didn’t have to since now I know I don’t live with them racially until I began my work in student services” (Marie, UY). This echoes other participants in that student affairs whether in graduate school or in a professional role was credited in providing an environment to engage in some type of racial reflection.

I found that Marie’s current state was far from what she initially described as she stated,

> A colleague of mine pointed out rightfully that I am white, I'm a well-intentioned liberal, and have not been through his experience, where he as a man of Color did grow up and face racial oppression. He and I had a disagreement regarding a student conduct matter where a Student of Color was about to be removed and I was accused of being too protective. (Marie, UY)

This participant was initially colorblind and moved to a self-awareness over the years. I asked Marie if her career in student affairs contributed to this development and she agreed completely. She indicated to me that her work as a staff member in academic affairs did not include exposure to conversations and work focused on racial equity. The sentiment that the field of student affairs contributed to racial awareness was unanimous among all participants in this study.

Another example of an evolution of racial awareness comes from Denise. She holds a role in International Student Services and she has been in the student affairs field for a little over seven years. She discussed an “ah-ha” moment when she began to understand the intersection of

race and gender. She had traveled to Ghana during her time as a student and indicated to me that this moment impacts how she recognizes her racial and gender identity. She described a foundational moment as follows,

> I was the only White person in this class, and there was a Black woman who spoke up and said something in reference to the professor's question, and I had one thing to add, so I just sort of paraphrased what she had said and then I added my one thing. The professor responded completely differently to me, like much more positively. He was almost apathetic and didn't really say much to her, like he kind of just brushed by her. I think that that was a crucial moment where I realized how my race helped me even when I didn't deserve it or when I said exactly the same thing as someone else said. (Denise, UX)

I found Denise's example important because the scenario above describes the moment she realizes her racial privilege despite her marginalized identity as a woman. Yet earlier in our conversation Denise described her marginalization as a science major and how being ignored by her instructor led to her academic exit from the sciences. Denise described that she struggled to reconcile her racial privilege with her cisgender identity. Again, this participant credits the field of student affairs in aiding her development. She indicates this when she stated, "I definitely believe that I would not think about race if I was in another profession. I have so much work to do in this area but what I have come to realize is a result of many trainings, dialogues and working with students" (Denise, UX). This response was typical of all participants who indicate that a profession in student affairs moved them forward in their understanding of race. Not only was the expectation to engage present in the professional environment at various times, these

experiences gave these women the opportunity to discuss their reservations as well as confirm what they learned about themselves.

Most participants attributed their observation skills to these developmental opportunities. Denise exhibits this as follows,

> Since then I feel like on campus in my job I feel like I'd notice in meetings a lot who's speaking and how much they're speaking, I feel like it is kind of chronic where White people and White men take up more space than women and in particular women of Color and People of Color. (Denise, UX)

I find this excerpt is important because it helps magnify Denise's progression from a young White woman struggling with racial privilege to a professional attuned to the racial nuances of her professional environment. The entire data sample of women exhibited some movement from colorblindness to awareness. This is not to infer that as a result of this process, participants did not exhibit White privilege or White fragility in the professional environment. Despite the insistence from several participants that they are racially aware, the tendency to re-center Whiteness as well as challenge it throughout the interview process was salient.

Participants at both institutions credited the field of student affairs for providing opportunities to develop racial consciousness at some level. Abigail from the UX campus indicates as follows, "I would never have the opportunities to talk about race in any other field and relate it to my experience as a White Jewish woman" (Abigail, UX). Brittany also echoes Abigail, "Since I started working in the field, I can tell you my views have changed so much. Maybe I am not as evolved as I should be, but I can tell you I have evolved at some level" (Brittany, UX). This is consistent among both institutions.

## Re-centering and Challenging Whiteness in Student Affairs

*Semantics as Re-centering Whiteness*

Although many participants used the term "woke" throughout the interview process to indicate that they are aware of their racial privilege and awareness, the tendency to re-center Whiteness manifested during the interview process. Re-centering Whiteness came to the forefront through the language used to describe communities of Color, emotional responses to racial discourse, and spatial dominance. On the other hand, most participants demonstrated a commitment to grapple with issues of racial equity in the professional environment. This commitment came to the forefront as they described their attempts to confront microaggressive behavior and although they sometimes did not intervene successfully, most participants were still willingly grappling with race. Additionally, most participants were also able to identify problematic personal behaviors that reinforced the racial hierarchy. For instance, Francine identified her tendency to dominate space other participants identified behaviors such as fear of African Americans and an exotification of Latinx peers.

The language most participants tended to use re-centered Whiteness throughout the interview process. When asked whether racial equity was important in student affairs Blue responded,

> It is important, but I think we make it important. It is not a personal issue for me, so I have a hard time saying that this is something to discuss on a daily basis. I think we should value everyone and maybe that is the way. (Blue, UY)

Blue's response is an example of the colorblindness that participants often defaulted into during racial discourse. This is an example of normalized colorblind discourse. This aligns with Blue's responses of "I am not racist" and "I cannot be oppressive" throughout the interview process. At

one point during the interview, while demonstrating the colorblind narrative she contradicted herself, “I really haven’t spent much time with them (African Americans) and don’t know much about their issues on campus but I feel much more at ease discussing race with Latinx colleagues or students” (Blue, UY). In this example, Blue’s racist tendencies surfaced during her attempt to demonstrate her colorblindness. When I followed up and asked whether she believed this was racist she replied, “No I am not racist I am just not familiar and sometimes I feel scorned by them (African Americans)” (Blue, UY). This response not only demonstrates racist language but also feelings of disgust (Matias & Zembylas, 2014). Institutional Newspapers, flyers and local newspapers indicate that at the time of this interview there was a tense discussion on campus between students specifically students of Color and campus administrators regarding salaries across the UY campus. According to one article (Institutional Newspaper, 2018) there was a tense confrontation between administrators, student affairs personnel and students. Blue indicated that they were involved in a confrontation with an African American student. Blue demonstrates a sense of aversion for the Other in what could be interpreted as an overt display of racial bias in the responses provided. This was not an isolated instance as it was demonstrated by several participants. A sense of disgust, fear or pity would be displayed for a Person of Color and then softened with language.

Becca spent over 25 years in residential life and exhibited emotional responses throughout the interview process. When asked to share a racial interaction with a colleague her response was, “Sometimes I'm not sure what to do with people's noticing of inequalities, whether I agree with them” (Becca, UX). When I asked Becca to clarify this response she said, “I mean I have a biracial family and I just wonder of it is always the correct interpretation of how things are in our professional environment. I want everybody to feel valued” (Becca, UX). In my

interview with Becca, I found that she felt at liberty to question racial interactions and the perceptions of People of Color. When she would find herself questioning a Person of Color's reaction or perception of race, she would use phrases such as, "My child is biracial" or "My husband is of Color, so I know…" to soften the impact of a White woman questioning a Person of Color. The angle she often took was the angle of concern and the approach of establishing equality in the professional environment. Becca often ended her display of caring with "But I don't know what to do about that" or "That is not my decision to make" indicating that there would be no follow up or action to accompany her display of caring. Displays of caring surfaced frequently throughout the interview process with phrases such as "I care deeply" or "Racism is bad but…". Queenie who has been in the student affairs field for 30 years aligned with Becca in her responses. This participant strongly identifies with Jewish heritage and she states, "My family is like a rainbow. I have biracial nieces and nephews and my brother in-law is Black" (Queenie, UX). Queenie then goes on to describe her racial interaction, "Sometimes people here get special attention. Now do not misunderstand me I am Jewish you know but African Americans it is understood that you never say "no" to them here and I do not think that is fair" (Queenie, UX). The participant went on to explain that there is not a racist tendency in them.

In order to give these interviews more context, there were two discourses dominating UX at the time. First, a White feminist actress was on campus who sparked an intense discussion about White feminism. Records such as institutional newspapers and marketing materials indicate that this discussion affected the entire campus, including student affairs. Many White professionals indicate that they are involved in biracial relationships and feel a sense of racial validation from that association. Becca could have been reflecting the climate issue of the time. Additionally, there was an intense conflict between pro-Israeli and pro-Palestinian students on

the UX campus. Many Jewish students, staff and faculty felt that they were victims of anti-Semitism. Queenie kept referring to her Jewish identity throughout conversation.

Many participants at both institutions re-centered Whiteness by disregarding the terminology People of Color utilized to describe themselves. Two instances come from Rita and Believe. As I used the term People of Color, these participants would refer to People of Color as non-White and at times the term colored people would be used in a response to a question. Note Rita's response, "Colored people have the floor when it comes to race. It is like as a White person I cannot comment or interject I am always wrong so what is the point" (Rita, UX). My response to Rita was, "Your phrase "colored people" is interesting. That term is no longer in use but the term "People of Color" is commonly used by communities of Color to self-describe." As we continued our conversation, Rita mentioned that at times she does use these terms in a professional environment. She claims that she forgets to use the appropriate term. Believe exhibited the same tendency as well. This was contradictory to these participants self-description as racially conscious White women. I found this to be the case at both institutions but in particular more so with older participants. Throughout the interview I would carefully provide information regarding racially terminology and its origins. As we continued with the interview process, both participants would continue to use the terms non-White and colored people. Thus, reinforcing Whiteness through language.

*Re-centering Whiteness Through Emotions*

As discussed earlier, participants exhibited a variety of emotions throughout the interview process. I found this form of response intriguing because the emotions displayed by participants tended to refocus the conversation on them as individuals and not the issue of racism. One emotional response that was common was in the form of tears. Whether it was during the

interview process or as an example shared by a participant, tears were by far the most common form of emotional response throughout this study. Maggie, who has been a student affairs professional for over four years and holds a role in residential life describes the internal conflict she experiences while engaging in racial conversations,

> I try to not be motivated by White guilt but sometimes it sneaks its way in there. I try to be conscientious that when I cry in meetings how it can derail a conversation and shift the focus onto my feelings rather than the issue at hand. (Maggie, UY)

Maggie's description of crying indicates that there is a level of racial self-awareness present. She describes how her emotions can derail a conversation that is dedicated to unpacking race and shifts the focus onto her emotions by changing the dynamics. Instead of addressing the issue of race, other professionals tend to focus on Maggie's feelings and this can result in an attempt to console her or shift the conversation. Kelly also describes her White tears as follows,

> I just can't take it sometimes and I begin to cry. When I was younger, I thought maybe it is because I am a girl. Socialized sexism I know. But now I cry more out of frustration and sadness but before it was out of anger for having my racism called out. I would think I am a good person you know? How dare you! And that was the end of that conversation. (Kelly, UY)

As a result of using tears, the focus on race in these conversations has been shifted to another topic that does not upset Maggie or Kelly. Maggie further explains, "I would cry when people would address an issue with me or "call me out" and I get super defensive but as I engaged and learned more about race, I began to work on that. Someone once told her to consider being called out a gift and that framed it for me. I am still working on it." Several participants expressed that they cry when discussing race in certain moments, but Maggie's response is distinctive because

she describes a sense of internal conflict. She is clearly aware of the impact her emotional reaction will have in a professional environment and she attempts to mitigate it as best she can while engaging. As for Kelly, she admits she still struggles with crying when addressing race.

Maggie displayed an ever-evolving sense of awareness of her racial identity in her professional environment. Additionally, I found that in hindsight Maggie displayed a tendency to recognize how her emotional reactions affect the professional climate. She would often articulate how she would alter her behavior, control her reactions and explain her changed behavior in similar situations. Like several other participants in this study, Maggie displayed anti-racist tendencies while unpacking personal racial baggage. She consciously pushed herself to situate herself on the threshold between what is comfortable to her and racial dissonance. Maggie emphasized this when she stated,

> Sometimes I sit in a meeting listening to the bullshit unfold. I have to admit at times I stay silent but I push myself to speak up. It is hard especially when your boss is the perpetrator. As time went on I found myself silent less and less. Not always perfect but not always silent. (Maggie, UY)

This quote struck me because right before this statement, we were discussing the internal struggle of addressing White fragility that may lead to White silence. Maggie indicated that it took some time for her to realize that silence is just as damaging in a student affairs environment or any professional environment. Although other participants articulated anti-racist tendencies, Maggie went in depth to discuss her internal struggle in a clear manner without much prompting. It was clear to me that she has reflected about race and her role for some time.

*Challenging Whiteness in Student Affairs*

Parallel to re-centering Whiteness, several participants demonstrated that they consciously engaged with racial dissonance and challenged themselves to disrupt White supremacy within student affairs organizations. At times, participants found themselves re-centering Whiteness and recognizing this tendency during the interview process. Several women would use these moments to relate it to their process within the professional environment. An instance was demonstrated by Harper, who is in her mid-twenties and has been working in residential life for almost five years. She caught herself re-centering Whiteness when she described leaving her hotel during a conference and ventured into a predominantly Black neighborhood:

> I was like, so upset just because it was men catcalling and I was alone, and I felt like I was dressed nice, and I could have been robbed or something because I was all by myself, or was I extra uncomfortable because it was black men? A different layer, because of that dynamic, I was the only White person, and I'm a White woman, and there were a bunch of black men around. (Harper, UY)

I found that Harper was sincere in her follow up to this description. She indicated that she recognized in back of her mind that she was reacting with fear to being around so many Black men. Harper did not know what to do with this realization and felt guilty. DiAngelo (2018) addresses the sense of belonging White people have throughout their lives. They have been born into a culture in which they are reflected and rare for Whites to experience a sense of not belonging racially. Harper experiences a rare sense of not belonging and DiAngelo (2018) underscores that these moments are usually short temporary experiences. The temporary feeling of not racially belonging are frames for Whites as scary or unsafe (DiAngelo, 2018) and thus

Harper's feelings of safety are compromised. Harper made no attempts to excuse her feelings, rather she was processing how she felt and what this meant for her as a student affairs professional who believes in social justice. Harper then connected the incident she described within the context of her everyday interactions with her colleagues. "I realize as a younger professional I may have based decisions on race and that sickens me when I think about it. I have to own up to it and change" (Harper, UY). She went on to describe that she challenges herself to be present in situations where she can leave her comfort zone because it is necessary. She said, "I have to have those uncomfortable conversations about White supremacy and how ingrained it is even when trying to do social justice work" (Harper, UY). This participant points out that growth is uncomfortable, and it is necessary to become a reliable racial justice ally. Self-awareness and a plan to tackle the historical trauma embedded within her when it emerges is essential in doing social justice work.

During the interview with Harper, UY was engaged in an intense discussion about safety on and off campus. One specific issue was the safety of Black men in the community as they interact with White community members and particularly White women. Marketing materials from that period indicate that there was a safety forum and harper was in attendance a few days before this interview took place. This may explain Harper's in-depth reflection of the reaction towards Black men when Harper attended a conference.

Maggie provides an example of racial dynamics in a professional meeting space as follows:

> I have been reading about how White women are deemed as innocent creatures in a sense. We are women and femininity and all this stuff. It is interesting to have that placed on me. I benefit from people seeing me as this innocent person and I can get away with more like with the questions I ask in meetings. Like our Director, who is a White male, I

> can get away with asking pointed questions more than my other colleagues. They have challenged him, and he has reacted very harshly to them and they are People of Color. (Maggie, UY)

This statement makes a reference to historical images or understandings of a group of people. Maggie is pulling from our U.S. historical narrative and applying it to the professional environment. She provides an example and connects it to the manifestation of power and privilege in professional spaces. Maggie is self-aware that instead of feeling like she is being policed, she is allowed to push boundaries. Yet, her colleagues of Color are not afforded the same treatment. It seems that Maggie is protected by her manager and she is aware that historically speaking White men have protected cisgender White women. Many women in this study indicated a sense of protection and coddling by White men in the professional environment. This translates into more career opportunities and flexibility for participants as White women. She indicated that she is trying to use her power to make way for People of Color in the student affairs profession by supporting People of Color in professional spaces and making sure they are heard. What I found interesting is that Maggie and Harper both are working through their Whiteness and trying to figure out how to use it for positive change.

Beverly illustrates a sense of awareness as well as a sense of urgency to act on her awareness. The participant describes this as follows:

> I come from a poor rural community up north. I am lucky to even be here at UX and it took me some time to understand that even though I am poor my Whiteness gave me an advantage. I used to use my gender as Woman along with class as an example of being minoritized. I realize that this is not the same, so I wanted to do something to create awareness. As an undergraduate, I read everything about race and in my doctorate

> program I conducted research focused on race with peers of Color. Now as a professional I continue to read and learn as well as facilitate as a White person and specifically as a White woman when I can do it. I feel like I am doing something. (Beverly, UX)

Beverly's example illustrates a concrete outcome that emanated from her process of thinking about race and class as a White women. Suzie's process also began as a cerebral struggle and progressed into some concrete action. For instance, Suzie states,

> I could not understand for a long time why women of Color would be upset with me when I cry during a racial conversation. I thought I was expressing empathy, but it was not until later that I realized even if I was crying in a professional space, our country is so messed up that there is a historical piece at play. I try to lead discussions on campus about crying and what that does. I think it is hard because higher ed is so masculine and crying is chalked up to a female thing especially White women. (Suzie, UX)

Just like Maggie, Suzie connects her tears to a larger phenomenon. Suzie also connected the localized location of the professional environment with the larger broader picture of history. Suzie went on to say, "Now it is easier for me to say, "hey this is bigger than you" and explain this from a historical perspective. I think that is essential". This participant related her habit of crying to a larger context.

All participants were asked whether the field of student affairs has shaped how they think of themselves as White women and what it means to them to be a White woman in student affairs. All but one participant replied that the field has provided opportunities to think about how they function in the world and more specifically in the professional world with White privilege. Barbara describes the process, "I don't think I would have the opportunity to unpack

my White self and Woman self in any other field like this. It does not have to be a training but everyday conversations" (Barbara, UY). Sally also points out opportunities she has encountered to reflect,

> Even when there are uncomfortable conversations that point out my White privilege are not easy, but they are opportunities for me think about what do I do on a daily basis? What does action look like? I have to say it looks like learning, allowing myself to be questioned and engage in the discomfort that is race. It is not just about getting along with my colleagues of Color, but it is challenging the unfairness that is the machine. (Sally, UX)

The training and professional development differed between institutions but at some level almost all participants indicated that they were affected emotionally and cerebrally by the learning opportunity. UY tended to partner with the community more to provide training to SA staff. This is most likely due to the small nature of the community and because there is a stronger tie between the community and the campus. As a research one institution, UX has more access to world renowned faculty and practitioners who are at the forefront of student affairs and equity. Most participants indicated that it was difficult for them to separate their gender identity as women and think of themselves as White because as women they have been struggling with equality. Most indicated that it was difficult perceiving themselves as an oppressor or microaggressor.

Most participants expressed that to be a White woman in student affairs means to listen, reflect, be aware of how much space one takes, and some responded that it is a responsibility. Sarah from UY expresses her sentiments as follows,

> For me to be a White women in student affairs means that I have a lot of power. Even if I am a woman, I am still White. I see many White women align themselves with White men because of the power association. For me it means that I need to hold my fellow White women accountable and point this out to them. I have to be the vocal one not women of Color or colleagues of Color. (Sarah, UY)

Sarah made an important observation echoed by Maggie, "I try to the best I can, but the worst is when I see another White women betray her gender to align with racial power. White women who hold leadership positions reify White supremacy by mimicking White males" (Maggie, UY). Maggie went to on to articulate how she has not figured out how to confront this yet. The sense of responsibility participants speak of means to address issues with other White women and hold them accountable. Brittany from the UX campus gave a similar view on the meaning of moving through the profession as a White women,

> I didn't get it right away, but we have a lot of White women in charge here. I think about it all the time that we are everywhere in student affairs. That gives us power. I mean we have power, but institutional power is something else. I know other White women who feel guarded like they cannot trust People of Color because they are going to get yelled at or something, but I think we have a responsibility to use our power for good. (Brittany, UX)

## Conclusion

The topic of race in student affairs solicited deep emotional responses from participants with some using other marginalized identities to address race, while others distanced themselves from race through language or the absence of racial terminology. A common theme across all participants is the development of racial consciousness over the course of their career. This

indicates that participants have shifted from a colorblind perspective into an awareness at some level that racism is an issue in the United States and in student affairs. Emotions emerged as a common theme across all women in connection to the racial dialogue we engaged in throughout the interview process. At times, these emotions centered on guilt but quickly transformed along the spectrum of self-victimization, helplessness and disrespect for People of Color. Several women grappled with their racial privilege and surprisingly many were thinking through utilizing their racial privilege to address racism. Finally, several utilized discursive tactics to indicate that they were not comfortable engaging in racial discourse. These findings are important in their contribution to a deeper understanding of Whiteness in student affairs.

## Chapter Six: Discussion and Conclusion

This study sought to understand the ways White women use to navigate race in the student affairs professional environment, how various identities are utilized in navigation of race and the manner in which White women reify and challenge White supremacy in student affairs. To these ends, this study utilized two frameworks—colorblind racism and emotionality of Whiteness frameworks to investigate the process of racial navigation in the professional environment. To achieve this goal, I sought to understand how White women engage with racial dynamics on campus while carrying out their professional roles. Next, I focused on the interplay of identities and how White women integrate other identities in their understanding of themselves as White people. Finally, I focused on investigating how White women support and perpetrate White supremacy as a system as well as how they might challenge the dominant racial structure in a professional student affairs environment.

### Summary of Findings

The findings indicate that emotions are a significant mechanism used by White Women. I use Figure 2.0 to help summarize the findings. Once again as a reminder this is a visualization of how the findings manifested within the context of this study. The image indicates that the findings are influenced by the socialization process. The socialization process is where participants receive direct messages about race as they grow up within their familial context. Along with direct messages participants also receive indirect as well as implicit messages. The family is the primary source of racial messages. Within the context of this study, White women received messages about People of Color and race, but race was not connected to them as Whites. The absence of a connection to race insulates participants from race-based discourse or interactions. Instead, the White women in this study learned to approach race as a Person of

Color issue. These racial messages are reinforced through the media and with images of People of Color as well as the educational system with curriculum developed by Whites for Whites. Institutions are designed to guard Whites and Whiteness through representation, in curriculum, media, movies and advertising (DiAngelo, 2018). It is also important to point out that the omission of race as a White topic supports the development of White fragility and White privilege (DiAngelo, 2018). At the core of the image, the participant is located and embedded in the emotions frame. Most participants indicate that they began their racial journey with a colorblind lens. When colorblindness is disrupted, there are emotional responses such as denial, self-victimization, helplessness, anxiety or guilt. The double pointed arrows in between emotions and colorblindness indicate that these two areas feed into one another. When a participant is in denial, feels victimized, feels helpless, anxious or guilty, they can retreat back into the colorblind framework to avoid racial dialogue or race in general. The findings indicate that this process is not linear and most of the time it is contradictory. Socialization is located right above colorblindness because as Bonilla-Silva (2014), Cabrera and Spanierman (2015), Matias (2016a) and DiAngelo (2011, 2012, 2018) indicate, colorblindness and emotions are shaped by the socialization process. The arrows are pointing one way from socialization to colorblindness because a participant's racial lens is shaped during the socialization process and as the findings indicate in this study, the socialization process is not impacted by colorblindness. An important note is that emotions are also socialized and can very well be situated in the same space as colorblindness and vice versa. Hence, the two-way arrows indicating that they feed into one another. During the socialization process, bias and racism are internalized, and these concepts move through the other areas and manifest in different ways in the professional environment. Shifting focus back onto the participant, the arrow below signifies all three areas (colorblindness,

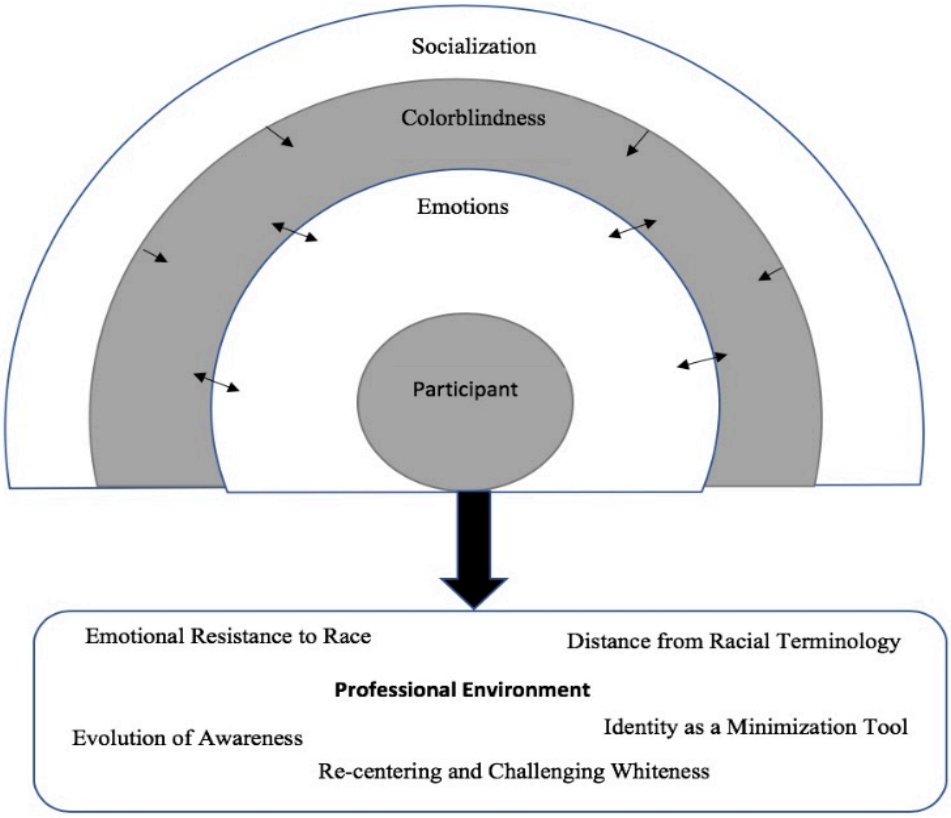
emotions, and their socialization process). The participant enters the professional environment with all three areas in the form of the themes that manifested within the findings of this study. Emotions are embedded throughout the findings and as Matias (2016a), Cabrera and Spanierman (2015) as well as DiAngelo (2018) underscore the central role of emotions as the force that can drive actions and reactions to race. Matias (2016a, 2016b) and DiAngelo (2011, 2012, 2018) illuminate that social forces shape emotions that lead to responses to racism.

One instance is the avoidance of racial terminology as a tactic of avoidance. This tactic is associated with the feeling of victimization and the claim of reverse racism. In order to remain in the racial comfort zone, the avoidance tactic allows participants to maneuver away from addressing race (Bonilla-Silva, 2012, 2014). Within the context of student affairs practice, avoidance allows for racism to remain unchallenged and Whiteness unnamed. This contributes to the condition of hegemony in student affairs and higher education in general. The findings also reveal that participants use their other marginalized identity statuses to minimize race as a focus. Participants use gender, sexual orientation, religion and disability to align their experiences with People of Color; thus, minimizing the racial experience of People of Color. As professionals, the habit of minimization can lead to the creation of spaces where White women use their marginalized identities to create a hierarchy of oppressions. For instance, comparing and contrasting a status of gender to racial identity. This can create a hostile environment for People of Color. The findings also exposed the common thread of a growing racial awareness among participants. An evolution of awareness is evident as all participants described the origins of their racial journey as colorblind. Regardless of how much growth took place, all describe growth at some level. It is also important to note that growth does not necessarily equate action or a higher level of racial consciousness. Growth means exactly what it is, some form of progress in thinking

of oneself as a White woman and what that means in society. Finally, the findings also indicate that while participants re-centered Whiteness in student affairs, they also worked to challenge it. As a result, the contradictory nature between White hegemony and challenging Whiteness emerge within the findings. In a professional environment this can include intervening with other Whites when there is a racist interaction, taking responsibility as a White woman to facilitate conversations focused on Whiteness for White people, or identify and halt horizontal oppression within an organization. In the following discussion, I will begin by addressing each research question and discussing these findings in more depth, followed by implications and a conclusion.

Figure 2.0

Visualization of Findings



## Navigating Race

The purpose of this section is to address this study's first research question; *How do White women in student affairs navigate race in the work environment?* The findings suggest that White women navigate race in the professional environment by drawing from an array of mechanisms. These mechanisms such as emotions, avoidance of racial terminology, and minimization of racism are reflections of the larger U.S. racial structure and are central to the findings of this study. Emotions are one instance of the racial dynamics that manifested in this study. Emotions are described by Matias (2014, 2016a) as socially constructed with the possibility of becoming internalized and "self-produced" (Matias, 2014, p. 136). As a consequence, the relationship between emotions and the conditions of society is not recognized (Ahmed, 2004; Leonardo & Zembylas, 2013) creating a dynamic of invisibility. The invisibility of White emotions creates a system where emotional manifestations of Whiteness are viewed as non-racial regardless of being racialized reactions (Ahmed, 2004; Leonardo & Zembylas, 2013; Matias, 2014, 2016a). Thus, White emotional resistance to race can seem neutral and void of race creating yet another opportunity for White hegemony.

### *Emotional Resistance*

Throughout this study, emotional resistance to race manifests through an array of emotions such as tears, avoidance, victimization, guilt, colorblindness and at times anger. Emotions were embedded throughout the findings of this study and underscored the significant role emotions occupy within White women's responses to race. Palmer (1994) outlines the issue of White privilege in White womanhood as grounded in the image of goodness that equates to powerlessness. Participants throughout the study demonstrated through emotional reactions such as crying that the image of goodness and powerlessness is ubiquitous, when disrupted it elicits a

desire to comfort or protect. That is when the universal notion of womanhood is disrupted, the desire to mitigate the disruption through comfort becomes the default reaction of the observer. Accapadi (2007) describes this image of White women as defining the norm of womanhood drawing its power from historical reinforcement as universal. As a result, women of Color are burdened with an added layer of oppression (Palmer, 1994; Accapadi 2007; Matias, 2016). Women of Color have historically been defined by the racial stereotypes associated with their racial communities (hooks, 1981; Collins, 2000; Accapadi, 2007). As a result of this societal norm, a crying White woman indicates helplessness and elicits a sense of sympathy.

Maggie articulates the White women crying image in her interview as she describes the internal conflict she experiences with White guilt. She further describes that she also struggles with crying in a professional space because she is cognizant of how it shifts the focus from the issue to herself. The use of emotions to navigate a racial professional structure whether conscious or unconscious is effective. In this instance, Maggie has some sense of awareness about what crying does to the dynamic of a meeting environment. Crying is one of the emotional reactions that White women default to when they delve into race on a deeper level. Matias (2016a) describes the emotional impact race can have on White women such as guilt, anger, anxiety and avoidance of race. These reactions can manifest as tears when White women are either confronted by race or challenged about their surface level of understanding. An interaction with a person like Maggie can be overwhelming and draining for People of Color. Matias and DiAngelo (2013) coined the term emo-cognitions to describe this type of interaction that seems simple enough but is full of “A plethora of emotional and mental racial dynamics” (p. 3). Maggie further details that she can get away with asking pointed questions in a meeting with her supervisor while her colleagues of Color are targeted for more simple things. She expanded on

her example and detailed how she feels like she can be disruptive with confidence that she will not suffer repercussions. Maggie's brazen description displays a strong sense of White entitlement.

Maggie also pointed out that her supervisor was a White male. This is an important piece of information and aligns with DiAngelo's (2018) point that tears from White women have a specific impact on men. The author goes on further to describe that White women's tears have manipulated men from all backgrounds. The difference with the manipulation of White men is that they are at the top of the gender and racial hierarchy (DiAngelo, 2018). As a consequence, White men "have the power to define their own reality and that of others" (DiAngelo, 2018, p. 136). This reality gives White males the power to define what experiences are valid as well as who is valid (DiAngelo, 2018; Matias & DiAngelo, 2013). This illuminates the reality that there is a sense of humanity that is granted to White women that has yet to be granted to women of Color (DiAngelo, 2011, 2012, 2018; Matias & DiAngelo, 2013; Matias, 2016a, 2016b). Accapadi (2007) supports this scenario in that White women's power comes from their Whiteness and ability to navigate in and out of gender identity. Additionally, the norms upheld by society make it possible for White women to switch between identities (Accapadi, 2007; Matias, 2014, 2016a, 2016b; Palmer, 1994). Maggie understands that she has power in this situation and continues to replicate her behavior in that professional space in the presence of her colleagues of Color.

Jordan is an example of avoidance as she maneuvers away from race. In her example, Jordan calls diversity a "no brainer" and uses veterans as a group to shield herself from race. She refers to the "ability to see past race" and rationalizes this through a colorblind lens (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). Jordan tended to minimize race by declaring that race is no longer an issue and if

veterans can see past it then so should we as a society. This aligns with Bonilla-Silva's (2014) minimization frame in that Jordan uses phrases such as "it is in the past" and "this is no longer the issue it once was" when describing her sentiments. She also uses what Bonilla-Silva calls "Semantic Moves" to maneuver away from race. According to Bonilla-Silva (2014), semantic moves are an aspect of colorblindness that can also be referred to as racetalk. They are used in situations where Whites avoid sounding racist. Jordan uses her profession as a semantic move by emphasizing that veterans have become so enlightened that they go beyond race and focus on people. Jordan aligns herself with this thinking by crediting the population she works with "for teaching her how to be a better person". The colorblindness in this example is robust and when I disrupted that framework with questions focused on the evolution of her racial awareness she became angry and frustrated. Matias (2016) outlines the emotional consequences to disrupting colorblindness. The outcome of such a disruption can be anger or victimization.

Jordan's sense of victimization is clear when she expresses frustration with an emphasis on race that she feels estranged from this subject and she also feels that it is crammed down her throat. Leonardo (2009) underscores the concept of the White race card. This is when Whites use their racial identity to simulate a sense of victimization. Jordan is resisting her role as a White woman within a system of Whiteness. She is not able to see past her individual self and focus on the systemic level of Whiteness. This disconnect fuels Jordan's perception of being targeted as well as her resistance. Thus, Jordan's resistance to recognizing racial injustice furthers White supremacy (Leonardo, 2009; Matias, 2016, 2016a). The process of victimization becomes a method of maintaining and re-enforcing White supremacy. In relation to the concept of White privilege, Jordan expressed that "they play the blame game". She further emphasizes the sense of victimization and racial resistance. This is an instance of how White women use emotional

behaviors that underscore the methods White women use to redirect conversation away from race (Matias, 2016) and underscore their "helplessness" to gain sympathy.

Several participants in the study felt a sense of victimization and reverse racism. This corroborates with Cabrera's (2012) finding that a misunderstanding of racism is related to an individualized understanding with the inability to understand racism in a broader context (structurally). As a result, Whites are not aware of their positionality in a society that is racialized in every aspect. In addition to Cabrera's finding, Trepagnier's (2005) study highlights the importance of racial self-awareness in White women. In her study, failure to understand that Whites are racially over privileged in comparison to People of Color fuels a sense of victimization among White women. Crenshaw (1991) describes how White women experience systems in comparison to women of Color. Systems such as domestic violence activist movements, and the criminal justice system are experienced significantly different by White women than women of Color. As Ozias (2017) points out, White women experience systems in a more empowered manner than women of Color because they feel that these same systems put them in danger or risk and frequently disempower them (Crenshaw, 1991; Ozias, 2017). Yet a lack of racial awareness by White women from a systematic perspective, can fuel a sense of racial dissonance that leads to anger and victimization. Matias (2016) as well as Cabrera and Spanierman (2015) emphasize the importance of emotion within racial attitudes. According to the authors, emotions drive action and reaction. Emotions can generate consequences for White people's reaction toward race. In both Jordan's case, victimization and anger lead to an avoidance of race that aligned with the colorblind perspective.

*Racial Avoidance*

The avoidance of race is an approach that several participants utilize to navigate around race in the workplace. Bonilla-Silva (2012, 2014) is clearly points out that avoidance is colorblind racism. One instance comes from Believe who was asked to describe a racialized incident in her professional environment. Her response was a mixture of self-victimization and avoidance of race in the form of avoidance of racial terminology. Believe refers to her age and her Whiteness as targets within her response to the question. She substitutes "exotification" of her blond hair and light features as an example of a negative racialized incident without mentioning the word race. I find that Believe navigated away from the word race using herself as an example of racial "victimization". I find that this behavior aligns with both abstract liberalism and the minimization frame of Bonilla-Silva's (2014) four frames of colorblind racism. Believe is trying to equalize the racial playing field by demonstrating that racism can happen to her as well as People of Color. Through Believe's avoidance of race, she establishes that society is an equal playing field for everyone because racism or prejudice are not unique to People of Color. This example reflects one element of what Bonilla-Silva calls the elements that comprise the new racial structure (2014). The elements are as follows, "1. The increasingly covert nature of racial discourse and racial practices; 2. The avoidance of racial terminology and the ever-growing claim by whites that they experience "reverse racism"; 3. The elaboration of a racial agenda over political matters that eschews direct racial references; 4. The invisibility of most mechanisms to reproduce racial inequality; and finally, 5. The re-articulation of some racial practices characteristic of the Jim Crow period of race relations" (p. 26). The avoidance of racial terminology along with the sense of victimization that leads to the claim of reverse racism are aligned with Bonilla-Silva's framework.

Both Jordan and Believe's example fit into what Bonilla-Silva (2010) refers to as defensive projections. This is a rhetorical tool of "They are the racist ones" which is a defensive projection indicating that People of Color are responsible for racism. This is a method used to avoid responsibility for racism and feel good about oneself (Bonilla-Silva, 2010, 2014). It feels like Jordan's comment about "playing the blame game" projects responsibility for racism onto People of Color at some level. Additionally, Believe's perspective reflected in her example illustrates that People of Color and specifically people from other countries have racist tendencies. As she shared her example she did not have to directly mention race to make her point. Her description was a method of maneuvering around the racial component to focus on herself.

Believe also engages other marginalized identities such as gender and age as an aid in her maneuvering. Accapadi (2007) addresses this behavior in her description that White women engage in toggling their identities as a convenience. Believe's responses to questions with a focus on affirmative action are indicators that her stance is that racism is now a thing of the past and affirmative action is not necessary. Comments such as "Affirmative action is not effective because people manipulate it and it is not fairly executed" (Believe, UX) indicate that Believe is minimizing the lasting impact of racial inequity.

*Navigating Affirmative Action*

Several participants address affirmative action focused questions and discussion points in a contradictory manner. While expressing to me that affirmative action is not necessary to advance, I would present the fact that affirmative action has benefitted White women over the course of its history. Participants tended to distance themselves from that fact and focused on the connection between affirmative action and People of Color. This makes sense from the

perspective of Unzueta, Gutiérrez and Ghavami (2010). Several White women in this study backed away from aligning themselves with affirmative action as if it decreased their worth. Unzueta et al. (2010) indicate that White women who perceive themselves as beneficiaries of affirmative action may report a sense of negative self-image. This is an instance of what maintaining a White ego that allows for the preservation of a positive self-image (Unzueta & Lowery, 2008; Unzueta et al., 2010). Throughout this study several women placed distance between themselves and affirmative action. Some of this distancing was rooted in the misconception that affirmative action is a policy that enforces quotas.

*They Blame Us…*

Matias was clear when she underscored that rhetoric, philosophical stances, attitudes and behaviors are used by Whites to exert Whiteness. Believe and several other participants came across as a well-intentioned liberal who lived within the colorblind framework but once their minimization of racism and the attempt to demonstrate equality throughout the interview process was disrupted participants became emotional (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Matias, 2016, 2016b). Statements such as “We have come a long way” or “They blame us” (Jordan, UY) were common throughout the study. There was a sense of denial and defensiveness when Believe and other participants would make a statement then retract an earlier statement once a there was a realization that it could sound racist. Statements such as “I mean I am not a racist I work with all races” (Believe, UX) while conveying emotions such as anger, denial, victimization or guilt aligns with the notion that White women use emotions as deflections and shields instead of engaging their own Whiteness through racial discourse.

The examples in this section demonstrate the various ways White women in this study use emotions, avoidance of racial terminology, and minimization of racism to navigate race in a

professional environment. Colorblindness serves as a foundation for a several participants racial lens. When colorblindness is disrupted emotions tend to surface (Matias, 2014, 2016, 2016b). When a sense of normalcy is disrupted though racial discourse, various emotions may arise throughout the conversation. The significance in recognizing the emotional component is that it fuels action and reactions to race in general. This drives actions or inactions as indicated by the literature (Bonilla-Silva, 2010, 2014; Cabrera & Spanierman, 2015; Matias, 2016). As I move forward with this chapter, my hope is that these examples are further illuminated with other instances in the following sections.

## The Role of Other Identities

As indicated earlier, Believe, engages gender and age as racial maneuvering tools to navigate racial discourse. It is common for participants to use gender, sexual orientation, age and sometimes religion to both navigate and establish an understanding of race. Blue pulls from her experience as a lesbian to distance herself from the perception of being a racist. She attempts to align herself with People of Color through a relational approach using her lesbian identity. Blue uses the minimization frame from Bonilla-Silva's (2014) colorblind perspective to both distance herself from race and align her marginalized identity with People of Color. At times, Blue also utilizes the cultural frame by attributing characteristics to People of Color.

White women in this study have access to their multiple identities in ways women of Color cannot access them. Audre Lorde (1997) clearly articulated this difference and connected this to a structural perspective. She indicated that Black women and men have a shared experience in racial oppression. Although through their gendered experience it is different. This shared experience does not exist between White women and men. White women can be lured into joining White men in their dominant identity as White and share in their male counterpart's

power and privileges that comes with Whiteness (Lorde, 1997). Several participants in this study use their marginalized identities to deny any personal connection with racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2010, 2014; Tatum, 1992). A few participants insist that they are not racist and that they know oppression as well. This stems from their identity as lesbian women who often perceived themselves as progressive. I find that there is a contradiction while attempting to use identity to toggle between marginalized and dominant identities. Blue indicates that she is not racist and does not see color because of this participant's lived experience as lesbian. Yet this participant admits that there is an uneasiness during interactions with African American colleagues in her professional life that clearly spills into her home life. Clearly contradicting the participant's claims about not recognizing race.

Several participants like Blue fall into the frame of cultural racism in that they use statements such as "Their issues are different, and I do not know them" (Blue, UY) or statements comparing African Americans and Latinx colleagues such as "I like Mexicans, but I know they have different needs that are based in their culture" (Rita, UX). These differences are attributed to their "cultural" needs. Indicating that the needs of colleagues in the professional environment are labeled by participant as stemming from their innate cultural "needs". Often these statements were followed by "I am not racist you know I love Mexico and I am a lesbian, so I know what it is like" (Blue, UY) or preceded by statements such as "I have Black colleagues and we get along well plus I have a disability. I know what it is to be the Other" (Rita, UX). Bonilla-Silva (2014) identifies these statements as discursive buffers that are used before or after someone states something that could interpreted to be racist. In these cases, participants also use their targeted identities as a buffer to minimize their race-based statements while attributing innate needs to

People of Color based on their culture. These examples are aligned with both the minimization and cultural frame of the colorblind racism framework.

One unexpected finding that aligns with this section on identity was that several participants use gender to respond to whether or not they believe in affirmative action. The "Yes and no but…" semantic move is used by a few participants to toggle between affirming their non-racist tendencies and their disagreement or conflicting views regarding affirmative action. Earlier in the chapter, I mentioned participants distance themselves from affirmative action to maintain a White ego (Unzueta & Lowery, 2008; Unzueta et al., 2010). In relation to identity, several participants contradict themselves in their responses. The "Yes and no I support affirmative action" is not uncommon among participants. Several use gender to affirm that they understand what it is to benefit from affirmative action but also that this policy may not be in use in the correct manner.

At times, statements such as "Yes I am a woman and I know I have benefitted from affirmative action" (Believe, UY) and "I am a lesbian too, so I get it" (Blue, UY), as well as "I understand the need, but I think it can be unfair sometimes…." (Believe, UX) can be interpreted as what Bonilla-Silva describes as "An expression of White's ambivalence on a very controversial social policy" (2014, p. 108). These statements often are accompanied by a sense of victimization and reverse racism. A few participants use these semantic moves to express mixed feelings in regard to affirmative action along with "I feel both ways about it…." Usually indicating that they are against affirmative action when it benefits People of Color but not when it comes to other protected classes such as women, sexual orientation and disability. I find that this tendency is connected to Rita's statement that she has to navigate the two marginalized worlds with a disability but "Skin color is something we can get past. Things are better now than

it was in the past" (Rita, UX). Rita is minimizing race in this statement while elevating the importance of her own marginalized identities. Several participants follow Rita's example without giving thought to their own privileges. Grillo (1995) describes this tendency as it is true that White women are subordinated as far as their status as women. In comparison to women of Color, their experience of oppression is not similar with the oppression of women of Color. If they are White and middle class both of these statuses furnish privilege even as the gender identity as a woman conveys oppression (Grillo, 1995). Participants such as Rita took this a bit further and disclosed additional marginalized identities such as disability, religion or sexual orientation. Race and racism intersect with other social identities and forms of oppression. This positions individuals and groups in varied ways within the racial system by means of class, gender, ability, and other social identities (Collins 2012; Crenshaw 1995; Lorde, 1997). Participants in this study tended to align their experiences with oppression to those of women of Color because they are lesbian or suffer from a disability.

White women in this study engage other marginalized identities to navigate race in the professional environment. Social justice and inclusion are core competencies in student affairs (NASPA & ACPA, 2015) and as a result, the student affairs professionals are relied upon for "expertise" in multiculturalism and diversity on college and university campuses. Professionals in the field must often participate in dialogues with a racial focus. In this study, participants are expected to engage race and other social justice focuses as part of their profession. It is within these contexts and expectations that participants engage in conversations with a focus on identity. Accapadi (2007) notes that White women's dual oppressor/oppressed identity becomes the basis for tension between White women and Women of Color when they are challenged to recognize their White privilege (Accapadi, 2007). I find that the notion of womanhood and what

that entails for different groups is glossed over by participants in this study. As I mentioned earlier, White womanhood is grounded in the image of goodness. A woman's experiences of are shaped by what Accapadi calls internal and external perceptions. The external perception of White women is that they are depicted to be the representation of "purity, chastity and virtue" (Accapadi, 2007) and women of Color have been "caricaturized" as associated with negative images and stereotypes along with lower status that are associated with their racial communities. I find that no matter how often participants in this study attempt to align with People of Color or use other marginalized identities as a discursive buffer in racial discourse, there is a lack of awareness of how their Whiteness places them at an advantage from a systematic level. The lack of awareness of their privilege stems from the inability to understand past the interpersonal and connect daily racial life to a systemic level. Additionally, Crenshaw (1989) explains that the concept of privilege is complicated between White women and women of Color because of the intersectional nature. The professional environment is one where racial realities often collide whether it is conscious or unconscious (Kirshman, 2005).

### Reinforcing and Challenging White Supremacy in Student Affairs

The purpose of this section is to illuminate how White women occupy a role in perpetuating White hegemony and supremacy. The purpose of the section is not to place blame or construct a negative image of White women but bring to light professional practices and conduct that could contribute to dismantling White supremacy in the professional environment. Additionally, it is just as important to outline the approaches participants utilize whether intentional or unintentional to challenge and interrupt White hegemony and supremacy. First, I will begin with practices that promote and sustain Whiteness such as the White tears, White

savior complex, distancing from race, and linguistic domination. Then I will outline how participants are challenging White supremacy as student affairs professionals.

*Weaponized Tears*

Participants demonstrate the various ways emotions manifest when addressing race. One emotional mechanism used was expressing emotions through tears. White fragility and privilege reveal themselves in professional spaces in the form of White tears on several occasions (DiAngelo, 2018; Matias, 2016) and can be potent weapons in the professional environment. Specifically, as indicated by Accapadi (2007), tears are used by White women as weapons to avoid or shut down racial conversations. As a result, the White woman is appeased and pacified while the colleague (usually of Color) who brought up the racial conversation is left to be scolded, reprimanded, labeled as a bad professional and in some cases fired. This is a form of exerting White privilege and fragility while re-enforcing White supremacy. This scenario solicits the images of the protected damsel in distress. Historically, White women have been viewed as the symbol of femininity to be protected (Solomon, 1985). It is from this historical connection that the concept of weaponized tears emerges. Think of the murder of Emmett Till[12] and recent uptick of White women summoning the police to monitor Black bodies[13]. This and of itself is violent and may result in death. From a professional perspective, this is an assertion of dominance that White people have over People of Color.

Suzie from UX ties her tears to history and the feelings her tears stir up for People of Color in the professional environment. She acknowledges that women of Color would react to her crying in spaces. Accapadi (2007) outlines this behavior as a form of trauma enacted by

[12] https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/27/us/emmett-till-lynching-carolyn-bryant-donham.html
[13] https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2018/10/19/bbq-becky-permit-patty-and-cornerstore-caroline-too-cutesy-for-those-white-women-calling-cops-on-blacks/?utm_term=.f5f5cd830fd5

White women in the workplace to avoid addressing an uncomfortable topic like race or avoid accountability altogether. This is a particular type of power that White women can exert that is not available to women of Color. At times, some White women exert this type of power at the expense of women of Color and People of Color in general. Matias (2016) refers to this as a type of narcissism of Whiteness because it shifts the focus back to the White woman. White women experience White privilege differently. They are able to use their emotions to move people into action. Maggie from the UY campus recognizes the power of her tears in professional spaces. Maggie ties these tears with the ability to maneuver professional spaces to her advantage. These tears are a form of clout in the professional world that can garner Maggie attention, sympathy and protection.

*The White Savior Complex*

Matias (2016) introduces the concept of the White savior through film. The role of the White woman coming into a K-12 environment to save students of Color from themselves. Matias states, "Through her trials and tribulations, wrought with tears and well-intentioned behavior, the White woman's tears are deemed worthy of sympathy because of her strength to endure People of Color (p. 6). Within this concept, the emotions and experiences of People of Color are perceived to be a weakness that necessitates a savior or as Matias (2016a) labels it "White saviority". This is where White women are "willing" to sacrifice themselves to save People of Color. Bell (2007, 2016) indicates that the "savior" mentality is a method of re-enforcing oppressive power structures because White saviors force their preconceived ideas of what People of Color need through their "messiah complex". Meaning that they know what is best for communities of Color and they will do it to save them from themselves (Bell, 2007, 2016; Matias, 2016a). The White savior concept is well documented in the K-12 arena and it is

also pertinent to higher education and more specifically student affairs (Matias, 2016a). Several participants demonstrated the need to save colleagues and students of Color. One instance was demonstrated by Marie from UY when she indicates that a colleague of Color called her a well-intentioned liberal who was too lenient and protective of students of Color. Marie also commented that she does approach situations with a "save them from themselves" attitude. This instance aligns with Matias' concept of the White savior complex. The notion that People of Color's struggles and emotions are indicators of weakness and a consequence of their own actions. On the contrary as mentioned earlier, the emotions emanated from White women such as tears are perceived by society to be a result of a heroic effort to save People of Color (Accapadi, 2007; Matias, 2014, 2016a, 2016b). Within the student affairs world this can result into a form of shielding of students and colleagues of Color.

Maggie a residential life administrator understands her power and privilege within the context of a professional environment. Maggie admitted that crying refocuses the attention on her instead of the issue at hand and knows she can use this tactic because of the outside perception that White women are pure and heroic in their work with People of Color. Both Accapadi (2007) and Matias (2016a) support this assertion in that the heroic perception of White women and their emotions makes it almost impossible for People of Color within student affairs and higher education in general to share a voice in professional spaces. Especially, when that voice contradicts that of the White woman. The concept of White women's tears is an emerging dialogue in the literature (Accapadi, 2007; Matias, 2016a, 2016b, DiAngelo, 2018). The tears that emanate from White women have a strong impact in cross-racial settings while impressing racism (DiAngelo, 2018). One reason is the long history associated with White women's anxiety or distress is that these tears have driven a violent reaction toward People of Color. DiAngelo

(2018) underscores the importance of being aware of the history behind White tears and the "innocent" pure perception of White women that well-meaning White women enact when they cry in cross-racial settings. This act of crying is a harmful enactment of White fragility (Matias, 2016a, 2016b; DiAngelo, 2012, 2018). Several participants admitted to using emotions to drive racial discourse. As a result of the feelings of White women, racial justice work becomes a compassionate act for People of Color (Frankenberg, 1997; Trepagnier, 2005; Matias, 2014, 2016a, 2016b) not because it implicates White women.

*Racial Distancing*

Bonilla-Silva (2001, 2014) tells us that Whites will work to restore a sense of White racial comfort in a discussion through the avoidance of racial discourse, minimizing it, rationalizing or distancing themselves. Most participants practice racial distancing in several ways. Some in the form of silence while others use language and terminology. DiAngelo (2012) indicates that emotional reactions can take the form of non-reaction such as White silence. This form of silence occurs when the racial discourse or situation becomes uncomfortable for whites and the result is silence. Rita from UX made it clear that from her perspective she does not get emotional because "I do not have the same emotional baggage with race as People of Color" (UX). This example demonstrates that the participant is more likely to be silent in professional spaces because of the distance she places between herself and race. The discursive buffer is an example that White women and White people in general can perceive race as a People of Color issue. White women tend to view racism as something that happens to People of Color not themselves (Frankenberg, 1997; Trepagnier, 2005). Blue a participant from UY also indicated that race is not a personal issue and therefore it is not something that is discussed regularly at home. It from this distancing that White women in student affairs exude their White fragility.

Frankenberg (1997) addresses this when the author describes Whiteness thriving due to its invisible nature. Distancing from race allows participants to ignore difficult racial dialogues and creates the opportunity for White women to avoid their role in the racial discourse altogether (Frankenberg, 1997). It is not a common occurrence for participants to discuss race and when there is discourse focused on race this triggers a range of defensive moves (DiAngelo, 2011; Bonilla-Silva, 2014). Robbins (2016) found that some White women who encountered racial dissonance meaning that they were confronted with the reality of being White within a racial hierarchy would avoid feeling "guilty" or "bad" by avoiding racial discourse. These dynamics between how White women feel and how they react underscore Matias' (2016a) as well as Cabrera and Spanierman's (2015) assertion that emotions fuel reactions making emotions a significant aspect of examination of Whiteness.

White silence is one instance of racial avoidance. DiMacio (2003) describes White silence as silence that Whites experience during discussions that focus on race. The silence is a result of negative emotions such as anger, victimization or guilt (DiAngelo, 2011, 2012; Linder, 2015; Robbins 2016). As a result, in professional situations where racial equity is the focus there tends to be a White silence. This form of racial distancing allows for unequitable practices to go on unchallenged and shape the discourse as well as processes and procedures. Matias (2016a) describes this process through the emotionality of Whiteness framework as prioritizing the emotionalities of Whites over People of Color and as a result racial dialogues fall short of making meaningful progress. Whether Whites are guilty, angry, defensive or in tears, these emotions are prioritized over the well-being and feelings of humiliation, sadness, anger and frustration of People of Color (Matias, 2016a). This is also an instance of how White emotions dominate space. Thus, fueling White emotional hegemony (DiAngelo, 2011; Matias, 2016a).

The emotional domination of space as well as the unsuspecting impact of White silence reflects an aspect of Sullivan's (2006) concept of ontological expansiveness. This concept underscores White entitlement over space as Whites tend to believe and behave that spaces whether they are geographical, linguistic, psychological economic or otherwise are and should be available to them to travel in an out as they wish (Sullivan, 2006; Cabrera et al., 2016). This manifests within the profession of student affairs when White women shed tears, resist, or usurp linguistic space at the expense of People of Color in professional spaces and processes such as decision making, controlling the racial discourse on college campuses and responding to race-based incidents.

*Linguistic Domination*

Most participants engaged in linguistic domination throughout this study. Whether they thought of themselves as racially aware or not, most engaged in what I would call a linguistic tug of war. Changes in racial terminology signify the social progress made toward racial justice. Whites often exercise their sense of spatial domination or ontological expansiveness within the linguistic realm by overlooking the self-selected terminology People of Color use to describe themselves. Matias (2016a) underscored the practice by urban K-12 teachers whom the majority happen to be White women, to use terminology that signal equity and social justice. This use is to place themselves in position where they can be perceived to be socially just educators. These educators retain negative repressed feelings of People of Color while aligning themselves with socially just terminology. This continues until these feelings are challenged and must be confronted. Thus, feelings causing racial stress and discomfort manifest for White women as result of confronting a racial truth. This is a result of the disruption of colorblind racism. Many participants used terms such as "woke", "racial justice" and "equity" while using language such as colored people and those people.

Instances of linguistic domination occurred throughout this study. Participants who considered themselves as “woke” at times engaged in a terminological tug of war. One instance comes from Suzie who refers to herself as “woke” meaning racially self-aware, would use terms such as non-White people but would correct herself in the process. When Blue would use the term colored people when referring to People of Color despite my intervention twice signaled that this participant was not willing to recognize or would gloss over my interjections. Many participants use phrases such as “those people” or “they” when describing African Americans and Latinx colleagues. Myers (2003) describes the danger of othering People of Color as it makes negating their humanity easier. In terms of the professional environment, in student affairs this dynamic can dehumanize and set the tone for professionals of Color to endure a climate of dehumanization and emotional violence that can lead to anger and frustration fueled by White colleagues. Additionally, linguistic domination is an example of how Whites in higher education can co-opt diversity and social justice terminology to perpetuate and uphold White supremacy (Harris, Barone & Patton Davis, 2015; Matias, 2016a).

## Challenging White Supremacy in Student Affairs

Although many participants engaged in reinforcing Whiteness, it is important to illuminate some of the good work that participants participate in as an attempt to disrupt White supremacy. Several participants engage racial dissonance in stages. For instance, some participants became silent during the response to the question of whether they question the competencies of their colleagues of Color. Many admitted to questioning competencies of colleagues of Color while not questioning the competencies of White colleagues in a professional space. As a result of this question, the majority engaged in a conversation focused on implicit bias and stereotypes. Participants engaged their racial dissonance in the moment and

admitted to seeking out information when racial discourse goes awry. This finding is in line with Robbins (2016) finding that some White women engage their racial dissonance by seeking out more educational opportunities. Robbin's study was focused on White women who were graduate students, but these findings are relevant for White women who are professionals in student affairs.

Several participants exhibit a sense of growing awareness. Most participants attribute their growth as it relates to their racial selves as a result of being a student affairs professional. Not all participants exhibit a high sense of racial awareness but almost all of them demonstrate growth in recognizing their role in a professional environment. Marie is an example of a professional who began on her journey as a White woman who moved through the world with a colorblind lens. Once her colorblind worldview was shattered, the participant demonstrates emotions such as defensiveness, guilt and shame (Matias, 2016a). The emotions most White women demonstrate once the colorblind lens is shattered goes beyond the interpersonal. As Matias indicates, emotions are shaped by the social order and in this case the social order is shaped by the system of White supremacy. Additionally, many participants also expressed the tendency to feel protective of colleagues of Color. Some were aware of their power and privilege within a professional space and use it voice concerns, ask pointed questions to their supervisors (especially White males) and even assist their colleagues of Color in filing grievances. Most participants recognize that the outcome for them as White women would be more favorable than the outcome for colleagues of Color.

It is necessary for White voices to speak out against racism and point out Whiteness as system. Frankenberg (1997), Trepagnier (2006) and Cabrera (2014) indicate that the invisible nature of Whiteness is harmful to White people as well as People of Color. Whiteness normalizes

racial privileges that Whites enjoy in a variety of spaces. Most of the participants in this study grew up in a homogenous environment that informs their racial point of view. According to Chesler et al. (2005) Whites as a majority provides the foundation for a sense of invisibility. Thus, there is a lack of understanding of their racial position within a racial hierarchy. As a result, this leads to colorblindness. Although the authors were referring to students, the same could be said of the participants of this study. Most participants began their journey with a colorblind lens and a few were still functioning within the framework of colorblindness. Although most advanced their racial awareness, almost all of them did not understand the full scope of their Whiteness as White women.

## Implications

### *Implications for Practice*

The findings in this study reveal several implications for practice. As professionals review this study and ponder how these findings affect their respective institutions, the participants in this study provided a narrative rich with insight into how they navigate the racial climate in student affairs and how this process may affect the climate within a student affairs professional environment. As professional student affairs administrators attempt to address issues of campus climate, free speech and race in higher education, this study provides insight into how White women in student affairs interact with professional colleagues in meeting spaces. The findings suggest that White women in student affairs use emotions, other marginalized identities to navigate the racial climate in a professional setting and at times a colorblind lens to address race in a student affairs environment. Participants supplied a plethora of examples that gave daily context to Whiteness and White hegemony in a professional setting. Findings reveal a variety of approaches to race. If we examine the daily practice White women employ to navigate race, we can connect participants day to day experiences and approaches to the larger structure of

race. Depending on where these women are situated within an institution may influence how issues of equity and social justice are addressed within a department or institution.

*Emotions.* The findings in this study demonstrate that emotions are shaped by the racial social structure. Many participants exhibited emotional responses while engaging in racial discourse. As Matias (2016a) indicates, emotions are shaped by society and manifest in various contexts. In student affairs, emotions such as guilt, denial, victimization and anxiety manifest in meeting spaces, cross-racial social interactions as well as student staff interactions. DiAngelo (2011), outlines the consequences of racial insulation as the development of racial comfort for Whites as well as a lower ability to endure racial stress. These responses can affect the professional environment in student affairs. The effects of a negative professional climate can indirectly impact campus climate for students as professionals interact with students and craft policies for students. White women in student affairs should seek out professional spaces to engage in racial discourse while unpacking their racially insulated upbringing. Furthermore, from a professional development perspective, training that delves into the connection between emotions and race is an important topic to incorporate into professional development models for professionals at all levels. The addition of this component is another way to delve below the surface of equity training. Particularly for HESA students preparing to navigate the professional environment. Linder (2015) points out the importance of not only teaching about power and privilege and oppression but also framing the emotional responses to working through White privilege. Linder's focus was White women in graduate school but the emphasis on understanding how fear, guilt, shame, and victimization obstruct antiracist actions is pertinent to professionals in student affairs.

*Language.* The majority of participants in this study shared that they attended HESA programs across the United States. When addressing the question: How often do you discuss race in a professional environment, participants shared that the topic was raised regularly because of the political climate in the U.S. that affects the campus. Many participants indicated that they felt that they did not receive adequate training in their respective HESA programs to engage in racial discourse or respond to incidents on campus. Most participants also indicated that the terminology in student affairs in regard to equity and racial justice evolves rapidly. A few participants used diversity lingo such as "woke", "intersectionality", "diversity", "Inclusion" and even referred to "White supremacy" to name a few terms. While other aspects of their interviews indicated a colorblind approach to language through the avoidance of race altogether. This suggests that there is a linguistic approach to navigating race in the professional environment while learning social justice terminology from colleagues, students and student affairs research journals. Professionals must be cautious not to focus too much on the latest lingo while hiring, promoting or selecting White women in student affairs to lead racial equity initiatives.

Until there is a fairly consistent lexicon of social justice terminology that evolves with the issues, student affairs professionals need to go in depth to unpack the lingo of social justice. Can participants describe the term and its importance? How is the concept connected to student success and a positive professional climate? Does the language used promote equity? The use of social justice lingo can disguise hidden feelings toward People of Color (Matias, 2016a) until the moment comes when one's racial world view is challenged, and those hidden feelings arise. The professional associations such as ACPA and NASPA may be able to occupy a central role in unpacking language for student affairs professionals and incorporating in depth level social justice training that is connected to the use of social justice language or "lingo". Stewart (2017)

frames the importance while addressing the difference between diversity and inclusion rhetoric v. equity and justice. Diversity and inclusion rhetoric is a form of appeasement that does not lead to transformative efforts to promote equity and justice.

*Development.* Student affairs professionals, specifically managers should rethink social justice professional development. Training focused on interpersonal interactions should also be paired with professional development that connects racism to systems such as White supremacy and Whiteness. This approach will move the racial conversation away from what DiAngelo (2018) calls a "simplistic understanding of racism" (p. 13). Participants in this study exhibited emotional responses to racial discourse because they connected race to individual interactions not systems. This focus may alleviate some of the anxiety and anger associated with racial discourse and cross-racial interaction in the professional environment. Linder (2015) found that White women struggled with shame and guilt as obstacles to anti-racist actions. This can be addressed through the creation of discussion spaces led by White colleagues to process the shame and guilt process in order for action to come to fruition. These spaces should serve more as tool building sessions as well as spaces to discuss emotional racial baggage without burdening colleagues of Color. This implication will require White racial justice allies to step up as facilitators and action-oriented thinkers. Spanierman and Smith (2017) underscored one of the most common reasons for aspiring White social justice allies is that there is no room in our current training models for social justice action "that goes beyond simply becoming aware of the pervasive nature of societal injustice" (p. 730). A redesign of the training approach for racial justice allies may be necessary to produce White racial justice allies that are more skilled at intervening and recognizing systems and nuanced actions of oppression. As indicated throughout this study, racism in the professional environment reveals itself in nuanced ways.

*Professional Training and Support in Student Affairs*

The following are specific implications for professional practice within a professional student affairs environment. Implications include, communication, a linkage to historical significance, a system focused training approach and creating spaces for White people to unpack racism are all important implications in student affairs. As professionals in the field engage in social justice work, it is urgent that racial hegemony is recognized and combatted.

Communication is one of the most important aspects of the professional environment. When dealing with a complex issue such as race, the method of communication we choose to exert in these spaces can help or hinder our professional relationships and reputation. It is important that White people understand that White emotions are constantly centered when working through racial discourse. This deflects away from the lived experiences of People of Color who must deal with racist institutions on a daily basis and White emotions become the focus. From an organizational perspective, an organization must be open and receptive to space for emotional conflict. As mentioned throughout this study, Whites experience a variety of emotions during racial discourse. The manifestation of these emotions tends to shut down otherwise potentially useful conversations. At times, Whites blame People of Color for their discomfort during racial discourse.

Unfortunately, SA professionals do not possesses the same level of racial awareness as they move through the field. It is important to begin thinking about framing complex historical imagery and establishing a connection to trauma. These historical images such as White women crying, and Blackface all have consequences such as a compromised sense of safety or stress for People of Color within a professional environment. In addition to this section's connection to the professional environment, HESA programs must adopt an in-depth racial history curriculum

aspect to introduce to new incoming professionals. This can be an additional to or a revision of the standard history of higher education courses offered throughout the country. An understanding of the larger historical dynamic can improve communication during racial discourse.

When a racial issue arises in the workplace it is important for Whites to understand that addressing racial issues is a learning process and not about proving how much you know. This leads to the importance of pausing before contributing to a conversation focused on race. These skills can be learned through training focused on facilitation techniques such as listening, recognizing triggers, reading a room and developing methods to address conflict. These skills can help professionals while occupying the role of participant in intense conversations to scan a room and observe other participants to assess whether or not their contribution is appropriate for the moment. This is a form of communication literacy. This form of literacy is an important component to creating a professional climate that lead to productive racial conversations. Facilitation needs to be a core component in HESA programs as well as the professional environment. All too often are SA professionals expected to facilitate and execute this skill well. Although there are facilitation training programs, this needs to be a core component of training for professionals since this is a core function of most SA positions.

When student affairs professionals discuss training usually the conversation centers on interpersonal as well as intrapersonal training. In order to understand White people's role within a racialized society, and ultimately the workplace, training and development should focus on building competency from a systemic level. It is imperative that we learn our history, how the system was developed and continues to operate in our daily lives. A focus on systems can be more useful in the discussions related to White privilege from a systemic level to engage all

participants. A focus on systems may quickly illuminate the racial structure, White supremacy without implicating Whites directly as well as the role of racial structures in student affairs and higher education. To clarify, this is not meant to alleviate White people of their responsibility but to engage them in a deeper level of understanding beyond the individualization of race.

Finally, White people often believe that racism is an issue for People of Color. Despite working on racial justice, Whites and specifically White women have a tendency of exerting their racial privilege through the White savior complex. Racial justice then becomes about saving People of Color from themselves. Within the scope of student affairs practice, there needs to be a space for White people to unpack their feelings and ask questions they would not ask otherwise. This is where White allies must step up to facilitate these spaces and illuminate their White peers on how racism hurts Whites as well as People of Color. These are spaces for Whites to process their feelings without harming People of Color in the process.

*Implications for Future Research*

This study leads to many avenues for new studies within the student affairs profession and higher education in general. First, participants in this study overwhelmingly indicated that the student affairs profession contributed to their growth in terms of racial awareness over the course of their careers. The exposure to social justice even at an introductory level seems to stimulate thinking about race in the U.S. at some level. It would be worthwhile to investigate the effectiveness of varied diversity curriculums in HESA programs and the effects this has on social justice terminology specifically and professional environments in more depth. Additionally, further research in how language shapes the navigation of racialized environments in student affairs has the potential to uncover and expose an effective navigation tool used by Whites to promote agendas that perpetuate and maintain White supremacy. Finally, there is room for more

research focused on how participants of this study use terminology that signal equity and social justice competencies (Matias, 2016a). Examination of the language used by White women as ontological expansiveness can illuminate yet another approach White women use navigate race in higher education in more depth.

The content of multicultural courses is an area that necessitates further research. Robbins (2016) found that some HESA programs give more attention to diversity than others but what does diversity or multiculturalism mean within the context of HESA curriculum? Whites in college and HESA programs may take an isolated course focused on multiculturalism without a focus on racism. This is problematic because the language used in these courses is focused on language such as “marginalized”, “disadvantaged” and even “urban”. These terms reinforce that racism is the issue of People of Color (Lewis, 2004). Not all HESA courses focused on multiculturalism are focused on White privilege or terminology such as “privileged”, “white” or unpacking White supremacy from a systemic level.

As the findings of this study indicate, emotions and language are in sync. It would be beneficial to examine racialized emotions further and unpack how emotions manifest in the professional environment. Also, what impact do they have on the campus climate for colleagues and students? Similarly, it would benefit the profession to research the facilitation dynamics of HESA courses and professional sessions focused on race. How do racialized emotions strengthen or support facilitation by White women compared to White men? Additionally, how do these emotions affect facilitators of Color? Research in this area will expand on findings by Linder et al. (2015) that indicate faculty fail to effectively facilitate discussions focused on racism as well as effectively address microaggressions in the classroom. One instance would be investigating the reasons facilitators may not address White people as beneficiaries of racism. There may be a

variety of reasons based on race, comfort-level and even fear of retaliation and fear of losing their livelihood if a facilitator is a Person of Color.

Another area of research is the avoidance of race in the workplace. This tactic manifests in many forms. One instance that was evident in this study came from Barbara who admittedly hates confrontations. Avoidance of race frames the notion of niceness that most participants in this study practiced at one point or another. To be "nice" and "polite" equals being professional. Linder (2015) indicates that avoidance is connected with fear of being labeled a racist as a result of any misstep. This may lead to a culture of avoidance in the form of politeness. This is an important area to delve into because these expectations have serious implications for professionals of Color in a profession that strives to be inclusive. When a colleague violates the taboo of race in a professional environment, they can be negatively labeled, or the racial discussion can be minimized by those who use avoidance as a tactic to navigate race. Delving into this area further will illuminate the harm embedded in the notion of the non-confrontational White woman in a professional environment.

The focus of this study is White women in student affairs, but I did not delve into the positionality of participants as managers. Positionality is a significant factor in how people communicate in the workplace. People of Color in student affairs often experience racism at the hands of White supervisors who minimize the work of professionals of Color, align their experiences with sexism, heterosexism, ableism and other marginalized identities with the racial experiences of supervisees of Color. This creates an additional layer of power dynamics within the already existing racial hierarchy that is embedded in the organization as well as society in general. Research focused on White women as managers in student affairs will illuminate how White hegemony manifests in the work environment, particularly from well-intentioned White

women. Lastly, in terms of analysis, I would use the emotionality of Whiteness framework as tool to analyze data from the beginning of a study paired with the colorblind framework. The emotionality of Whiteness framework was incorporated late in the analysis phase because emotions surfaced as a core outcome. It would be worth exploring whether the findings would differ when using this framework throughout a study.

## Conclusion

In Eduardo Bonilla-Silva's 2018 presidential address to the American Sociological Association (ASA) he stated that "Emotions and language go together". In this study, I sought to examine White women using these two lenses. Cheryl Matias' emotionality of Whiteness framework provided a framework to discuss and examine what Bonilla-Silva (2018) frames as "Feeling Race" (ASA Presidential Address, 2018). Eduardo Bonilla-Silva's colorblind racism framework provided the lens to examine language and how it is used in navigating racial dynamics. Together, these two frameworks provide a more complete sense of how White women navigate race in student affairs and higher education. All participants have felt race even without realizing it. The findings underscore how White women can feel race whether consciously or subconsciously by reveling in their ability to experience race from a privileged perspective. In a sense, my attempt is aligned with DiAngelo's (2018) claim that race is often examined as a People of Color issue. My attempt here is to refocus race as a White issue and specifically a White women's issue. Bonilla-Silva framed the role of Whites as follows, "All Whites whether consciously or not, participate in various ways and degrees in maintaining the racial order and partake in the pleasure of enforcing racial boundaries and the racial etiquette of the day" (ASA Presidential Address, 2018). The White women in this study all identified as progressive and engaged in upholding White supremacy and the racial order through their emotions and reactions

(actions) to race in a professional environment. The findings indicate that student affairs professionals must continue to incorporate racial dialogue within the professional setting. Additionally, we must delve into the training curriculum with a deeper focus on racial emotionality and how it supports and hinders our racial equity training efforts.

Student affairs as a field plays a significant role in social justice efforts in higher education. Senior leadership across the U.S. rely on student affairs professionals to lead in the development of proactive and reactive remedies to racial tensions on college and university campuses. White women occupy critical roles within student affairs as well as across the higher education landscape. Their representation in student affairs makes it critical for researchers to examine White women's approaches to racial equity in a professional environment. Historically speaking, White women have cultivated the image of innocence and womanhood, this study advanced an understanding of how this history may or may not play out in a profession that emphasizes social justice. An understanding of how White women navigate race can help us understand from a different angle how this affects professionals of Color. In his American Sociological Association presidential address Bonilla-Silva states, "I have been feeling race all of my life even before I knew what race was" (ASA Presidential Address, 2018). In this study I sought to illuminate how Bonilla-Silva's sentiments are not exclusive to People of Color. White people feel race just as much as People of Color albeit these feelings are shaped differently by the forces of history and socialization.

## Appendix A: Email to Share with Prospective Participants

Greetings,

My name is Christine Mata and I am writing to solicit participants for my dissertation research. I am a doctoral student in the Higher Education and Organizational Change program in the Graduate School of Information Sciences at the University of California Los Angeles. I am also the Associate Dean of Students at Humboldt State University. The purpose of my dissertation is to investigate how White women in student affairs engage in race in the work setting. Through this study, I hope to understand how White women develop an understanding of race and how their identity as White women interplays with the racial dynamics in the workplace.

As a professional, I have developed a passion for diversity and social justice work and the value our profession places on diversity, inclusion, and multicultural competence. While engaging in that work, I noticed that many White women are not always sure where they fit in conversations about diversity, especially when it comes to race. My curiosity of the dynamic between the work environment and how White women approach race is the reason I chose this topic for my dissertation research.

If you are a self-identified White woman in student affairs professional with four or more years of experience, then I invite you to nominate yourself for this study by completing a participant information form.

I will ask you to participate in one 60-90 minute face-to-face or phone interview, during winter and spring of 2018. Some participants may have a second 30-45 minute optional interview for clarification of information shared in the first interview. Participation would be confidential, as all participants will select pseudonyms for the study. More information is provided on the participant demographic form.

By nominating yourself, you have the potential to make an important contribution to practice and research in student affairs and higher education. Click **here** to complete the online individual demographic form. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Christine Mata
Doctoral Candidate
Higher Education & Organization Change
Graduate School of Information Sciences
University of California Los Angeles
(626) 543-0461
chrismata@ucla.edu

**Appendix B: Participant Demographic Form**

# Participant Demographic Form: Study on White Women in Student Affairs

* About me and the study: I am a doctoral candidate in the Higher Education and Organization Change program in the Graduate School of Information Sciences at the University of California Los Angeles. The purpose of this study is to investigate White women in student affairs professionals and their perception about their role in the racial discourse in the workplace. I hope to understand how White women engage in racial discourses in the workplace and the affects it has on the work environment.

* This form: The information collected on this form will only be used to contact you for follow up on any information or answers you provide. Additionally, any demographic data I collect will help me craft a clear description of the participant sample for this study.

*Informed Consent: This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of California Los Angeles. Completion of this form and participating in this study are both voluntary. The information collected on this form will not be identifiable by your actual name or any other identifying information about you. That information will be kept confidential. The information collected maybe shared as part of the study to present findings or with a pseudonym that you select.

*This form should only take 10-15 minutes to fill out. Please answer the following questions:

* Required

Full name *

Your answer

Email *

Your answer

Phone number

Your answer

Are you currently a full time student affairs professional? *

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No * If you answer no I am sorry to inform you that you are not eligible to participate in their study.

What is the name of your institution of employment? *

Your answer

What is your functional area? (e.g., residential life, student conduct, orientation, clubs and activities...etc) *

Your answer

How long have you been a student affairs professional? *

Your answer

Will you be available in late fall 2017 to participate in interviews? *

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

Will you be available in winter and spring 2018 for interviews? *

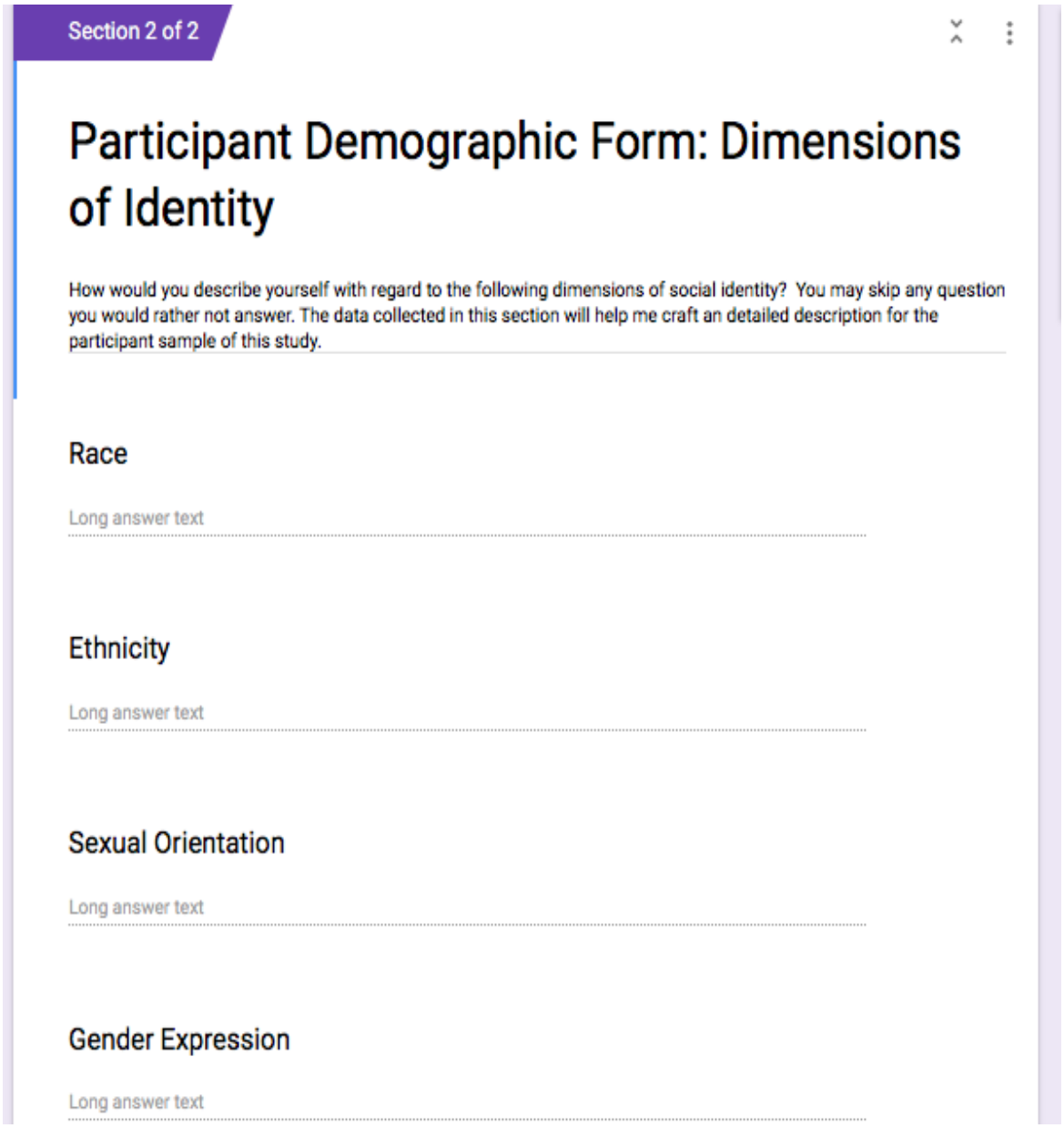
- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

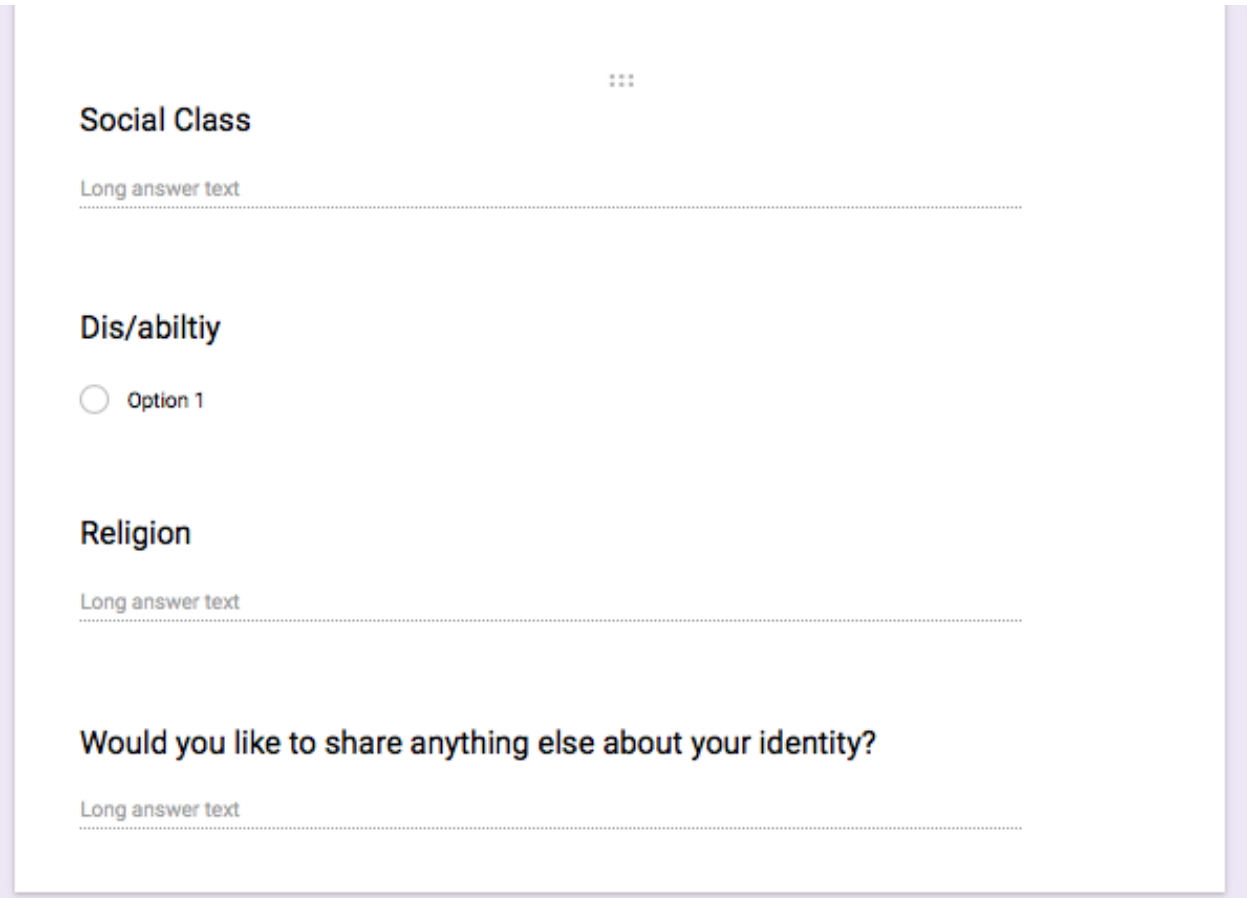
Do you consider yourself a White woman? *

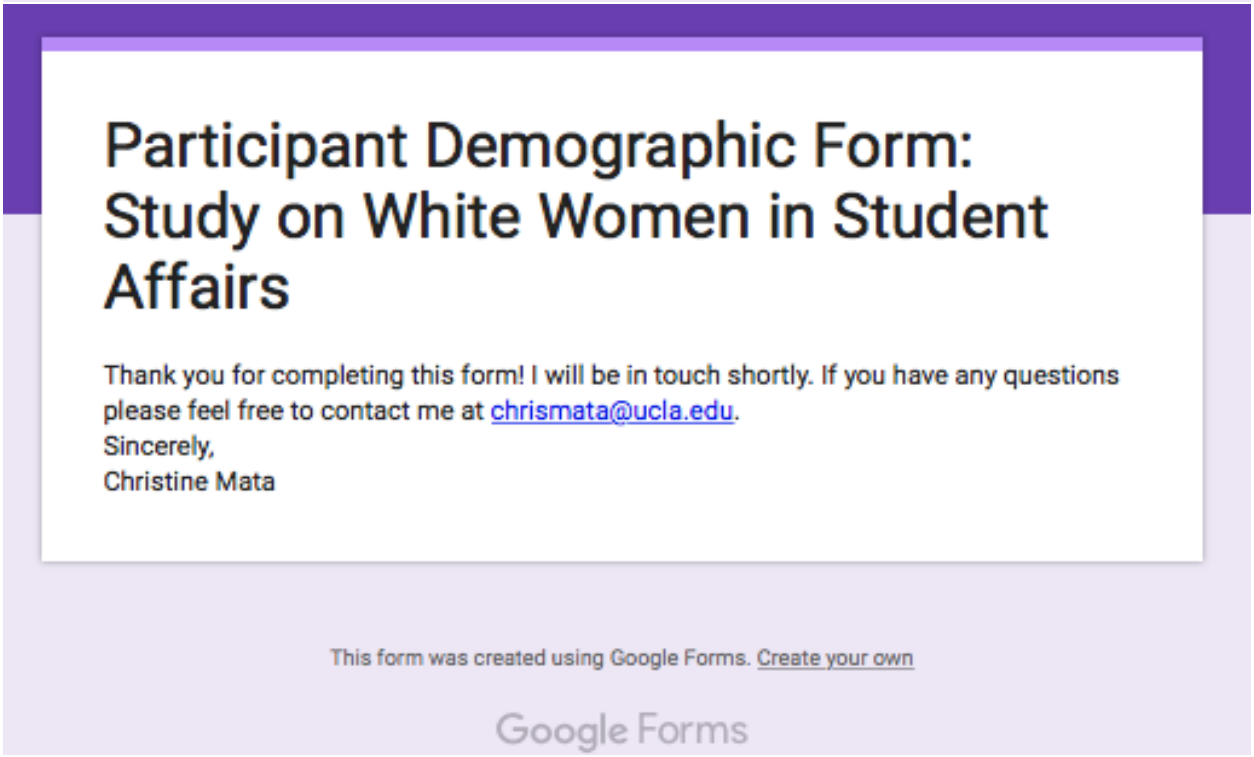
- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

NEXT

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.


Section 2 of 2
Participant Demographic Form: Dimensions of Identity
How would you describe yourself with regard to the following dimensions of social identity? You may skip any question you would rather not answer. The data collected in this section will help me craft an detailed description for the participant sample of this study.
Race
Long answer text
Ethnicity
Long answer text
Sexual Orientation
Long answer text
Gender Expression
Long answer text




Adapted from: Robbins, C. (2012). *Racial consciousness, identity, and dissonance among white women in student affairs graduate programs.*

## Appendix C: Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

[Before the interview, review human subjects and obtain documentation of informed consent. Ask participants if they have any questions before moving forward.]

*Opening Comments*

Thank you for meeting with me today. I am so grateful that you are taking the time out of your busy schedule to participate in this interview. Before we begin, I want to introduce myself and this study. My name is Christine Mata and I am a researcher from UCLA's Graduate School of Education. I am also an Associate Dean of Students at Humboldt State University.

The purpose of this study is to understand how White women in student affairs engage in race in the workplace. Our interview today is to help inform my understanding of White women in professional roles. In no way, will this interview serve as an evaluation of you. Please feel free to share anything you like. If for any reason you do not wish to answer a specific question, simply say "I pass". If at any point you would like to excuse yourself from this interview please let me know so I can end the conversation.

If you have not received a consent form via email please let me know so I can make sure I have a signed copy from you. Otherwise, I will have to postpone this interview. I would also like to ask for you permission to record the interview and to take notes during our dialogue. In order to protect your identity, I will transcribe the dialogue using a pseudonym for you. Do you have any questions before we start?

**Ask participant to choose a pseudonym before progressing to the interview questions.*

*Opening Question*

1. Let us begin with introductions. My name is Christine and I am a Doctoral student at the University of California Los Angeles. I am Mexican-American and I am originally from East Los Angeles, CA.
   *(Ask participant to introduce herself)*
2. Low risk question: customize question based off the demographics form (e.g., describe where they grew up).

*Background Questions*
(Choose 2-3 if time permits and review demographic form)

3. What led you to a career in student affairs?
4. How has your professional experience been similar or different from what you thought it would be when you chose this profession?
5. At what point in your professional trajectory did you begin to think about the role of race in student affairs?
6. Can you describe a memorable racial incident you had to deal with in your career? (*Follow up questions*) What was your role? How did you respond?

*Race in the Workplace*

**7.** How often do you discuss race at home? (*follow up question*) In a professional environment?
**8.** In what settings have you discussed your racial identity? What projects, committee and professional experiences have led you to reflect on your racial identity?
**9.** When you discuss race in your professional environment, who do you discuss racial issues with?
**10.** When there is a racialized incident on campus, who do you look to for guidance?
**11.** Are you involved in diversity committees in your professional role?
- How do you feel about diversity committees on your campus?
- Do you think they are necessary?

**12.** Tell me about your colleagues of Color (Duties, Functional Areas, level of interaction).
- Do you feel you can discuss race with your colleagues of Color?
- How comfortable are you discussing race related events in the presence of your colleagues?

  Follow ups:
  - Competency of colleagues of Color
  - Affirmative action (What do you think?)
  - Do they get emotional when talking about race? (Cry maybe?)

**13.** Think of a time when you had a conversation about race with a peer (Colleague). Describe the setting and interaction...

*Gender and Race*

**14.** While discussing this subject with White women issues of gender and gender expression do come up. Tell me about your gender. What does it mean to you?
**15.** Tell me about your racial identity. What does being white mean to you?
- What experiences influenced your understanding of your racial identity?
- What experiences influenced your gender identity?

**16.** How do you notice your racial identity and gender identity intersecting?
**17.** How does your understanding of your racial and gender identity affect your professional life?
**18.** How has your development as a White woman shaped you as a student affairs professional?

## Appendix D: Optional Second Interview Protocol

*Welcome Remarks: Thank you for requesting a follow up interview. As a gentle reminder, I just want to make sure you understand that this is optional and if at any point you decide you would like to end this interview please let me know and I will end the discussion. This second part of informal and will flow more like a conversation and will last approximately no more than 45 minutes.*

Concepts to explore in second interview:

- Have you thought about the discussion we last had? What thoughts have come up for you about that conversation?
- Follow up from questions from part one.
- Diversity and equity work in student affairs.
- Discussing race with colleagues of Color.
- Supervising colleagues of Color.
- Hiring and affirmative action.
- Gender and race.
- Allow participant to choose what they want to talk about.

## Appendix E: Consent Waiver

University of California, Los Angeles

### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

*White Women in Student Affairs: Engaging with Race in a Complex Work Environment*

Christine Mata, MA from the *Higher Education and Organizational Change Division* at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) is conducting a research study.

You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you *self-identify as a White woman in the profession of Student Affairs*. Your participation in this research study is voluntary and you may decide to discontinue your participation at any time during the process.

**Why is this study being done?**

*The purpose of this study to gain knowledge of the various ways White women in student affairs engage race in the work environment.*

**What will happen if I take part in this research study?**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, the researcher will ask you to do the following:

- *Fill out a two page demographic form.*
- *Schedule a 60-90 minute phone appointment with a possible follow up of about 20-30 minutes (if necessary).*
- *Give feedback on a written version of the findings.*

**How long will I be in the research study?**

Participation will take a total of about *90 minutes total with a potential follow up of 20-30 minutes.*

**Are there any potential risks or discomforts that I can expect from this study?**

*All measures possible will be taken to protect the identity of participant. Each person will be assigned a pseudonym and all identifiers will be known only to the researcher.*

**Are there any potential benefits if I participate?**

You may benefit from the study as a professional in student affairs. This study will contribute to a growing area of research focused on White women and race in professional environments in student affairs.

The results of the research may help address inequities in the student affairs profession and help White practitioners address issues of campus climate.

**Will I be paid for participating?**

- You will receive a $5.00 gift card to Starbucks Coffee for your participation.

**Will information about me and my participation be kept confidential?**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can identify you will remain confidential. It will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of assigning pseudonyms and keeping data in a locked drawer in the researcher's home. Only the principle investigator will have access to the data. All identifiers will be destroyed after the findings have been recorded and participants have had the opportunity to review a draft.

**What are my rights if I take part in this study?**

- You can choose whether or not you want to be in this study, and you may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time.
- Whatever decision you make, there will be no penalty to you, and no loss of benefits to which you were otherwise entitled.
- You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.

**Who can I contact if I have questions about this study?**

- **The research team:**
  If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the research, you can talk to the one of the researchers. Please contact:

- **UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program (OHRPP):**

  If you have questions about your rights as a research subject, or you have concerns or suggestions and you want to talk to someone other than the researchers, you may contact the UCLA OHRPP by phone: (310) 206-2040; by email: participants@research.ucla.edu or by mail: Box 951406, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1406.

***You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.***

**SIGNATURE OF STUDY PARTICIPANT**

Name of Participant

Signature of Participant | Date

**SIGNATURE OF PERSON OBTAINING CONSENT**

Name of Person Obtaining Consent | Contact Number

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent | Date

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