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ABSTRACT

This dissertation presents a longitudinal ethnographic study about race and how college students construct and negotiate its meaning. The study utilizes multiple qualitative methods such as participant observation, unstructured interviews and focus groups. Rather than race identity or racism, the discourses of race and how they are produced or adopted by students on a university campus are central to this work. Drawing from Critical Race Theory, Critical Whiteness Studies, and other race theories, I present qualitative analyses about race, which demonstrate how racism is cloaked and persists in colorblind discourse and the race talk of educated young people. This work illuminates how colorblind discourses function for different racial groups of people, exposes the mechanics of race talk, and challenges the stasis of current racial/multicultural education. I conclude with implications for further research and recommendations for educators to be more vigilant and productive in anti-racist and justice education for all students.

Racing Discourses:
Constructions and Negotiations Students Make About Race

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Cultural Foundations of Education
in the Graduate School of Syracuse University

May 2012

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We never achieve alone. There are so many people who contributed to this accomplishment by contributing to the quality of my life. My family and closest friends have endured with me, providing encouraging words, space to do my work, and the kind of love that could fuel a rocket beyond the gravity of social barriers and life challenges. I am blessed.

I am the product of public education from Jamaica, West Indies to New York, USA; from K-12 to graduate school. This degree is my first from a private institution of higher education. I am grateful for all the educators who have taught me about some particular subject and about life over the years. The more formal education I have received, the more I give thanks for so many dedicated professionals who nurtured the best in me. Among these are Jim Doellefeld, who first encouraged me to seriously consider doctoral study, and Lois Smith Owens, who affirmed my intellect and valued my contributions as a new professional. I am especially grateful in this moment for the various professors at Syracuse University who deepened my interest and learning in the field. These scholars came from my home department, Cultural Foundations of Education, and others such as Higher Education, African American Studies, Latino and Latin American Studies, and Political Science. I am grateful for the opportunities my interdisciplinary program provided for me to shape the contours of my studies.

Special acknowledgement must be made of my committee members, who pushed me to stay focused, motivated, and sound in my work. I had the privilege of taking courses, even independent studies with Dr. Barbara Applebaum, who always valued my work and encouraged me to dig deeper. Dr. Timothy Eatman came to the university right on time to join my committee and strengthen my confidence at each turn in the dissertation process. Dr. Sari

Biklen, my wonderful advisor, was so skillful in her methods of encouraging and challenging me to become a confident writer, to develop my thoughts clearly, and to see the nuances in my analyses and overall work. I so deeply respect the scholarship and expertise of this core group of people and recognize how exceptionally privileged I am to learn from them. Thanks to my extended committee, Dr. Christine Ashby, Dr. Tom Wolfe, and Dr. Janis Mayes, who provided thoughtful responses to this document and engaging discussion at the Defense.

I thank all those who contributed to my doctoral studies and research by their support and provision of opportunities that allowed me to conduct my studies and to write this dissertation unhindered. This includes Barry L. Wells, Dr. James K. Duah-Agyeman, JoAnn May, Dr. Frances Faehner, and my Office of Multicultural Affairs Family. Dr. D. has been amazingly supportive and I will always appreciate him for knowing how, when, and where, even if all the details for "why" aren't clear. My success is a part of his legacy.

During the period of transcribing my recorded interviews, I took a trip to Long Island to visit with my family for the Winter holidays. It was a Friday afternoon. As a doctoral student, I certainly packed my tapes, transcriptions, and field notes with me so that I wouldn't miss an opportunity to do some work, even during the holiday season. A friend met me at my apartment parking lot, packed his things in my trunk, and we took the 5 hour drive together. After I arrived on Long Island, I soon realized that my bag with all my research was not with me. Certain that I had packed the bag, I checked my car and every bit of my mother's house to find my "research bag." It was not to be found. At church, all I could think about and pray about was finding my research bag. So, the next day, I borrowed my girlfriend's car and drove back to Syracuse to find everything I had sacrificed many months to produce. All I could think about was my research and what this could mean if I didn't find it. I had recalled that I did pack the bag in my car; then

removed it to repack my friend's items in the trunk. The bag must have been left in the parking lot, in the snow. I drove with every ounce of hope I could muster, pleading with God and His universe to find my bag, whatever condition it may be in. Finally, I arrived in Syracuse, then in my neighborhood, then my block. Then slowly as I pulled into the parking lot of my apartment, there in front of me was the bag, hanging in a tree. I could hardly believe it. My research bag hung on the branches of an evergreen tree. To Whomever It Was that placed my bag in that tree, I dedicate this dissertation to You!

My family and most of my friends have no idea what the doctoral or dissertation writing process is like. However, they do know that it requires enormous sacrifices and they supported me through it all. My deepest thanks are offered to my parents and siblings, whose prayers and other forms of frank support made me determined to live up to the family name. My "Ph.D. Crew" brought accountability to life in this process. I cannot thank Dr. Michelle Espino, Dr. Judy Marquez Kiyama, and soon to be Dr. Monica Miranda Smalls enough for offering the kind of support and direction at a critical point in the process that rejuvenated me with focus. To Janet Morgan, staunch spiritual advisor, thank you for your cultural and spiritual influence. I am raised by a host of Brothers whose spirit of conscientious achievement assured me that this would be done. Specifically, I am indebted to those "razor sharp" Brothers at the University at Albany, State University of New York, for surrounding me with inspiration when I was an undergraduate and for nurturing the deepest, strongest bonds I know. My godfather, Louie Tobias, is a constant, quiet and significant presence. Also, my Brothers at Syracuse University, who's care for me, even as their Chapter Advisor and Mentor, kept me inspired to meet their expectations of me and as well as my own. My accountability partners during the writing phase, Noreen Buckley, Sangwani Mabhena, and best friends on the planet, Mr. Osomo Thomas (my

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May this work mean something.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
CHAPTER 1:	INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY	1
	Introduction……..	1
	Contexts…….	10
	National……..10	
	Higher Education…….....	11
	The Research……..15	
	Phase I……15	
	Phase II……..	17
	Overview of the Dissertation…….	17
CHAPTER 2:	LITERATURE REVIEW	20
	Introduction……20	
	Race and Racism……22	
	Critical Race Theories, Colorblindness and Microaggressions…….	25
	College Student Development and Adjustment……	33
	Identity……..	37
	Critical Whiteness Studies……	40
	Summary……46	
CHAPTER 3:	METHODS AND PROCEDURES	48
	Considerations For My Work……	49
	Study Design…….	51
	Procedures…….	53
	Selection of the University and Program……....53	
	Data Collection – Phase I……..	54
	Informants Chart……57	
	Portraits……..57	
	Interview Protocol……..63	
	Data Collection –Phase II……..	64
	Focus Group Interview Protocol……65	
	Data Analysis……67	
	Challenges……..70	
	Strengths……	71
	Researcher Perspectives……71	
	Summary……74	
CHAPTER 4:	DATA CHAPTER: COLORBLIND ENTRAPMENTS	76
	Introduction……76	
	Colorblind Discourses and the Minimization of Race……...	79
	We're human……..81	

No big deal……82

In the past…….. 84
Essentially speaking…….. 87
Family Portraits……..91
Friendship and Dating Frames……...93
Don's Family……..93
Jennifer's Family……... 96
Geoff's Family……...98
Negatives……103
Clayton's Family……104
Leslie's Parents…….. 106
Natasha's Grandparents……. 109
Summary of Portraits……. 110
Wrestling with Whiteness, Asian Ambivalence, Black Reconnaissance
A. Homes, Safe Houses, and Host Bodies (Introduction)…… 111
a. White Resistance – Homes and Safe Houses……...113
b. White Resistance – Host Bodies……..118
B. Asian/Asian American Ambivalence – Finding Home……... 122
C. Black Reconnaissance – Conflicts and Conflations…….128
Conclusion……. 135

CHAPTER 5: TALKING RACE, RACING TALK 138
Introduction……138
White Talk, Back Talk……...140
Nic's Talk (analysis)……..146
Tom's Talk (analysis)…… 147
Dominant Denials…….. 148
Talk of Knowing and Doubting……. 151
Hip Hop Race Talk Generation……..154
Listening…… 161
Race Talk Chalk: We don't do what they do…… 165
Talk about the race walk/ Walk the race talk…… 170
Conclusion……. 183

CHAPTER 6: RACE: SHIFTS, STAYS, DRIFTS 176
Introduction……176
Conceptions of Race…….. 177
Race is normal, systematic……177
Race is political……..180
Race frustrates individuality…….. 183
Complexity and Fluidity of Identity: Deconstructing Race Identity. 187
"Black" Identities under Construction……... 188
Asian Identities of Relation……... 192
Emergent Latino Constructions……. 194
White Stasis……196

Lived Realities on Campus…… 198
Classrooms, Race-rooms……199
The *Colored* Section…….. 205
Conclusion……. 214

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION 217
Summary and Discussion…….. 217
Implications……... 226
Research Implications……231

References……..235

RACING DISCOURSES:
CONSTRUCTIONS AND NEGOTIATIONS STUDENTS MAKE ABOUT RACE

Paul M. Buckley

INTRODUCTION

Race confounds us. In the United States, we are caught in its ideological grip with various levels of consciousness about its hold on our psyche and our bodies. Yet, race, a social construction and political negotiation, is with us. It shapes our talk and walk, our privileges and debts, our realities and dreams, our births and deaths. It separates us and divides our quality of life unequally. Yet, its common use in our language does not translate to a common sense of what race is or does. This dissertation examines the meanings of race and how they are constructed by students at a predominantly white university in the Northeast, U.S.A. with strong commitments to diversity. My study investigates how this generation of college students comes to understand what they do about race, how they talk about it, and how they negotiate and re/produce discourses about race from their social locations. This study spans three years and concludes during the campaign that produced the first African American president of the United States. It is within this historical moment that news media have pondered and suggested that the U.S. has reached a new day in racial politics, a new "post-racial" era. Yet, many question what that term could possibly mean except to silence any meaningful conversation about race because we are somehow "beyond" it. Even though President Obama articulated the necessity for national dialogue about "race" during his historic campaign for a more perfect Union, he seems particularly challenged (perhaps because of his race) to discuss race as

he leads the imperfect union during this contemporary period of "post-racial rhetoric." Race is irony.

Race has confounded and gripped us from the beginning. It challenges our foundations and ideals. This is clearly exhibited in the juxtaposition of our constitution and the social context in which it was written. The Constitution of the United States of America was established by "the people" in order to "form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility" (U.S. Const. pmbl.) and fulfill other functions of a nation state seeking the blessings of liberty. As the Constitution was written during the time of brutal chattel enslavement of Africans by White oppressors, so is the rhetoric of "post-racialism" spouted in the present day when racial injustice and inequity patterns are so rampant. While promising equality and justice for everyone, the United States has perpetuated a history of racial injustice that is still prevalent today. Racial inequality is obvious among our nation's educational, health, and economic systems. Hard data provide hard evidence of persistent broken promises for non-white people within the structure of American life. For example, the U.S. Census (2000) data shows that Black Americans are three times as likely to be poor as White Americans, and are among racial minorities who are overrepresented in the most disadvantaged neighborhoods. A review of both the flow of money (income) as well as the collection of assets that one owns (wealth) reveals the crucial patterns of racial imbalance that plague this country (Oliver & Shapiro, 1995, 2004). The U.S. economic structure which has been transformed from an industrial to service focus has stifled the incomes of people with modest educational achievements, significantly impacting Blacks, Hispanics, and Asian Americans (Massey, 2006).

Education in the United States has been considered one of the great "equalizers" or remedies for social inequities and injustice. Yet, U.S. education is particularly a site of inequality

(Frankenberg & Lee, 2006; Kozol, 1991; Ogbu, 1994;). African Americans, Latinos/Hispanic Americans and other racial/ethnic minorities have historically been denied opportunity to higher education until the access movement that began in the 1940's and later included the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950's and 1960's (Seidman, 2005). Still great disparities between White and underrepresented students remain today. Recent statistics indicate that even before college, Blacks and Hispanics meet challenges to their educational attainment at a higher rate than Whites. According to the U.S. Department of Education, the high school dropout rate for African Americans ages 16 to 24 was 9.9 percent, almost double the rate for White Americans at 4.8 percent in 2008. For Hispanic Americans, the dropout rate was 18.3 percent that year, the highest of all race/ethnic groups with American Indian/Alaska Natives at 14.6 percent ("The Condition of Education," 2011).

Manning Marable (2002) observes that "opportunity and access to higher education are determined primarily by wealth" (p. 137). At the primary and secondary levels, Black and Brown students are victimized by the lack of financial, human, and pedagogical resources facilitated by a structural formula of school operations that maintains them in the lowest performing public schools. Wilson (1996, 2009), an African American sociologist, has made race and class integrative arguments to explain the source of this social fact; pointing to past racial discrimination that created the Black underclass and the structural dis/location of employment ending in resource depleted neighborhoods. Although Wilson (1973) has controversially declared a "declining significance of race," critiques of his work have demonstrated that a trend toward income racial parity that Wilson argued in 1973 did not and does not hold (Cancio, Evans, & Maume, 1996; Kim & Tamborini, 2006; Thomas & Hughes, 1986;). Yet, Wilson contributes significantly to discussions that reveal the inequities of historical and present systemic racism. It is well documented that residential segregation patterns are closely linked to concentrated poverty lines that work against successful

schools. Of course this is only a part of the larger story of disparity in the quality of educational services and successful pedagogy for urban schools and school districts with a majority of racial minorities.

Since the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision to end segregation of American students by race, there was significant decline in segregation patterns until the mid 1980's. However, an examination of U.S. public schools demonstrates a reversing trend leading to re-segregation, especially for Latino students whose enrollment in public schools has tripled since the late 1960's (Frankenberg & Lee, 2006; Orfield, Eaton, & Jones, 1996). Sadly, court orders ending desegregation plans have contributed to this reversing of two educational goals U.S. American society says it holds dear: equality and integration. There is much research that emphasizes teachers' engagement of culturally relevant pedagogy for students' success (Banks & Banks, 2004; Howard, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2001; Tate, 1995). Additionally, ethnographies like Annette Lareau's *Unequal Childhoods* (2003) and Anne Ferguson's *Bad Boys* (2004) highlight the central white middle-class lens from which many students are interrogated, judged, provoked, and disciplined. Ferguson calls for a "restructuring of the entire educational system" in response to the race, class, and gender intersectional subjugation of students (p. 234).

Meanwhile, post-Civil Rights laissez-faire racism pervades the national landscape and inhibits governmental action to redress racial inequality concerns at any and all levels. Bobo (2006) describes laissez-faire racism as a pattern of beliefs that involve "staunch rejection of an active role for government in undoing racial segregation and inequality" and denies that discrimination and racism is a problem in society (p. 93). This post-Jim Crow form of racism also accepts negative stereotypes of African Americans and views Blacks as the source of their collective problems. This racist discourse is coupled with another dominant discourse: colorblindness. Bonilla-Silva discusses

colorblindness as "ideology" so I will use his language here. Colorblind[1] ideology suggests that we live in a race neutral society where inequalities are the result of naturally occurring phenomena such as market dynamics and the inferiority of Blacks (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). In other words, colorblind ideology as a form of racism takes on subtle and institutional forms that "explain contemporary racial inequality as the outcome of nonracial dynamics" (p. 2). This "new racism," as Bonilla-Silva calls it, stifles conversations about race or racism or any acknowledgement of inequality and creates a catch 22 for contemporary victims of racism who must prove that racism exists by demonstrating their victimization, which is precisely what the colorblind system of racism rejects. However, this "race neutral" perspective that denies discrimination acknowledges race only for commodification—the purchasing and sharing of "race" as products, symbols and experiences for Whites as well as African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans ("People of Color"[2]).

It is within this national climate of dominant colorblind discourses that this dissertation is written. The research presented in this dissertation grew out of my interest in the subject of race and racism that may have begun as early as third grade. It was during a regular school day at Clarks Town elementary in Jamaica, West Indies that one of my peers challenged me to understand race and nation as two distinct identities. "If you were born in England, how come you're not White?" he asked. My eight-year old peer and I had witnessed many tourists in coach buses drive by our school, slowing speed only to gaze at us, Black children, on the playgrounds. The buses, filled with White people from "Foreign," were like fancy mobile cages with windows and doors that never

[1] This well used term in race studies can be problematic in that it reinforce ableism. An exploration of Disability issues (and perhaps their relationship to race) could be its own dissertation. However, while focusing on race in this dissertation, I am not neglecting the significance of this discourse in the broader topic of social justice education.
[2] Nieto (2000) describes the use of this term, people of color, to express important connections and common experiences among groups such as African American, Asian American, Latino, and Native or American Indian. I use this term (or students of color, specifically) throughout the dissertation interchangeably with a listing of the four race/ethnic groups. At the same time, I am keenly aware that there is great diversity within this conglomeration and that the connections between them do not express uniformity and should not be used to hide rich diversity among the individual groups.

opened toward us. This made tourists seem at once special. They were set apart in another world behind the glass windows and towering metal of the coach bus. Then at once they were also strange, alien beings, even bust like, looking at us with blank stares and expressionless in their overlapping white economic privilege. As a U.K. born Black Jamaican boy, I was a bit of an outsider, a foreign boy when I mentioned my birthplace. However, my classmate and I both knew I was not like the foreigners in the bus.

When I arrived in the United States one year later, race would become more real to me. My teachers were mostly White and my fellow students were diverse but mostly Black at the first school I attended. I would soon learn about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Underground Railroad and Sojourner Truth during Black History Month. Two years later, I would better understand that Dr. King was a soldier in the army for racial justice and the Underground Railroad was a metaphor for the journey of enslaved Africans who escaped their slave-oppressors like runaway trains toward freedom. By middle school, my family moved to a more integrated town in New York State where the number of my White classmates decreased each academic year. (I didn't learn about "white flight" until college.) The diversity of my teachers increased but remained mostly White. I thought little of it, but did think about race often in my honors courses in high school. It was in those classrooms that I shared the most racially diverse academic experiences which included Black, Latino, Asian, and White classmates. However, most of my high school peers were Black and Brown (or Latino) students who did not share as many classes with White counterparts in our school's racially stratified academic tracking system.

I attended a very large public university where the Black population was less than ten percent. Latinos and Asian Americans also represented a small percentage of the population. Native Americans were almost invisible. The university was historically and predominantly white in its

enrollment and employment. It was in that setting that I experienced the most direct interpersonal and institutional racism. Freshman year, my relationships with White roommates quickly deteriorated as I felt racially isolated by them and witnessed their blatant ignorance and tokenism toward me. When I became a leader on campus, I would learn more about the majority disdain and stereotypes held toward minority groups as well as the structural disadvantages toward students of color as individuals and members of cultural clubs and organizations on campus. I would also become civically engaged by participating in grass roots student resistance to some of these concerns, dedicating myself to community service and learning about the local community, and at times engaged in student protests that countered the status quo. Yet, I was also able to develop some cross-racial friendships and associations with my peers and university professionals. These experiences helped me to consider issues of race and racism as complex formulations to negotiate and struggle against, while developing optimism for positive cross-racial relationships and social change.

These considerations informed my interests as a professional in the field of Higher Education. I developed strong passions for work in critical multiculturalism and diversity education, as well as access and retention projects. These works deepened my interest in the social construction of race and social justice through education as I pursued the Cultural Foundations of Education doctoral program. However, I also recognized that my collegiate experiences with race and the academic theories I was exposed to were somewhat different from contemporary ideologies and experiences of the millennial college generation. These students were more likely to have heard and learned about concepts like “diversity” and “multiculturalism” than I was in my secondary and college years. Further, issues related to these concepts seemed to be more openly engaged in university curricula today; and, from my professional observations and discussions I held with

colleagues from various campuses, cultural organizations seemed to be more generally supported. Therefore, I wanted to understand more about how this generation of college students interpreted race. How did these students come to understand race? What contributed to this understanding? How did students think about race even as they matriculated to college? This dissertation presents my academic inquiry and discovery on the topic.

What do you think about race?

> *"It's never really been a factor. I've never really thought anything of it, to be honest with you, I guess. I don't, like I guess, I don't know about anything about race. I never really sat down and asked myself that question. It's not an issue for me, to be honest with you. Um, I guess, I don't know, I don't really know how to describe it..."*
>
> - Tom, a first-year white student in the Pre-First Program

It may sound as though Tom does not have a concept of race. Rather, he has a certain concept of race that allows him to manage his privileged position in a racist society. The discourse of colorblindness is visible in his talk.

"Race" disrupts. Many high school students, all of whom live lives shaped by race, give it limited reflection and critique when they transition from high school to college (Pascarella, Edison, Nora, Hagedorn, & Terenzini, 1996). This ethnographic study explores how students make meaning of "race" as they transition from high school to Findings University, the pseudonym for a large, diverse, predominantly white, private university in the northeast. This project examines the conceptions of "race" held by 25 students who identify broadly with one or more of these historically recognized race categories in the U.S.--white, Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic, and African American/black. Conceptions about race can include identity, social relations, meaning, history, and origin. The primary focus of this work does not probe the particular racial category informants employ to identify themselves. That is, I am not primarily

interested in how students identify racially and their reasons for doing so as a major focus of this study. I am, however, interested in how the students' racial identification contributes to the social location from which they speak. This project has broader objectives than the study of students' racial identity. It highlights the vocabulary they use, the discourses that animate their talk, the examples they provide, the issues they raise—in other words, the meanings they make about race among and between themselves--to understand its impact in society from their perspectives. These meanings include the ways that informants discuss their identities as well as race itself. I examine how informants' comprehension of race frames their understanding of the social world and shapes their personal experiences.

Through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and focus groups, this project collected data in two phases: 1. During the students' pre-collegiate summer experience- the Pre-First program at Findings, I conducted interviews as well as observations of students in their residence hall. 2. During their junior year I facilitated 3 focus groups of 5-7 students each. These approaches enabled me to explore students' interpretations of race between their first and junior years of college. This usually hidden interpretive process will offer educators critical insights for curriculum development and foundational approaches to racial justice education. Additionally, findings may be used to enhance opportunities for positive cross-racial experiences.

I designed my study to engage in participant observation, in-depth interviewing, and focus groups of a particular cohort of incoming students to the university, asking:

1. What ideas about race do students bring with them to university campuses? How did they develop these ideas? How do they go about confirming or questioning them?
2. How do students negotiate the racial diversity of their collegiate experience with home and past?

3. How do language and ideas from campus programs emerge in the students' voices? What kinds of collegiate experiences and environments do students find significant?
4. If students come to think of race as a social construction, what do they begin to do with it? Do they still speak of "race" as something "real" or do they begin to say that there is no such thing or that it does not exist? How do they attempt to construct race for themselves? How do they describe the real consequences of racism?

Chapter 3 of this document explains my methodology in detail.

CONTEXTS:

National Contexts:

In the United States, "race" is one of the most engaging and contested topics. While diversity has become a buzz word in several arenas, including higher education, race remains a significant element in the negotiation of collective identities and other social relations. One notion of "race" is the essentialist notion that people are born with a fixed identity, even a fixed race identity; and the essence of that identity is shared with every person of that same race (Omi & Winant, 1994). For example, an essentialist could argue that all Black people have or do X; and not to have or do X would mean that a person is not Black. Biological essentialism can be found in the origins of the race concept, generally referred to as "scientific racism" (Malik, 1996). However, modern biological research has demonstrated the genetic variability within the subgroups of human beings we call races, with most of the variation found *within* groups and only about 2 percent variation between the major races (Graves, 2004). This fact has strengthened the anthropological stance that race is a social construction, something humanly constructed. However,

essentialist notions of this construction may still emerge if races of people are thought to involve some common essence of being that other races do not hold. Social essentialism, focused on the notion of an essence of behavior, can be constructed. A more critical understanding of race highlights the concept as a "complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle" (Omi & Winant, 1994). This study illuminates the meanings students make about race and how these meanings are transformed in the college arena. The struggles and experiences that inform and transform students' interpretations of race are revealed.

This study reinforces research that demonstrates a "color blind" society and examines the persistent formulations of racism in contemporary America. Students negotiate the ongoing assimilation and acculturation of dominant racial discourses in their everyday lives. They discuss how family, schooling, and popular culture provide platforms for various expressions of white supremacy and racism. These expressions, though clearly providing evidence, are not understood by students—Whites or people of color-- as white supremacist but more ambiguously presented or understood as benign stories and articulations. Yet, they shape and reinforce the racialized experiences of students on university campuses across the nation.

Higher Education Contexts:

Higher education in the United States began with two purposes in mind: to educate civic leaders and provide training for clergy. Hence, the earliest colleges and universities -- which we now regard as leaders in higher education -- were established with a focus on the most privileged classes of the U.S. American citizenry (Lucas, 1994). White people have continued to benefit from institutional and social arrangements in all arenas of U.S. American society where litigation, like Plessy v. Ferguson in 1896, supported notions and formations of race that denied educational and other opportunities to non-whites.

While the 1896 legal affirmation of "separate but equal" discourse was overturned in 1954 by Brown v. Board of Education, Jim Crow segregation validated the status quo (Baker, 1998). Therefore, by 1960 the higher educational landscape was still largely a white populated enterprise with very small numbers of the racialized "other" on campuses, except for historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) which began forming in the mid-1800s (Brown, Donahoo, Bertrand, 2001). Significant gains in the diversity of American college and university campuses were not realized until the Civil Rights Movement. Some estimate that only about four thousand Black students attended predominantly white universities in the northern region of the U.S. in 1954, while approximately twenty thousand Black students attended the HBCUs (Clotfelter, 2004). The proportion of Black students enrolled in full-time undergraduate studies rose steadily from 3.9 percent in 1954 to 10.7 percent in 1998 (Clotfelter, 2004, p.53).

The Civil Rights Movement of the 1950's and 1960's resulted in greater access for African American and other racial and ethnic minorities to post-secondary education (Seidman, 2005), allowing for more racial diversity at predominantly white institutions. The most recent available statistical reports show that minorities (Black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and American Indian/Alaskan Native) compose 30.9 percent of students enrolled in degree-granting institutions ("Digest of Education Statistics," 2007) in contrast to 15.4 percent in 1976. Federal policy has been particularly instrumental in this growth. The Higher Education Act and other amendments of the late 1960's included the development of federal TRIO (just three in the beginning) programs that assist in providing access and support to "disadvantaged" students. Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 delineates all the legislative requirements for these programs. However, the first of the federal TRIO programs, Upward Bound, which prepares low income and first generation students for college, emerged from the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. Since then the Student Support Services, Educational Opportunity Centers, Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Program, and other programs were developed to increase access and participation in post-

secondary education. TRIO programs provide competitive grants to institutions that demonstrate a need and commitment to the program goals in their applications. Two programs at Findings University—the Student Support Services and Higher Educational Opportunity Program—are TRIO initiatives. However, beyond federally funded initiatives, predominantly white colleges and universities have employed a number of localized recruitment strategies to diversify their student populations as well. The quality of efforts will vary among institutions as does their interest in and understanding of diversity. Findings University has been nationally recognized for its diversity initiatives and concern. Utilizing more of its own resources and strategies than state and federal governments provide, Findings has increased its percentage of underrepresented students in recent years. Additionally, the theme of diversity is promoted and engaged in many of the university's initiatives and some of its curricula. "Pre-First" is one of those initiatives.

Pre-First is a six-week pre-freshman program that provides participants the "opportunity to become familiar with the academic, social and cultural life at "Findings University" before getting caught up in the fast pace of the fall semester" (program website). Participating students take 7-10 credits, have an advisor, live on campus in a residence hall, and engage in co-curricular activities designed by the program staff. There are three types of students in the Pre-First program—Higher Educational Opportunity Program (HEOP) participants, Student Supportive Services Program (SSS) participants, and "regular admits" who choose to attend Pre-First. The HEOP is a program for New York State residents who would have met certain eligibility requirements, including being "initially inadmissible to the degree program for which they applied" and who have been economically disadvantaged. Participants must attend Pre-First. Similarly, SSS has income guidelines that suggest assisting students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and first-generation college experience as a priority. However, while SSS students would have demonstrated need for academic services, they have met all academic requirements for regular

admission to the university. SSS is a federal program and participants at this university must attend Pre-First. Both programs (HEOP and SSS) respond to the reality of educational inequalities in the pre-college experience. Pre-First was of particular interest to this researcher because of the mix of students that would be present- racially, economically, academically, and regionally diverse.

The Pre-First pre-freshman summer program requires TRIO students' participation and welcomes "regularly admitted" students to attend also. During the six-week Pre-First summer program, student enrollment is about two-thirds students of color (underrepresented students or statistical minorities in the larger nationwide context) and one-third White. However, during the regular academic year (Fall and Spring semesters), Findings University enrolls 72 percent White students and only 28 percent students of color in its undergraduate population. Hence, the Pre-First program presents an unusual Findings student composition. In an effort to prepare all participating students for the demographic change they will experience in the Fall semester, the statistical reality of Findings as a predominantly white institution is discussed openly by Pre-First faculty and staff throughout the summer session. African American and Latino faculty make up 10 percent of the overall faculty. At Findings University, diversity is officially recognized as a value of the institution and the campus discourse suggests that the campus community engages and struggles with related issues (such as race, culture, sexuality, gender, religion, etc.) on an everyday basis. Since I conducted interviews and focus groups with those students whom I observed and interviewed in the Pre-First program during their junior year, these elements of the university were especially inviting for my research project.

THE RESEARCH:

Phase I

Due to my interest in a *process* of meaning making over time, I collected data at two separate intervals. Over the course of six weeks in the 2005 Pre-First program, I conducted participant observation in the main lounge of the Pre-First program's residence hall and held 25 in depth interviews, to allow for more complete data than interviewing would provide (Becker & Geer, 1967). Participant observation helped me to contextualize the data collected in the interviews as I observed some of the interactions in the common space shared by Pre-First students. From my observations, I chose individuals who seemed significant to talk to (interview) and after each interview, continued in similar purposive sampling (Cuadraz & Uttal, 1999).

Emerging Themes from this phase:

1. Students talked about race as groupings of people based on skin color and reflected some confusion about what it means. Some students, who were exposed to discussions about race in a seminar course, expressed some ambivalence about its reality. Yet they described racialization in high school until their first summer as Pre-First college students.
2. Students spoke about racial diversity at the university as both an attractive quality and one that created some apprehension. While some informants, Whites and students of

color, discussed being attracted to Findings University for its diversity, they also discussed the challenges presented by the need to find a racial niche and not be confined by one.

3. Some students described their parents' racial ideology as an "old" view that students saw as incorrect, outdated, or somehow limited in its contemporary application. All of the parental views that were described as "racist" involved the parents' response to a real or hypothetical friendship or dating relationship.

4. Some White students and students of color used colorblind styles in their language to explain racism or describe racists, seeing racism and those who perpetuated it only in extreme terms, "like the Ku Klux Klan."

5. The discourse of individualism trumped race. This meant that, in the end, students wanted to feel as though race was not a burden to them. A strong sense of individuality was expressed by each of the students. They did not want to see race as having the potential to hinder their own aspirations or experiences. For students of color, race *should not* matter. For White students, race *did not* matter. They were not interested in accepting any responsibility for race or racism.

These themes were interrelated. For example, some students' desire to explore intimate relationships with a racial other was both tied to their curiosity about diversity and their need to explore individual independence, pulling away from parental ideologies. They reflected the students' perspectives expressed in the interviews I conducted in phase I (participant observation and individual interview phase) of this project. These themes were analyzed and considered with the focus group data from phase II of the research.

Phase II

In the Spring and Fall 2008 semesters, I conducted the second phase of data collection which utilized focus groups with some of the same informants from the first phase, at the end of their third year in college. Focus groups are important for examining how diverse students produce and reproduce race when they are together, and make gestures in speech about race as an object they reconstruct in their local environment. I constructed focus groups that were racially diverse in composition, without tokenizing participants of color, to promote a robust discussion to get at (1) shared vocabularies among the students; (2) points of connection and separation and how they negotiate the differences; and (3) how these students negotiate their conceptions of race as a central theme of conversation from their diverse racial locations and perspectives. I obtained their informed consent and protected the identity of each participant with pseudonyms. The focus groups were tape recorded and transcribed. Both strategies (interviews and focus groups) allowed me to follow up with emerging themes from the data in the first phase of the research. The second, third, and fourth research questions provided the particular focus of this phase of the research.

Overview of the Dissertation

Chapters 1, 2, and 3 introduce this dissertation and set the foundation on which the data rest. This dissertation draws on literature in critical theory, critical race theories, critical whiteness studies, and race and racism. After a review of the relevant literature, I outline my research methods and reflect on my role as the researcher. Then I offer three data chapters that present my findings from the individual interviews and focus groups I conducted at Findings University.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 of this dissertation present the rich data I collected and the analyses I made that tell the story of students who entered college with particular ideas about race. In Chapter 4, *Colorblind Entrapments*, I demonstrate how my informants reflect a particular frame of colorblind discourse that minimizes race and racism as a societal ill. These students also wrestle with postmodern identity constructions and attempt to negotiate their family's racial discursive legacy, while denying their own strivings with race and racism. Chapter 5, *Talking Race, Racing Talk*, explores the mechanics, nuances, and challenges of race talk among and between groups of students. Relying on focus group data, this chapter demonstrates persistent racist ideologies, denial of such ideologies and behavior especially among White students, and how discourses are used to maintain communities of race group insiders, while excluding others. White students engage methods of denial while students of color employ talk that generates interrogation of identity and the social order. Finally, I examine the changes in students' conceptions of race, their complex understanding of race identity, and the experiences that shaped their understanding of racism after two to three years in a diverse college environment in *Race: Shifts, Stays, and Drifts* (Chapter 6). I demonstrate how students' core ideas about race stayed the same from their first summer in college (phase I) to the junior and senior years (phase II). Students of color tended to minimize race less than they did years before as a result of their campus experiences, while White students demonstrated more aggressive denials. Most students were faced with significant identity constructions and interrogation of their group identity race labels. Yet, White students in the focus group disengaged from interrogating or considering the meaning of their identities in deeper ways.

The final chapter (7) summarizes the dissertation as a project that reveals students' negotiation of colorblind discourse and constructions of identity and racial meaning. This chapter underscores the critical conclusion that students were still unable to talk about power explicitly, even as students of color made references to power dynamics in their interpersonal relationships and experiences cross-racially.

Further, the implications of this study shatter notions of great progress in anti-racist education in diverse environments and expose the impotence of higher education in this area. Students are making meaning and maintaining the meanings they already have when they matriculate to college. Racial justice education requires a clear curriculum that does not take colorblind practice in its pedagogy and that challenges all learners to do the hard work of seeing racial structures of injustice in order to develop a new order of equality.

CHAPTER 2:

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents the collection of literature that provided a foundation of scholarship to frame my dissertation work. This literature review covers four main topic areas: race and racism; critical race theories, colorblindness and microaggressions; college student development, adjustment and identity; and critical whiteness studies. Race and racism are two core concepts of my research. Students often conflate race and racism, or discuss their experiences with racism in order to interpret race. Recent scholarship on this topic discredits scientific racism and examines race as a construction to be debunked (Graves, 2004; Katayama, 2002; Olson, 2002; Omi, 2001). Hence, this dissertation approaches the concept of race from a constructivist perspective. From this foundational viewpoint, it was important to examine various race theories that provide critical insight to the operational manifestations and consequences of race as a construction. Critical race scholarship, including the specific body of work called Critical Race Theory, provides a useful lens through which colorblind discourses and other contemporary racial manifestations can be analyzed.

I chose to reference college student development literature which provides context for the college stage of life where my informants find themselves. This literature, which explores theories related to students' adjustment to college and their development as individuals and groups in that context, helped me to appropriately understand the thoughts and experiences of my informants over time, with specific interest in diversity related topics and concerns. Here my focus was on psychosocial development in

terms of the students' connection with the university, rather than internal or strictly psychological development. An example of this approach is to explore how students described their racial identities as they relate to students' interpretation of race and racial or ethnic community membership, while not relying on racial identity development literature and models. Such an approach does not center on the students' thinking about their own identity or focus on their psychological development in terms of identity. My interest is not so much about students looking within but how they interpret and describe looking out toward their communities and society. Hence, the scholarship I engage for the exploration of identity is not focused on racial identity development, but rather the literature that frames how identity itself can be understood or approached. For this reason and the critical observation that whiteness dominates the institutional context of a predominantly white institution, I examined Critical Whiteness Studies to help make the context as well as the actors in that context more visible in my analyses. The selected literature reviewed for this and all the topics aim to explore the relationship of individuals to society, to examine the prospect of student interpretations.

Although I do not present an exhaustive review of the literature for these broad areas of scholarship, I present a concise review of the most important literature in terms of their influence on my dissertation research and writing. The literature presented here should be read as selections from the larger scholarship. Much like the very broad topic of race, which this dissertation is about, there are narrower threads that can be explored and focused on. That is the approach of this literature review. Throughout the dissertation, other literature is engaged that compliments the backdrop offered in this review or refers to it

Race and Racism

Race. It has been defined in numerous ways by social theorists, educators, philosophers, sociologists, anthropologists and others. The great American sociologist and first African American to receive a doctoral degree from Harvard University, William Edward Burghardt Du Bois (1995), described race as a "vast family of human beings, generally of common blood and language, always of common history, traditions and impulses, who are both voluntarily and involuntarily striving together for the accomplishment of certain more or less vividly conceived ideals of life" in his essay "Conservation of the Races" over one hundred years ago (p. 21). Since then, race has been described in other ways that have suggested race is a biological fact. However, many scholars and scientists alike have shattered the biological "fact" of race as myth (Graves, 2005). Human genetic variation is not clustered in any significant way for us to agree to the common non/sense of race. Race is a social construct and so is racism. Yet both constructs have material consequences in the lives of raced people. Omi and Winant's (1994) description of race as "a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies" is central to this dissertation (p. 55). This definition acknowledges the phenotypes that society uses to symbolize and embody the social and historical processes that define race. This definition neither essentializes race nor minimizes its social significance as a simple "illusion." Rather, Omi and Winant emphasize the social and historical processes that create, inhabit, transform, and destroy racial categories. This is a project they call racial formation which is linked to the organization and order of society. A racial project is simultaneously about racial dynamics and the redistribution of resources.

Racial formation is both a macro-level and micro-level social process. At the macro-level, racial formation is manifested in legislation, governmental activities, and other dimensions of the social

structure. At the micro-level, racial formation is people's "common sense" about race or their application of various discourses that the structure helps to provide about different human bodies and groups of people. Racial discourse highlights where people's understanding of race comes from. Biklen (1995) describes discourses as "institutional ways of understanding relationships, activities, and meanings that emerge through language" and regulates people's framework of truth (p.81). Discourses determine what people can see and how they see it because discourses are concerned with meaning. To describe anything as an action is to engage in interpretation (Bavelas, 1994). People are able to interpret racial meanings because of the notions provided by the racialized social structure that conditions them. There is a critical and active link between the customs, laws, and impositions of the social structure and the conception of race that people develop. People are racialized. Races are the results of the racialization process. The racial classification of people or the racializing of people is a political act (Bonilla-Silva, 1996). "Indians" as savages, Europeans as "civilized," "nigger," "mulatto," and "Negro" are all social inventions for political purposes (Allen, 1994; Berkhoffer, 1978; Graves, 2005; Marabel, 2003; Roediger, 1991). Likewise, the current terms utilized for identification through box checking on the U.S. census are politically driven (Baker, 2004; Hodgkinson, 1998).

Racism has been defined by social scientists and other theorists and scholars in ways that come up short (Bonilla-Silva, 1996). For the past fifty to sixty years, most scholarship on the topic of racism has defined the concept in dogmatic and ideological terms. One of the earliest definitions of racism is "the dogma that one ethnic group is condemned by nature to congenital inferiority and another group is destined to congenital superiority" (Benedict, 1945, p. 87). Graves (2005) outlines five pillars of racism or racist thought: (1) that biological races exist in the human species; (2) races have genetic differences that determine their intelligence; (3) races have genetically determined differences that produce unique diseases and cause them to die at different rates; (4) races have genetically determined sexual appetites

and reproductive capacities; and (5) races have genetically determined differences in athletic and musical ability (p. xxx). Yet Bonilla-Silva challenges definitions of racism that focus on "beliefs," "dogma," and ideology. He asserts that racism must be understood as a structural concept, within "racialized social systems" (Bonilla-Silva, 1996, p. 469). Racialized social systems place people in hierarchical race categories that positions them as either superordinate or subordinate in the system. These classifications "partially organize and limit actor's life chances" which develops racial "practices of opposition" (Bonilla-Silva, 1996, p. 472). Whether these racial interactions are overt, covert, or inert, they produce economic, social, political and discursive practices that characterizes "us" versus "them." With the structure as a foundation, a racial ideology develops that serves as an "organizational map" to direct the actions of racial actors in the society (Bonilla-Silva, 1996, p.474). This inevitably leads to "racial contestation" or strife between the races.

Andersen (2001) has suggested that power and domination are central factors to our comprehension of race relations and that analyses that focus only on ethnicity "runs the risk of eclipsing the ongoing power differences that define groups' experiences in the United States" (p.196). Hence, I utilize a definition of racism found in the work of William Julius Wilson (1973) which reflects racial contestation within the social structure. Wilson explains racism as "a principle of social domination in which a group that is seen as inferior or different because of presumed biological or cultural characteristics is oppressed, controlled, and exploited—socially, economically, culturally, politically, psychologically—by a dominant group" (as quoted by Mubiru, 2008, p. 108). This definition acknowledges structure, discourse, a system of unequal power, and various levels of society and aspects of existence. While other scholars discuss various types of racism and widening conceptions like "white racism" and "reverse racism" (Blauner, 2006), the definition offered by Wilson offers a sober understanding of the dynamics of racial structure and discourse that address all actors in the racialized

social system and further clarifies the motives and results of other terms that have emerged out of racial contestation. One such term, that I use periodically in this dissertation, is white supremacy. I use this term almost interchangeably with "racism," as white supremacy is how racism is manifested in the United States. Ansley (1997) describes white supremacy as "a political, economic, and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of white dominance and nonwhite subordination are daily reenacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings" (p. 592). Further, white supremacy as the manifested reality of racial dominance in the United States makes "reverse racism" an impossibility and an unsound proposal when non-White people do not have power as racial/ethnic groups to control resources and do not have institutional dominance in this society.

Critical Race Theories, Colorblindness, and Microaggressions

This study draws on the critical race theorists' theme of race as a "social and political construct" (Guinier and Torres, 2002) using Critical Race Theory and other theories and principles that expose race. Critical Race Theory (CRT) views race as both a product of social thought and relations; and a product of the dominant society's endeavors to manipulate resources (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Hence, though socially constructed, race has material or real social consequences that shape the experiences of different groups of people within the societal structure. Another tenet of CRT proposes that racism is an ordinary part of social life and experienced everyday by most people of color in the United States.

Critical Race Theory emerged in the late 1960's or early 1970's, largely led by lawyers, law scholars, and activists who were concerned about the increasing ideological shift in how race and racism

were addressed by society and in particular, the law. Critical Race Theory started in the community of legal scholars (of color) to account for the role that racism plays in American law and the effort to eliminate racism and all form of oppression (Matsuda, 1991). As a scholarly movement, CRT draws on diverse traditions such as Marxism, the Black power movement, radical feminism, post-structuralism and postmodernism. It attempts to comprise an intellectual and political practice that is both "a left intervention into race discourse and a race intervention into left discourse" (Crenshaw et al., 1995, p.xix). CRT has extended its influence and appropriations into fields like history, sociology and education, where it challenges normative texts, traditional methods, and pedagogical practice while underscoring race and racism in research (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, & Crenshaw, 1993; Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). Specifically, Ladson-Billings (2009) calls our attention to how race and racism pervades the history of U.S. American education and persists in management and methods of schooling today. CRT helps educators to examine issues in education like assessment, desegregation, school funding, and other policies.

The basic tenets of Critical Race Theory include: (a) racism as an ordinary part of U.S. American life; (b) interest convergence describes behavior of the majority group to tolerate racial justice when it meets their interests as well; (c) races are social inventions, derived from social thought and relations; (d) differential racialization describes the ways that different minority groups are racialized in society based on current needs of the dominant group (such as labor market needs); (e) the history and experience of people of color with racism gives them a unique voice to share knowledge (tell stories) that their White counterparts could not; (f) anti-essentialism and intersectionality capture the condition of individuals having multiple identities that may be overlapping and conflicting (Delgado & Stefanovic, 2001). CRT is concerned with the law's role in social domination and illuminates "unconscious racism" or colorblind

ideology that maintains the subordination of non-White people in our society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995).

The critical race theory frame is an important analytical tool to bring students' interpretations of race to the fore, highlighting the dominant racial ideology's impact on all students. Although CRT focuses on the operation of race and racism at the macro levels of society, its utility for this project is in its ability to illuminate students' ability or resistance to place themselves within the larger nexus of power relations in society. One of the ways race and racism are maintained and reproduced at the macro and micro levels is through the perpetuation of ideology that safeguards their interests.

I draw on other theorists and scholars, who are not CRT, to further outline how race and racism work in contemporary society. These selected scholars include Bonilla-Silva (2003), Hall (1996), Moya (2000), and others who contribute significantly to analysis I conduct in this study. In *Racism Without Racists*, Bonilla-Silva, a sociologist who studies race, demonstrates how color-blind ideology is reflected in the language of Whites in particular. Using a narrative survey, Bonilla-Silva examines ideology, Whites' racial ideology, and how it is "produced and reproduced in communicative interaction" (p.11). Additionally, the author highlights the subtle linguistic styles of this ideology that color-blind users employ within today's normative climate. This work provides useful conceptual tools for my own project, which interrogates "gestures" through communication as well. Bonilla-Silva sets out four principal concepts or central frames that set interpretive paths for the structure of color-blind racism. They are abstract liberalism, naturalization, cultural racism, and minimization of racism. Bonilla-Silva's summary of each is outlined below:

1. "The frame of abstract liberalism involves using ideas associated with political liberalism (e.g. "equal opportunity," the idea that force should not be used to

achieve social policy) and economic liberalism (e.g. choice, individualism) in an abstract manner to explain racial matters." So when a student says "You just can't force people to live together" in response to questions about inequality in housing, abstract liberalism is at work. Liberal language is used to mask the stance, not to oppose the racism of today.

2. "Naturalization is a frame that allows Whites to explain away racial phenomena by suggesting they are natural occurrences" (p.28). We see this when a student might say that "it's normal for a manager to hire someone that looks like him." Such statements are intended to rationalize racist behavior as normal, expected behavior for everyone.

3. "Cultural racism is a frame that relies on culturally based arguments such as 'Mexicans do not put much emphasis on education' or 'Blacks have too many babies' to explain the standing of minorities in society" (p. 28). Cultural racism employs old biological racist ideologies to denigrate culture and justify racial status quo.

4. "Minimization of racism is a frame that suggests discrimination is no longer a central factor affecting minorities' life chances ('It's better now than in the past' or 'There is discrimination, but there are plenty of jobs out there.')" (p.29). People using this frame would accuse people of color of being too sensitive and would only see the most extreme cases of discrimination as racism.

These central frames of color-blind ideology wrap together to form a wall that shields Whites from the reality of race and racism in the United States. Drawing from Bourdieu, Bonilla-Silva discusses the

"white habitus" created by this wall that maintains an obscured view of race. Bonilla-Silva points out that this wall is both "impregnable" and elastic (p.211). The elasticity of the wall guides its impregnability, allowing users to hold on to the central frames in a variety of ways, including the use of exceptions rather than absolutes, and both crude and gentle stylistic attacks. Rather than reproducing a racial stereotype in absolutes, color-blind frame users may say that "Not all Blacks are dangerous, but most are." To make an even more crude statement, Bonilla-Silva observes the 'I am not prejudiced' preface used to temper a statement's malice. Other researchers like Garrett A. Duncan (2002) explicate "liberal ideological underpinnings" of care or "false empathy" (Delgado, 1996) applied by the more privileged toward marginalized populations in research methodology and educational service. Duncan notes the "pathology language" that emerges in educational research, based on racialized education discourses that normalize rhetoric of Black students (young people of color) as academically and socially deficient.

Bonilla-Silva's study also examines the impact of colorblind ideology on Black people. He concludes that Blacks generally oppose colorblind ideology. But it is more complicated than that. On the one hand, they support affirmative action and view discrimination as a central factor that affects their quality of life. On the other hand, they are indirectly affected by color-blindness. Blacks sometime invoke abstract liberalism to explain some racial phenomena and make limited use of the rhetorical style. However, their use of style is not to hide racism but to make distinctions between their perceptions of the way things are and the way they should be. For example, Blacks and Whites might both say "you can't force people to live together in the same neighborhood." However, the meanings each group makes are different. Blacks may go on to say "when we move in, Whites move out," explaining that discrimination still exists and needs to be overcome. Bonilla-Silva also clearly points out that color-blindness is the dominant racial ideology of U.S. American society and hence the impact of its transmission to the subjugated is reflected.

Color-blind ideology insists on treating all persons "equally" without regard to their race by seeking to explain racial inequality in non-racial terms (Bonilla-Sylva, 2006). Thus, color-blindness as an ideology ignores the history, consequences, and persistence of racism in contemporary U.S. American society. Gallagher (2003) describes color-blind ideology as a race neutral perspective that "removes from personal thought and public discussion any taint or suggestion of white supremacy or white guilt, while legitimating the existing social, political and economic arrangements which privilege whites" (p. 1). For example, a 1997 Kaiser Family Poll found that 64% of Whites did not believe that White Americans benefited from past and present discriminations against African Americans. White privilege is maintained by negating racial inequality while converting color to an expression of style or culture for consumption.

Guinier and Torres (2002) outline three rules that govern the colorblind world. First, colorblind ideology recognizes race as all about skin color, a "false construction of phenotype." Second, recognizing race is viewed as an inability to let go of racism. Third, color-blindness does not connect racism to power and privilege within the structure of society; and relegates it to individuals who are not so nice to others. In other words, color-blind ideology ignores the institutional power and regime of power in our society and the material consequences of the construct of race. Further, such ideology could be the result of "interest convergence" (Derrick Bell) because people tend to believe what is beneficial to them to believe. For elite Whites, color-blindness benefits them materially. For subjugated people, like working class Blacks, color-blindness may benefit them psychically. Yet research has shown that Whites and Blacks endorse colorblind racial ideology to varying extents (Judd, Park, Ryan, Brauer, & Kraus, 1995; Ryan, Hunt, Weible, Peterson, & Casas, 2007). The Ryan, Hunt, et al. studies showed that participants, who were members of a diversity program, showed stronger support for multicultural ideology over colorblindness than participants not involved. However, Blacks had a stronger tendency to endorse multiculturalism, while Whites had a stronger tendency toward believing colorblindness would improve

intergroup relations. Still, these beliefs do not necessarily translate into anti-discriminatory behaviors or intergroup togetherness.

In *White-Washing Race* (2003), the authors outline three tenets of colorblind ideology that explain a rationale for those who adhere to it: (1) the Civil Rights Movement was successful and Whites wholeheartedly accept the principles reflected in Civil Rights law; (2) vestiges of racial inequality, if there are any, only persist because Blacks have failed to take advantage of the opportunities afforded them as a result of Civil Rights; and (3) the United States is rapidly becoming a colorblind society and therefore has little need for "color-conscious" policies like affirmative action. These authors point out that while colorblindness was championed by liberals in the 1960's to oppose Jim Crow, today it is used by Whites to delude themselves and the entire society that race has become insignificant and there is no hierarchy of power along race lines to examine. "It is power that confirms and normalizes the particular perspective of White Americans (p. 64)." In a society dominated by colorblind ideology, some people even claim that our society has encouraged black hatred (rather than white racism) and such an investment in racism has increased the financial earning of Blacks while victimizing Whites, who have been deemed far less prejudice. Such arguments have been made by authors (journalists and scholars) like Jared Taylor (1992), Charles Sykes (1992), and Dinesh D'Souza (1995) who have contributed to the national discourse and interpretation of our race situation in the United States. Such claims are aided by colorblind discourses that dismiss and perpetuate the subtle operations of present day racism.

Another subtle form of racism is microaggressions. Microaggressions underscore one of CRT's tenets that racism is pervasive and an "ordinary" part of life in the United States and demonstrate one of the ways racism is masked within a "colorblind" society. Racial microaggressions are defined as "subtle,

stunning, often automatic, and non-verbal exchanges which are 'put downs' of Blacks" (Pierce, Carew, Pierce-Gonzalez, & Willis, 1978, p. 66). They stem from unconscious attitudes of white superiority that reinforce Black subjugation. Microaggressions often escape examination because they are unconscious, subtle and pervasive (Delgado & Stefancic, 1992; Pierce, 1974). Solorzano (1997) examined racial microaggressions in education, especially in education scholarship and media that re/produces stereotypes about students of color. He called for the use of CRT, and an understanding of microaggressions specifically, in teacher education programs as a framework to challenge deficiency theories and examine institutional, macro and micro, conscious and unconscious forms of racism. Solorzano and his colleagues (2000) demonstrated how microaggressions impact African American students' academic and social life on a predominately White campus (PWC). African American students in that study described being made to feel "invisible" in the classroom when their thoughts were not validated by professors or their peers, being shut out or reluctantly invited to study groups, subjected to low expectations from professors, being watched as they entered various social and academic spaces, and the additional administrative hoops they were expected to jump through to coordinate activities that their White peers were not obligated to do. The cumulative affect on these students is one of despondency and exhaustion.

Although many studies have focused on the African American experience with racism, other studies have been developed to unearth the impact of racism on Asian American and Chicana/o people (Lee, 2003). Sue and his colleagues (2007) defined racial microaggressions as "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color" (p. 271). Racism as endemic to American society and manifested through aversive forms is difficult to quantify (Alvarez, Juang & Liang, 2006; Sellers & Shelton, 2003).

College Student Development, Adjustment and Identity

Race has been an important theme in the broad scholarship about college students. Whether such scholarship is about the retention of students of color (Seidman, 2005) or student experiences on predominantly White campuses and cross-racial attitudes (Aguirre & Martinez, 1993; Alvarez, 2002; Helms, 1994), there have been robust discussions that have sought to capture the varied interpretations, categorizations, approaches, and nuances to race in higher education (Buenavista & Jayakumar, 2009; Echols, Hwang, & Nobles, 2002; Harper, 2009; Kuh, 2005; Museus, 2008, 2009, 2010; Villalpando, 2002; Yosso, Parker, Solorzano, & Lynn, 2004;). Other race themed scholarship in higher education has focused on identity development among students from various racial/ethnic groups. Another important empirical project, conducted by Cowan (2005), examined the relationships and interactions of students across race and analyzed the number of inter/intra-group interactions among groups at six southern California State University campuses where Whites were not the majority of students. Additionally, while other scholars have investigated student perspectives about race and/or diversity and campus climates (Villalpando, 2002), few studies have examined how students interpret race across racial categories at a predominantly White institution.

A critical race theory framework uncovers how ideas about race develop, especially during the college years. Previous research has demonstrated that perspectives about race are developed in early childhood and that parents have significant influence in determining how their children will respond to issues about race (Gollnick & Chinn, 1998). Chickering (1969) made significant contributions to college educators' understanding of students' development and identity adjustment as a critical process in

collegiate life through his theory which offered "seven vectors of college student development:" achieving competence, managing emotions, becoming autonomous, establishing identity, freeing interpersonal relationships, clarifying purposes, and developing integrity. There have been numerous studies on college student development that cover a range of topics that highlight the various experiences and factors that contribute to college student success (Astin, 1984, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Sanchez, Marder, Berry & Ross, 1992; Terenzini & Wright, 1987) Additionally, there have been many studies that explore college student development factors in race/ethnicity comparative ways—from faculty-student interactions (Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000; Colbeck, Terenzini, Cabrera, Bjorklund, & Parente, 2001; Cole, 2006; Kim, 2006; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), roommate compatibility and conflict (Fuller & Hall, 1996; Grossman, 1997; Towles-Schwen & Fazio, 2006; Shook & Fazio, 2008; Sillars, 1980), family attachments and involvement (Armino & McEwen, 1996; Sanchez, Mardner, Berry, & Ross, 1992; Tinto, 1993; Tierney, 1992) and student perceptions of campus climates (Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000; Cabrera & Nora, 1994; McClelland & Auster, 1990), to name a few.

Other literature highlighted the first-year experience as an important period for the success of college students and stages of adjustment to include "separation, transition, and incorporation" (Gardner, 1986; Tinto, 1988), and the positive impact of diversity and multiculturalism on campuses for all students (Cowan, 2005; Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002). Students on college campuses may be exposed to three types of diversity. Structural diversity represents the simple diversity experiences among students that help to enhance critical thinking, degree aspirations, intergroup dialogue and relations, civic engagement and cultural awareness (Bowen & Bok, 1998; Duster, 1993; Gurin, 1999; Tierney, 1993). Pascarella, Edison, Nora, Hagedorn, & Terenzini (1996) further examined these implications to determine how students' openness to diversity and challenge is influenced by background, academic and non-

academic experience, and the environment of the institution he or she attended. They focused on first-year students and measured their "end-of-first-year openness" to diversity, as well as offered recommendations for institutional policies that enhanced the institutional environment. Hence, an examination of students' interpretations of race using a critical race theory framework seems most appropriate as they transition from direct supervision of their parents to more freedom, during the first year of their collegiate experience when they are subject to the new environment of their institution. The second phase of this research project aims to capture the students' perspectives when they have presumably been incorporated in the culture of the institution.

Kuh and Whitt (1988) defined campus culture as "persistent patterns of norms, values, practices, beliefs, and assumptions that shape the behavior or individuals and groups in a college or university and provide a frame of reference within which to interpret the meaning of events and actions on and off the campus (pp. 12-13)." This definition highlights the broad complexity and significance of institutional culture. Research has demonstrated that campus cultures of predominantly white institutions (PWIs) can be especially challenging for students of color, who are often devalued and excluded (Gonzalez, 2003; Museus, 2007). Often students of color report being excluded from social networks that their White peers access and thrive in (Lewis, Chesler, & Forman, 2000). To help negotiate their college experiences to find a sense of belonging or positive psychosocial adjustment to college, students of color utilize community involvement, family and peer support to assist them (Choi, 2002; Guiffrida, 2003; Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Asian American and African American students at PWI's utilize ethnic student organizations, to create campus subcultures, to assist them in their adjustment to the larger campus community (Museus, 2008). Students of color participation in these organizations are often a first step for campus involvement and provide opportunities for these students to develop or enhance skills for cross-cultural interactions (Harper & Quaye, 2007; Sutton & Kimbrough, 2001). Rather than cultural suicide through complete

detachment from their communities, these connections foster cultural integrity and help these students to persist (Tierney, 1999; Kuh & Love, 2000). However, while student organizations help to make large campuses feel smaller by providing more intimate experiences for students, not all of them encourage more diverse experiences and support the implementation of diversity goals that institutions may have. Research demonstrates that some student organizations, particularly White Greek-Letter organizations (WGLOs), reproduce systems of dominance and exclusion (Morris, 1991; Sidanius, Van Laar, Levin, & Sinclair, 2004; Torbenson & Parks, 2009). Many fraternity and sorority activities encourage homogeneity and have negative impact on interactions with diverse student peers (Laird, 2005; Muir, 1991; Sidanius et al., 2004).

Locks, Hurtado, Bowman, and Oseguera (2008) made a significant contribution to the scholarship on student adjustment and my work in terms of understanding campus climate and student experience with diversity. Research has shown that students have a greater sense of belonging on campus when they have had positive interactions with diverse peers (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990; Hoffman, Richmond, Morrow, & Salomone, 2002; Hausmann, Schofield, & Woods, 2007). Locks et al. affirmed this scholarship and further demonstrated that these positive interactions have a stronger effect on sense of belonging than the cumulative amount of time spent socializing (Hurtado et al., 2007). In other words, the quality of experiences with diverse peers is more powerful than simply being present on a campus where diversity is represented statistically. Of greater significance to my work was the finding that precollege experiences and predispositions also have strong influence on the collegiate experience with diversity. Specifically, the proportion of Whites in precollege environments influenced students' ability to have positive cross-racial interactions. For White students, it was more difficult to have these positive interactions if they grew up in neighborhoods or attended schools where Whites were a significant majority with few experiences with peers of color. Whereas for students of color, cross-racial interactions were easier and if

their precollege experiences reflected situations where their White peers were the majority. A major factor in students' decision to engage with the other is fear based anxiety (Stephan & Stephan, 1989, 1996). The current research found that students (White and People of Color) who grew up in predominantly White contexts tended to perceive less racial tension. The research of Locks and her associates also reinforced the idea that college students are predisposed to continue the same interactions they had in high school, whether or not their social interactions included diverse peers (Saenz, Ngai & Hurtado, 2007). These predispositions are accentuated over time and include the selections students make for classes, activities and venues of involvement, peer groups. Locks and her associates also found that women in their study had a strong predisposition to being involved in diversity activities.

Perry (2002) discussed the "currents" of racial identity formation for White students based on their proximities of association with other racialized people. In her work, *Shades of White*, Perry presented her research on White students at two different high schools; one white homogenous (or predominantly so) and one multi-racial. White students who had little to no association with racial difference constructed their identities as "normal." The White students in the multi-racial school who had more contact with difference were challenged to define "white" more frequently. Hence, they either searched for ethnic pasts or adopted what Perry calls "postcultural" selves—a present or future oriented "self-concept that dismisses all relevance of and indebtedness to the past" (p.93). Yet, both school environments yielded "white is normal" discourses, whether because of homogeneity or in more diverse situations where white is rationalized as a normative cultureless-ness.

Identity

Outlined here are some of the analytical tools or theoretical frameworks that shape conceptions of a racial identity. Norton (1997) refers to identity as the way "people understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their possibilities for the future" (p. 410). Identity cannot be understood apart from larger social networks and relationships, which may be unequally structured (Bourdieu, 1977; West, 1992). Most of the arguments about identity began with two streams of contemporary thought about race identity that help to define it in either essentialist or non-essentialist terms. Essentialism, with its notions of fixedness and universality, is heavily critiqued by feminist scholarship as an imposition and exclusion of identity difference and "otherness" (Harris, 1990; hooks, 1991; Jhappan, 2006; Williams, 1991). Other scholars have argued against cultural essentialism or what Appiah calls "racialism" (Appiah, 1989; Narayan, 1998). These arguments have been made with postmodernist thought as the better alternative that views identities as fragmented, "conditional, lodged in contingency," (Hall & Du Gay, 1996, p. 3) "fabricated and constructed rather than self-evidently deduced from experience" (Mohanty, 1997, p. 203).

Stuart Hall (1990, 1996), a sociologist and cultural theorist, offers important ideas about the fluidity of identity that is significant to my research. In an introductory essay to a reader on the topic of Identity, Hall (1996) discusses the ambivalence of identification that emerges at the intersection of the subject and discursive practices. Hall critiques the interiority of identity and suggests that identities are constructed through difference, within the "play of power and exclusion" (p.5). Identities are constructed within specific historical and institutional sites where the subject is hailed through discourse. This process of "interpellation" presents temporary points of attachment where identities are produced. In his work on "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," Hall (1990) suggests that we should think of identity as a "production"

that is always in the process of being represented or re-presented. His critical thesis, that identity is constituted within representation, also engaged the notion of diasporic identity as recognition of hybridity in identification. Cultural identities, which are unstable productions within historical and cultural discourses, present and respond to positionalities and narratives. There is no oneness in identity and experience.

An epistemic status of cultural identity validates the significance of experience—varied and ruptured. Moya (2000) explained that physical realities will inform the contours and contexts of theories and knowledge in profound ways. Using realist theory, she claims that people who are or have been oppressed have *epistemic privilege*—"special advantage with respect to possessing or acquiring knowledge about how fundamental aspects of our society (such as race, class, disability, gender, and sexuality) operate to sustain matrices of power" (Moya, 2000, p. 81). This is because they have experiences that can provide information we need to analyze structures in society, and people who are not oppressed in the same way usually lack these experiences. Individual and group experiences will influence a person's cultural identity. How the person interprets the experiences will depend on what theories and/or discourses s/he has access to. Hence, colorblindness will shape students' experiences and their interpretations of those experiences, ultimately shaping their expressions of identity.

Further, the literature I have reviewed thus far underscores the idea of reified colorblindness and discourses that deepen the effects of oppression. To clarify, colorblind discourses work to hide realities of white supremacy or racism in the United States. These dominant discourses, that impact all people within the society, strengthen their views and interpretations of race behavior because colorblindness does not allow for racist acts to be named and interrogated as elements of a pervasive contemporary reality in society, but only to be interpreted as occasional breaches from a well ordered "post-racial" society. The dominant discourse of colorblindness reinterprets racist realities as rare outliers

from an otherwise just society. Hence, Whites, with the privilege of a society working in their favor, would only and continually view society from a solely individualist perspective that would not allow them to interrogate their exclusive race-based privileges that they receive as a group and would otherwise think of as normative. (See the next section on Critical Whiteness Studies.) Also, people of color could adopt these discourses and interpretations, and be limited in their ability to provide counter-frames to colorblindness, the racial structure it upholds and vice versa. That is, without the critical engagement and appreciation of experience, particularly the epistemic status of the oppressed to analyze the oppressive structure, resist it, and provide information that can offer reinterpretations for various agents in the structure. Hence, contemporary social realities, including racism, and dominant discourses like colorblindness create tensions that inform the interpreted experiences of Whites and People of Color and establish the messiness of these identities while providing subjugated people (People of Color) with an anchor to negotiate meaningful social identities.

Critical Whiteness Studies

For almost two decades, Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) has been a growing area of academic inquiry into the construction, consequences, and responsibilities of white identity. Critical Whiteness Studies scholars include Ruth Frankenberg, Cheryl Harris, Noel Ignatiev, David Roediger, Peggy McIntosh, T. Allen, G. Lipsitz, Zeus Leonardo, Kincheloe, and others. Critical whiteness scholars can be generally classified as preservationists, who explore aspects of whiteness that can be preserved without privilege and oppression and seek to rearticulate whiteness (Apple, 1998; Winant, 1997); and abolitionists, who believe that whiteness cannot exist without white supremacy and should therefore be

abolished (Ignatiev, 1995; Roediger, 1991). Roediger has called for abolition of whiteness by noting that "It is not merely that whiteness is oppressive and false, it is nothing but oppressive and false." The construction of whiteness in the United States began with what Whites were not—slaves and Blacks—and further developed into a collection of elaborate strategies and themes of existence that avoid identifying with a racial group or experience, and further deny racism and its legacy (Frankenberg, 1993; Harris, 1993; Roediger, 1991). Whiteness involves position, worldview, property, power, privilege, and discourse. "White" as a description of people is distinctly different from, though connected to, "whiteness" as a collection of strategies and discourses that are supported by institutions and material practices that benefit White people and oppress others. Although whiteness is not easily defined in a concise way, it is understood to benefit people who have it with enormous and "relatively exclusive" access to the privilege it reproduces (Chubbuck, 2004). Whereas "whiteness" is racial discourse, "White" people represents a socially constructed racial identity (Leonardo, 2002).

Frankenberg (1993) describes three dimensions that comprise the terrain of whiteness. First, whiteness is a location of structural advantage that affords privileges to some people based on their racial identity as white citizens. Whiteness then is a location of structural advantage socially, politically, culturally and historically. White privilege is maintained within a system of dominance that renders whiteness unnamed. Drawing on feminist theory, Frankenberg describes the second dimension as the position from which White people see themselves and others, called standpoint. Standpoint highlights the connection between one's societal standing and his/her perceptions. The third dimension of whiteness is the set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked or unnamed. These cultural practices are often "invisible" in the sense that they are considered normal; which reflects the dominance of these practices.

In "The Souls of White Folk," Leonardo (2002) draws on similar important traits of whiteness discussed by Frankenberg, but as a global phenomenon that accompanies global capitalism. One of the

traits of whiteness that obscures its globalization from view is its "unwillingness to name the contours of racism." This trait underscores people's denial of racism when faced with the truth about inequity and their diversion to any other factor but racism or what White people (and institutions) have done. White denial has formidable strength because of all the assumptions and ideas that are taken for granted (Van Dijk, 1998; Wise, 2004, 2009). Also, the minimization of the legacy of racism is a trait that neglects the barbarity of the past and disconnects it from present inequities. This minimization and neglect of global white hegemony obscures the shared history of distinct White nations and their oppression of Black nations. Leonardo aims to help us see that current globalization efforts viewed in historical context tracks the worldwide moves and effects of whiteness.

Cheryl Harris (1993) uncovers the historical construction of whiteness and its critical characteristics as property. Race and property were conflated through the system of slavery that treated Blacks as property and constructed Whites as not slaves. White was a marker for freedom, while Black meant possible enslavement. Whiteness then is a legal right to white identity that offers all a person's rights, including inalienability, the right to use or enjoy, reputation, and the right to exclude. With these rights, whiteness developed with entitlements, the ability to be experienced and used to exercise power or will, status or value, and the ability to exclude others from those benefits. Further, the Naturalization Act of 1790 restricted citizenship to persons who were White and other laws ensued to maintain such privilege for the first 200 years of the United States. With legislative changes that have removed explicitly expressed white privileges, Harris argues that whiteness retains a "consolation prize" that ensures that, rather than Whites will win, Whites will not lose by not being on the bottom of the hierarchy of races (economically and socially).

Whiteness as a position and exercise of power has a certain "hidalguismo" or "alpha and omega" status (Rimonte, 1997; p. 42). Such claims to superiority and almost divine status, centers

whiteness as an ideal and orders the Other to the margins of abstraction. This allows whiteness to avoid positional interrogation and to present itself as the socially informed, morally accurate, and logically desirable perspective. Whiteness is global. Leonardo (2002) argues that just as capital transcends national boundaries, multinational whiteness is engaged in a process of globalization whereby there is a neo-colonization of nations and domination of (non-white) Others. This global view of whiteness also allows for greater interrogation of the monolithic whiteness that U.S. immigrants, such as the Irish and Jews, are said to have adopted. Goldstein (2006) argues that Jews "became White" with great difficulty in the pre-World War II era; and that although they have become a part of the white mainstream in the United States, Jews still wrestle with whiteness as it conflicts with some key elements of Jewish identity. The "price of whiteness" may be a loss of self.

In communication studies, Nakayama and Krizek (1995) contributed to the interrogation of the discursive space of whiteness as an invisible, normalized, and unarticulated position. They propose that the central space that whiteness holds allows it to make itself visible and invisible while exerting enormous influence on everyday life. By looking at whiteness through discourse, we can avoid the trap of essentializing it. Whiteness is constituted through its strategic rhetoric of universality and invisibility. Nakayama and Krizek identify six strategies of the discourse of whiteness. There is the naked truth of whiteness tied to power as the "majority," while it hides historical construct of itself. The power of this "status" remains stealth. Another strategy affirms whiteness when Other-ness is negated. White is the absence of other ethnicities or color, so it becomes the default. For example, "White-non-Hispanic." A third strategy makes white a simple scientific category without any meaning; it is just a label. Historical and experiential knowledge of whiteness remains masked. Another strategy is to confuse whiteness with nationality, i.e. "white" means "white American." This conflation of race and U.S. citizenship has significant discursive political power. The fifth strategy emphasizes individualism over subjectivity by

resisting the term “white,” which denies any ethnic heritage and makes white invisible again. Other ethnic heritages become labels while white is not and simply assumed. Finally, a discourse that embraces “European descent” as a label demonstrates a symbolic ethnicity that camouflages or does not necessarily recognize power. These discourses demonstrate the dynamic nature of whiteness that presents and masks itself at different moments (pp. 298-302).

In the field of education it is important that whiteness is recognized for the power inherent in its operation, the unearned privilege it bestows on Whites, as well as its system of domination and oppression of other people. Further, White people must recognize how they are “implicated in systems of oppression and privilege” and learn how to engage in the “fact of racial inequality” in our society (Applebaum, 2007, p. 455). Much of this awareness could be developed in the classroom to prepare all students to be agents of anti-racist change (Blum, 2002; Delpit, 1988; Lawrence & Tatum, 1997). However, classrooms reify the construction of education for good white, middle class students while they pathologize Black students. These constructions must be challenged, especially in teacher education programs where the next generation of teachers is trained to be effective educators. Case and Hemmings (2005) showed how White women teachers utilized color blindness and race neutrality as distancing strategies to not confront race and racism. White complicity as a matter of being, with or without any intentional action or behavior, demonstrates the hegemonic system that benefits all Whites (Applebaum, 2007; Bartky, 2002).

Chubbuck (2004) demonstrated that whiteness is difficult to disrupt—among individuals and institutions. Whiteness is often “enacted” in a way that’s intertwined with personal identity. This can lead to stated intentions and meaning well to be anti-racist while reproducing racism. Further, knowledge of racism and cultural understanding do not necessarily “disrupt” the persistence effects of whiteness among people. Also, within institutions where people function, abolitionists and preservationists/

rearticulationists can re-center whiteness while attempting to argue their approaches to dismantling it. Hence, educators must be vigilant in their interrogation and offering of solutions. Chubbuck recommends that whiteness must be disrupted in a community where "honest scrutiny" and "challenging accountability" are essential aspects of support.

Applebaum (2010) has made significant contributions to CWS with her book, *Being White, Being Good: White Complicity, White Moral Responsibility and Social Justice Pedagogy*. She thoroughly critiques "white privilege pedagogy" for its simplistic analyses that encourage White students to offer solutions to racism that disregard the privilege constituted in their being white. While White students' acknowledgement of systemic privilege suggests a positive step in learning, rather than denials of such privilege, awareness does not go far enough. White privilege pedagogy, Applebaum contends, works to protect "white innocence." She explores how "white ignorance," a type of white privilege that safeguards such privilege with a sense of authority not to know and count such unknowing as knowledge, helps to reproduce white supremacy and racial injustice. Such ignorance is "willful" not necessarily because of intention but because it is in the interest of Whites to accept the benefits of it. White ignorance "parades as knowledge" and develops a "refusal to consider" other knowledge or perspectives. Hence, white complicity in a system of white supremacy is denied as normative and common sense. This manifestation of whiteness protects White people's moral innocence in discussions about race.

Applebaum argues that white moral "response-ability" for racism can be taken by White students when white complicity is understood as a form of structural injustice. This responsibility can be taken without taking liability as traditional models would suggest. The focus is not on blame or guilt. Drawing on Iris Marion Young's Social Connection Model (2006), Applebaum argues that Whites must take responsibility for their complicity as agents who by their actions and their being (White) contribute to the structural processes responsible for injustice. So, White people did not necessarily have to be there at

the inception of white supremacy to take responsibility for it in the present. These ongoing, rather than terminal, structural processes continue to produce injustices that Whites could potentially lessen by doing whiteness differently (Warren, 2001). This difference in whiteness, Applebaum argues, involves understanding that white complicity manifests through white bodies and discursive practices, being vigilant about how whiteness seeks to maintain its invisibility, and listening to hear the anger and criticism from Others. The white complicity pedagogy that Applebaum outlines aims to present an effective approach to help White students do whiteness differently without being affirmed to believe they have arrived.

Summary

This literature review discussed the significant literature that serves as a backdrop to the work of this dissertation—to explore the meaning students make about race. It highlights scholarship on race and racism, the philosophy that undergirds identity, colorblindness and its manifestations in microaggressions, and critical whiteness studies. The specific literature engaged here works to provide a foundation for the central topic of race. Race is a social and political construct, with formations at the macro and micro levels. Racial formations and processes create racialized social systems around a principle of domination. This principle is clearly expressed in the United States as white supremacy. Then the literature provides frameworks and lenses through which race can be analyzed and its meanings made visible in the discourses that students use or interact with in some way. Critical race theories expose the normative reality of racism in society and how colorblind discourse is used to maintain the subordination of people of color through various strategies.

The select scholarship of this literature review demonstrates that race, as a concept and process, is dynamic in all its manifestations. From identity to experience, race is contested and convicting of human bodies and the environments in which these bodies act. The approach to understanding identity must not be removed from social relations or networks, but examined as a messy concept that is shaped by experience and structure. Student bodies present learners in higher educational contexts who engage in the process of interpreting their own racialized selves as well as other selves while finding membership within a university community. Universities, especially PWIs, reflect white dominance present in society, even globally. Whiteness as property, denial, and power shapes perceptions and seeks to maintain its invisibility, presumed normalcy, and supremacy. The literature demonstrates the ongoing process of race and the struggle for subjugated people to live meaningfully and justly in a racist society. This society is dominated by whiteness and maintains white supremacist inclinations while cloaking itself with colorblind discourses.

CHAPTER 3:

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

In this chapter, I articulate the methods and procedures I utilized for this research project. First, I offer important considerations for the methodology of this work and its significance for research in education. Additionally, after the methods and procedures are delineated and some research challenges are reviewed, I offer insights about the researcher and his experience that enhances the methodologies employed in this project. My experience with this project offers key insights for other qualitative researchers who may conduct similar work about race. Finally, I present a brief summary of the chapter.

My interest in this study was to explore how students make meaning of the object- "race." I was particularly interested in how they assign meanings to race, how they make various gestures about race to one another, how they have interpreted the gestures made by others to them about race, and how the constructions and negotiations of these meanings interact, and specifically within the context of a multiracial yet predominantly white university. Hence, I was interested in conducting a qualitative research project that would uncover these meanings. I did not remove myself from this process of meaning making and recognized that meaning would be made during the course of my research as well. My social location was important to this process.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR MY WORK

According to Bogdan and Biklen (1998), qualitative research involves five essential characteristics: 1. it is naturalistic, having an actual setting where the data is found; 2. it is descriptive; 3. there is a focus on process rather than outcomes; 4. data analysis is inductive; 5. "meaning" is the essential concern. Hence, as a qualitative researcher, I was concerned with how people (and in this case, students) make sense of their experiences. These perspectives, the meaning participants make of their lives, were central to the analysis and interpreted results of this study. While all research involves some imposition of the researcher's interpretations on the researched, understanding the research participants' point of view offers the least distortion and privileges the informants' perspectives. Context was also critical. I desired to capture the perspectives of the students themselves within their social context.

Much of the development of qualitative research was influenced by George Herbert Mead's conception of symbolic interaction in *Mind, Self, and Society* (1934). This contribution was important for my project that was primarily concerned with meaning making within the context of the college/university. In Blumer's discussion of symbolic interactionism (1969), he summarizes three premises of the concept. First, human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings they have assigned to these things. Second, the meanings of things are derived from the social interaction between human beings. Third, the meanings are modified or otherwise managed in an interpretive process used by the person who interacts with these things. In summary, symbolic interactionism sees meaning as a derivative of social processes, rather

than being inherent in an object itself or only in the mind of an individual (psychological perspective).

Meanings have material manifestations as they determine action and reaction in the world that human beings share, interpret, shape and are shaped by. Symbolic interactionism, then, is highlighted by "gestures" and response to the meaning of those gestures. A gesture is "any part or aspect of an ongoing action that signifies the larger act of which it is a part" (Blumer, 1969, p.9). Thus, speech and the vocabulary one chooses to use is a gesture. Symbolic interaction involves interpreting the action of another. Mead (1934) offers a "triadic nature of meaning" that: 1. signifies what the person to whom it is directed should do; 2. signifies what the person making the gesture will do; and 3. signifies the joint action that will be produced by the acts of both parties. In the context of my research, I wanted to understand how students would express the interpretations they made of race from their experiences on a college campus, how they would respond to those experiences based on their interpretations, and how they would make meaning together from their articulations of those meanings in focus groups. Qualitative methods are particularly useful for my project, which draws on Critical Race Theory (CRT) and its support for storytelling to "analyze the myths, presuppositions, and received wisdoms that make up the common culture about race" (Delgado, 1995, p.xiv). CRT's view of race as a product of social relations and social thinking provides a lens by which I could view the process of race "construction" in my research and analyze the data through that lens. Leaning on CRT and other theories helped me to think critically about my analyses and make important connections between individual thought and action, and larger social phenomena; specifically the persistence of race in our society.

My work is also informed by a post-positivist philosophy of research which guided me to explore the world *constructed* by my informants rather than discovering a world fixed in any particular set of facts (Lather, 2001). My critical inquiry into higher education through this project, while not a feminist project, draws on feminist approaches to research practice. For example, I approached my work with a strong sense of the complexity involved, the various angles to consider, and with constant questioning or reflection about *my* place as a subject in the research. In other words, I drew on feminist methodology within my research even though I did not undertake a feminist project or employ feminist methods necessarily. Harding (1987) distinguishes method as techniques for gathering empirical data while methodology describes the theory and interpretive framework that directs the project. My methodology reflected frames and lenses through which I approached and viewed the procedures and methods of my own project.

STUDY DESIGN

I designed my study to engage in participant observation and unstructured interviewing of a group of incoming students to a large university in the Northeast region of the United States. Due to my interest in a *process* of meaning making over time, I wanted to collect data over the course of 2-3 years. I was also interested in the transition from high school to college. Therefore, incoming students who were participating in the Pre-First Program were of great interest to me.

After speaking with the director of the Pre-First Program and receiving written permission to conduct my study, I prepared and received approval for my IRB proposal. I asked that Resident Advisors of the program be informed that I would make visits to the residence hall where they were housed. Resident Advisors were to inform students at their initial floor

meetings that a doctoral student would be in the residence hall. I obtained program materials and information about some of the activities that would take place during the initial days of the program. I passed by the registration process that took place in the student center, then helped a student who was the younger sister of an old friend to move in. These activities allowed me to enter the world of these incoming students subtly. Then I prepared for my first day in the field.

My plan was to conduct both participant observation and interviewing to allow for more complete data than interviewing would provide (Becker & Geer, 1967). Participant observation would assist in contextualizing the data collected in the interviews. Hence, my first priority was to simply observe. I spent my first day in the main lounge of the residence hall, on the first floor, and soon chose this as my major site for observation. It was in the lounge that students played pool, studied, ate snacks, napped, watched television, talked, sat, and observed each other. From my observations, I would choose individuals who seemed interesting to talk to (interview) and after each interview, continue in similar purposive sampling (Cuadraz & Uttal, 1999). I would choose people based on the emerging themes surrounding my interest. (See the *Procedures* section for more details.)

After this first phase of data collection during the six week program, I planned to collect data a second time during the students' junior year at the university. Between the initial data collection and the second phase, I would begin to transcribe and review the tape recorded interviews and type up my field notes. The second phase would utilize focus groups with key informants from the first phase of interviewing to discuss experiences at the university and their interpretations of "race."

PROCEDURES

SELECTION OF THE UNIVERSITY AND PROGRAM

In the U.S. American context, most colleges and universities are predominantly white and serve as spaces where our nation's racial ideologies and discourses are engaged or even performed. Hence, I was especially interested in a predominantly white institution (PWI) with a significant level of diversity that might offer the potential for a very dynamic interface of race constructions and negotiations. Findings University has been nationally recognized for its diversity initiatives. Through its own commitment of resources and strategies that compliment what the state and federal governments provide, Findings has increased its percentage of underrepresented students in recent years. Additionally, the theme of diversity is promoted and integrated in many of the university's initiatives and some of its curricula. "Pre-First" is one of those initiatives.

The Pre-First Program at Findings University offered me a unique opportunity to engage students in the midst of their early transition from high school to college. This important period in the lives of young people has been given less attention in published higher education scholarship, especially due to the spatial challenges of these students not being on either high school or college campuses during the traditional academic year. Yet, the post-high school graduation summer before full-time college matriculation is critical to student development and retention (Arnold et al., 2008; Attinasi, 1989). Hence, as a transitional program located on a college campus, Pre-First was perfect for facilitating my initial fieldwork.

During the Spring 2005 semester, I approached the Pre-First Program director and discussed my interest in conducting an ethnographic study utilizing Pre-First students as informants. The idea was well-received, although the director might have been more interested in a study that would provide more immediate data that could be used for the program's benefit

sooner. In the meeting, I clarified the longitudinal nature of my research design and the sociological and educational issues I hoped to understand. With the director's permission, I prepared to begin my work in July of that year.

DATA COLLECTION- PHASE I

During the first phase of my research, I engaged in participant observation at the Roosevelt Hall, where Pre-First students were housed. For six weeks, I spent five to six days of each week at the residential hall observing and interviewing my informants from approximately 6:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. or 11:30 p.m. from Monday through Thursday. On Fridays, I attended for a few hours starting at 4:30 p.m. On Saturdays and Sundays, I spent several hours during the day and later in the night, depending on the schedule of residence hall programs or interviews with students. I also attended some social activities of the hall such as "Open Mic Nights." Although I sparsely visited the cafeteria, I spent the balance of my time in the main lounge of the residence hall. This participation in the lives of the students helped me to share in their experience, becoming changed while remaining unchanged by it (Bruyn, 1963).

I focused on building rapport and gaining the trust of potential informants during the first week of the program. I did this by being visible, showing up everyday and spending time reading, writing and observing the main lounge of the residence hall. I also hung out in the lobby and sometimes just outside the hall where two short rows of picnic tables facilitated small group gatherings. On a few occasions, I played pool with a student when the lounge traffic was light. Although I worked on campus from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (4:00 on Fridays) in the Student Affairs division, I was able to avoid Pre-First students while in that role. This meant adjusting some of the work assignments that would normally require me to present workshops to the

students within the first 3 weeks of the program. I am grateful to my supervisor for being gracious with me during these arrangements. I was able to dodge similar assignments until the 5th week of the program when I presented workshops for two class sessions in the Engineering school. Otherwise, I quickly returned home after work and changed out of a shirt and tie, to casual attire (often jeans, t-shirts, short-sleeve casuals, khaki's, shorts, sneakers or sandals). As I learned from reading other ethnographers, conducting research about students or young people required thoughtful strategies to share in their experience (Dolby, 2001; Eckert, 1989; Ferguson, 2001; Perry, 2002).

As I engaged in participant observation, I noted the frequent use of the lounge. Some students played games or watched television. Others studied there as a way of making new friends as well. Males and females flirted with each other. Groups began to form but with tangents or bridges to other groups. Sometimes the concentration of people in the lounge seemed to favor one group or another—more White, more Asian American, more Black, more male, more female—but such majorities never lasted. Mostly, there were usually cross-cultural student interactions taking place.

After several days, I began to ask various students who I saw often in the main lounge if they would be willing to participate in my study by allowing me to interview them. Observing helped me to understand the students' context, but talking to them would help me to understand their lives and how they made meaning of their experiences (Kvale, 1996; Seidman, 1998). The responses I received were always positive. The challenge we faced was finding time to sit and talk for 45-60 minutes. Many students expressed that the Pre-First program was intense and they wanted to do well. I always expressed that I had respect for their time and I would be flexible in finding a time that would work for both of us.

My first 5 or 6 interviews were with African-American or Black students. Although I had begun to build some rapport with a more diverse set of students, I intentionally began interviewing people who shared the same "race" as I did with the thought that they may be more comfortable discussing race with me than other students who identified differently. I would observe from the experience that there was little noticeable difference in comfort levels among my informants. This continued until I had spoken with 6 Black informants. At this point, I began to evaluate the direction of my study. Did I want to explore the meanings that Black students made of race in higher education? Did I want to focus on male students in particular? Could my study just focus on Black and Latino males? Or did I want to focus on male and female students from multiple racial categories as I anticipated before my first day in the field? As I considered my options, I reflected on the unique opportunity I had with the Pre-First Program to engage a diverse group of students who were not yet fully matriculated in a full-time credit offering semester at the university in discussions about race. I was driven by the desire to understand the various meanings students make from diverse racial backgrounds. An additional consideration was the importance for me, personally, to engage in work about race that expanded my reach beyond Black subjects only, especially as a researcher who is Black. Hence, I continued my work as planned. The total 25 informants that I interviewed reflected African American/Black, Asian American, Hispanic/Latino, and White racial categories.

Each interview began with my inquiries about how the student was doing or their schedule for the day. I always expressed my gratitude for the student's willingness to participate in the interview and offered an overview of expectations. I informed participants of my doctoral student status, the interview as part of my research, the tape recorder's purpose for transcribing the interview, and the importance of being open, relaxed, and honest. I also shared that they

could terminate the interview at any point if the discussion seemed too uncomfortable. After that preliminary discussion, the interview began. I attempted to make it an almost seamless process between the overview and the interview itself and simply suggested that now we would be recording.

The following chart describes the racial/ethnic composition of my informants.

	African American/Black	Asian American	Latino	White
Male:	5	2	4	3
Female:	3	3	3	2

Portraits:

The following are portraits of my informants, using pseudonyms. As each informant is introduced, the racial description that is presented will reflect their self-identification and other details they shared about high school demographics and where they lived prior to attending Findings University. Hence, the ways that I describe their race may not be consistent in terms of the academic, legal, or politically correct categories for describing one's race in the United States.

Amy is a Chinese American Asian female student. She attended high school in Brooklyn, NY. She described her school as largely White with about 50 Asian Americans, "perhaps 2 or 3" African Americans and "very few Mexicans." Amy is an Engineering major.

Angela, a White female from Long Island, New York, played lacrosse while she studied at Findings. She intended to major in Communication and Rhetorical Studies. However, she did

not return to the university after her first year. She reported that 50% of her high school population was White, 30% Black, about 5% Hispanic, 10% Asian, and another 5% who were Indian or "Hindu."

Ariel is an African American male from Northeast City, majoring in Sociology. He attended a predominantly White, private religious high school. There were approximately 100 Blacks, less than 10 Latinos, and approximately 13 Asian Americans out of the 720 students at his school. Ariel reported that his school offered challenging "social pressures" for many of the Black males who attended. Ariel acted as a "big brother" to many of them.

Billy, a Caucasian male from Amherst, New York, was majoring in Engineering before he transferred out of the university. He reported there being "probably 10 or 15 Black kids" in his mostly White high school, with a graduating class of 400 students. Billy is a skilled guitarist and singer, which allowed him to become well known after the talent show at Pre-First.

Brian is an African American male student from Patterson, New Jersey. He attended a religious high school which was predominantly Black with few Asian Americans, Latinos, and Whites. Brian is majoring in Political Science.

Choon-yei is an Asian student. She sees herself as distinctly Asian, rather than Asian American. She attended a predominantly White high school in Oregon, where she learned that to even say "race" was taboo. Choon-yei (or Choon) was born and raised in South Korea. She is very outgoing and frank in her discussions about any subject.

Christine is an African American female student from White Plains, NY. She reported that her high school was "very mixed" with Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Indian, Black, White, Spanish and Muslim students. She is majoring in African American Studies and Public Relations. She sings, writes and recites poetry.

Deirdre is a Black female from Patterson, New Jersey. Her Caribbean heritage was important to her. Deirdre attended a Black high school. She reported that "the only Whites were the teachers" and that the six or so White students who were present when she began high school were all gone by her senior year. Deirdre returned to New Jersey after her first year to study Nursing, a program that was discontinued at Findings.

Don is an outgoing White male, from Union, New Jersey. He reported that his high school was 75% White. The other quarter of the population was Hispanic and Black, with a small Indian representation (of about 5 percent). Don was an intended Chemistry major before he left Findings after the first year.

Geoff is a Caucasian male from New York City. Geoff was interested in all visual and performing arts but he is focusing on Photography for his major studies. The diversity at Findings and the campus location on the east coast were two important factors that helped Geoff to choose the university. He said that he "needs" to have a lot of diversity. He reported that the students at his high school represented 50% Whites and the other half were "minorities," including Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians.

Jennifer is a Hispanic (female) from Puerto Rico. She reported that there were only Puerto Ricans at her high school. Although her high school peers reflected different shades of skin color, they were Puerto Ricans. Jennifer was a Broadcast Journalism major at Findings before she returned to Puerto Rico after her first year.

Jossette is a Latina (female) from the Bronx, New York. Jossette is majoring in International Relations. She decided to attend Findings University because of the diversity statistics, which she reports being "higher than most colleges." High school was diverse, but predominantly "Black and Spanish," according to Jossette. She was president of the Latino-American Club in high school. At Findings, she is very active in a "multicultural" sorority.

Julia is a Latina (female) student from Bronx, New York. She attended a diverse Catholic high school that, when she began there, almost seemed to share an equal percentage of Blacks, Latinos, and Whites. However, by her senior year, she reported Whites were only about 10 percent. Then there were slightly more Blacks (45 percent) than Latinos (40 percent) and a scattering of other ethnicities and cultures in the rest of the population. Julia's parents exposed her and her siblings to their racially diverse group of friends, she said, and as a result Julia has sought cross-cultural interactions at Findings. Julia is a majoring in broadcast journalism.

Leslie is a Black Asian male from Queens, New York. He identifies more strongly with his Black racial heritage. He reported that he was "one of twenty Black people" and 15 Latinos at his high school. "It was Asians and just Whites; that's it." Leslie is a Political Science major.

Mei is an Asian female student. She recently migrated with her family to the United States (a year before matriculating at Findings). She belongs to a Chinese ethnic minority group. She is majoring in Finance.

Natasha is a Black American female from Patterson, New Jersey. She and Deirdre are best friends and attended the same high school together. Natasha is majoring in Social Work.

Richard is a Latino male from New York City. He was valedictorian for his high school graduating class. Richard reports that his high school was diverse, with Whites, Blacks, and "Spanish" students representing a "pretty equal" portion of the population. Richard struggled as an Engineering major and changed it to Information Studies in his third year.

Rolando is a Latino male student. He was born and raised in Ecuador until he migrated to Queens, New York four years before matriculating at Findings. His high school was predominantly attended by students of color, mostly Black and Hispanic, with some Chinese and Indian students, and "maybe one or two" Whites. There were conflicts between some Latinos, specifically Dominicans, and African Americans in his high school. Rolando majors in Engineering.

Terrence is a Black male, Sports Management major from Northeast City. He attended the same predominantly White, religious high school as Ariel; and describes it as a "fancy" and "preppy" education. Terrence shared that he wrote a letter of appeal to enter the school for 9th

grade after one of his 8th grade public school teachers "inspired" him by telling him that he would not amount to anything.

Tom is a White male student from New Orleans, Louisiana. He attended private school before matriculating at Findings University. He reported that he chose Findings so that he could experience more diversity than the "mostly White" schools he previously attended. Although financially privileged, he said that he was raised not to think of himself as "better than anyone else" because of his family's resources. He is active in one of the National Inter-fraternal Conference fraternities on campus and lives in his chapter house. Tom is majoring in history and Political Science.

Tyson is an African American male who took great pride in being an official student athlete during the Pre-First Program. Tyson reported that he attended a predominantly Black high school, with some Whites and a couple Asians. He was undecided about his major before he left Findings to attend another university and play football.

Wes is a Latino male student from New York City. He is majoring in Industrial Design. He attended a diverse New York City public high school that he perceived to be more or less populated by a similar number of Asian Americans, Blacks, and Whites; then a smaller number (10 percent) of Hispanics/Latinos.

Wilson is a White male from Sarajevo, New Jersey. He reported that his high school was very diverse with 40 percent of the population being White, about a third was Black, and the others were Latino or Indian. Wilson is a Chemical Engineering major.

These portraits present details that explain the social location of each informant in terms of their race and/or ethnicity, hometown, and the diversity they were exposed to in schools prior to attending Findings University. These details were important to help this researcher understand the perspectives they shared and an appropriate analysis of their interpretations.

The interviews covered a series of questions that moved from personal to more thoughtful and perhaps risky. They end with thoughtful questions about the future. These questions were designed to provide background information about each student and to elicit their thoughts and experiences about race. A sample of the questions that were asked is listed below:

1. Why did you choose to participate in Pre-First?
2. What do you expect from the Pre-First experience?
3. What do you think about the racial diversity of students (and staff) in the program?
4. How does this "diversity" compare with your high school experience?
5. How do you identify yourself in the multicultural context?
6. A. What do you think about "race"? B. Have you always thought that?
7. What do you think your parents think about "race"?
8. How does race matter in college?
9. How did race matter in high school?
10. How does race differ from culture?

11. What were your friends in high school like?

12. Tell me about your friends in Pre-First.

13. When you are not in class, how do you spend your time here?

14. How are you growing in this new experience?

15. What do you think your first semester will be like?

DATA COLLECTION- PHASE II

The second phase of my research utilized focus groups to gather data during my informants' junior year at the university. In this phase, I aimed to understand how students made meaning of race over the course of six semesters in college and how they would express these ideas in each other's presence. Morgan (1996) defines focus groups as a "research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher" (p. 130). This definition highlights the importance of focus groups as a research tool and the researcher's active role in developing the discussion. The increased use of focus group in research among social scientists points to the benefit of data collected from group interaction. Focus groups help researchers to explore topics of interest, validate findings, and clarify content domains (Smith, 1995; Strickland, 1999). As the researcher, I gave critical consideration to group size, cultures of the group membership, and location of the focus group to accommodate eye contact and a comfortable level of intimacy. These important elements should be considered and decisions made based on the goals of the research (Duffy, 1993; Knodel, 1995; Ramirez & Sheppard, 1988). As was the case for interviews, informants were invited to speak openly, honestly, and

clearly for the tape recorder to capture the discussion. I tested the recorder before we began each session. Also, I offered water, juice, and snacks if the group desired to eat.

Ideally I wanted to have three focus groups of very diverse informants- gender and race. Further, I had hoped for particular informants to be present. However, I knew that over the course of three years, I risked not having all the informants I took special interest in for participation in the focus groups to be present on campus or desire further involvement in my study. This risk proved significant in terms of my ability to gather focus groups of 7 participants and with my key informants. However, with 25 informants from Phase I in my pool of potential focus group members, I was still able to gather groups that worked out well.

I conducted three focus groups with 5-6 members each, including this researcher. Each group was diverse in its own way. Group One: one Asian American female, one Latina, and two Black males. Group Two: Two African Americans (1 male, 1 female), one White female, and one Asian American female. Group Three: one White male, one Latina, one Asian American female, and two Latinos. Each focus group lasted 75-90 minutes with robust discussion among its members. My key informants were students across the racial spectrum who provided nuanced data and interesting stories about race, or who demonstrated high interest in sharing experiences and views.

The focus group interview protocol is below:

1. How have you connected with other students since Pre-First?
2. What has happened with the ideas (about diversity) that you learned about during Pre-First? Where do you talk about those issues now? What is that talk like?
3. Given your grounding with Pre-First, what kinds of challenges have you faced as a group since then? When? How?

4. How have you come to see people's racial differences since Pre-First?

5. How do you identify yourself by race?

6. What kinds of interactions have you had with students who are different from you racially since Pre-First? How have you thought about those interactions?

7. What kinds of extracurricular activities have you gotten involved with? Are any of these activities based on race or culture? If they aren't, how do issues of race or culture arise in your activities?

8. Some of you have said in your interviews that race is a human invention or simply differences in skin color and geographic background. What is RACE to you? It has been two years since I first interviewed you during Pre-First; are you aware of how your ideas about race have shifted since then?

9. Have you experienced racism on campus? Have you experienced racism off campus since you've been a student at Findings?

10. What is the relationship between race and racism?

11. How did the Pre-First experience shape the rest of your time on campus?

12. How do you talk about race when you talk about it? Who do you talk about race with? How do you talk about race differently in different spaces? In class? Out of class? With friends? With others of your peers?

By engaging triangulation of methods—participant observation, interviews, and focus groups—I obtained rich, thick data that would strengthen my understanding and representation of the participants' perspectives (Biklen & Bogdan, 1998; Denzin, 1970; Dobbert, 1982). That is, I desired to understand the realities of my informants from their point of view, the way they saw it. Participant observation allowed me to understand the environment and context in which my informants lived their daily lives during the first phase of the research and to be engaged in that social interaction. Interviews provided each informants' viewpoint and story from past to present. The focus groups allowed me to understand viewpoints as they interacted with several

others after more time and experience had developed. All three methods deepened the empirical possibilities of my study.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis actually began during the first phase of my research as I recorded field notes and conducted interviews. After each session in the field and each interview, I spent time thinking about my informants, their environment, and the data they provided. These important moments in the research process kept me engaged in a dialogic way with the emerging data and guided me in my efforts to understand how students interpreted race in their everyday lives.

Interviews, focus groups, and field notes generated approximately 400 pages of transcriptions and notes for analysis. After phase I of the research, I transcribed the interviews, included my observer comments, and developed a list of general themes that emerged. As I listened to interview recordings and read the transcriptions, I thought about trends and themes that connected the language and interpretations of my informants. These general themes helped me to formulate the interview protocol for the focus groups in phase II. Similarly, after phase II, I transcribed each focus group recording, included my observer comments, and reflected on the emerging themes.

Themes in the data reflected the "regularities and patterns" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 171) and subjects that helped me to see the story that these students were telling. Themes emerged through comparisons of informants' statements and observations I made in the field and created categories and subcategories (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Charmaz, 2000; Glasser & Strauss, 1967). Many of these codes focused on perspective, ways that students thought about race, context, social structure, etc. For example, some informants expressed their perspective

that race is used to create divisions. Others expressed how race is handled within their family situation or structure. In phase II, strategy, activity, social structure, and process codes were especially visible and interesting. For example, rich themes about *how* some students talked about race, their involvement on campus, informants' explanation of student social etiquette on campus, and their changes or maintenance of the same perspectives they had in their first year emerged in focus groups.

Codes, categories and sub-categories were developed and written on lists and index cards, as I worked through an understanding of the matrix of themes present. For example, initial codes included items such as: "race history," "white talk," identity," "fraternities," "interracial dating," "expectations," "divisions," etc. However, throughout the process of analyzing my codes, larger themes emerged as I came to understand various ideologies these codes meant. Hence, there are many codes within larger themes that express the meanings made by informants and by the researcher throughout the interview process, recording of the interview, and interpretation (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). Therefore, my first data chapter comprised these sections:

I. Colorblind Discourse and the Minimization of Race

II. Family Portraits

- A. Friendship and Dating Frames
- B. Negatives

III. Wrestling with Whiteness, Asian Ambivalence, Black Reconnaissance: Homes, safe houses and host bodies

- A. White Resistance
  - 1. Homes and Safe Houses

2. Host Bodies

B. Asian/Asian American Ambivalence—Finding Home

C. Black Reconnaissance—Conflicts and Conflations

Drawing from the students' language and perspective, I creatively formulated titles for sections that expressed the interpretations of my data and hopefully provoke further interpretations by my readers.

The two phases of my research guided my approach to writing the "realist tale" that I researched (Van Maanen, 1998). I decided to write one chapter on the descriptive data on the colorblind ideology expressed in students' discourse from the individual interviews in phase I. I would write a separate chapter on the data from the focus groups. By taking this approach, I would demonstrate the role that time played in the meaning making process for my informants. However, I began to see that "talk" about race was increasingly significant in my coding scheme. My informants were not only sharing their reflections about race talk among their friends and classmates, but they were talking race in very interesting ways during the interviews and focus groups. So, I decided to write a separate chapter on this as well, thereby highlighting some processes of race talk and some challenges to engaging in that process. The final data chapter explores how race shifts, stays, or drifts in meaning and construction for these informants between phase I and phase II of the project.

CHALLENGES

The challenges to my research process included my job, the duration of my project, and student life schedules. As noted earlier, during the first phase of my research I was working full-time on the Findings University campus. Hence, I was not able to be a participant observer during the hours of business- generally from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Generally, students were in classes during those hours. However, I wished that I could have observed them at lunch and at other times and locations during the day. This was not possible. Additionally, by phase II of my project, some informants' awareness of diversity education as an aspect of my work on campus may have influenced their willingness to participate or "chilled" some of what they may have wanted to say. For example, some informants may have been more politically correct in their statements because of their awareness that I was not a "graduate student" only, but a university administrator who had some connection to the facilitation of diversity on campus.

The duration of the project, spanning three years, may have contributed to a loss of motivation by some informants to re-connect and participate in focus groups. While informants seemed interested, schedules presented difficulties for finding a common time to meet and some informants did not seem to be as motivated to follow-up with me as I coordinated the logistics of these focus groups. I also noted that the everyday schedules of these juniors were quite hectic. Many of my informants had jobs and were active in co-curricular activities of the campus. Hence they were quite busy. I conducted one focus group during the fall semester of the senior year because a couple of the informants participated in study abroad the year before. There were others (3 White students in particular) who were no longer on campus. This was disappointing for me as researcher because it really limited my ability to have the broadest demographic mix I had hoped for in all the focus groups.

STRENGTHS

However, the longitudinal nature of this project was important and beneficial for my research by providing data about the ways students made meaning of race in the college arena. Beyond phase one of this project, students had more time to experience college life and more interactions with their peers from diverse backgrounds. Students also had more opportunities to engage in academic and co-curricular learning experiences that might influence their thinking about race. The longitudinal approach of this project allowed more time for students to reflect on the subject of race and make connections to their everyday experiences. The second phase of data collection allowed this researcher to analyze change in perspectives about race or to understand more clearly how the university's structure and efforts may have impacted the meaning making process of my informants. Additionally, this researcher could approach working with focus groups with the benefit of already being acquainted with the participants. Data from phase I offered background information that helped to shape the direction of the focus groups without taking any additional time. The project was worth its challenges.

RESEARCHER PERSPECTIVES

I am the researcher and the research. I approached this research project with an awareness of my *self* as a subject in the process. As I engaged others in conversations about race, I knew that "I" was a part of the terms and methods of the conversation. I was not the neutral and invisible researcher. Instead I was very much the raced human being who belongs to the "raced people" (Dyer 1997, p.2) we call African-American or Black. Hence, I was always conscious of the fact that each of my informants was having a conversation about race with a Black man. I was aware that as a Black man, I might be perceived as threatening and dangerous

or anti-intellectual or patriarchal (hooks, 2004; Hutchinson, 1996; Mudhabuti, 1990). I was also aware that African-American or Black informants might think that I already understood their perspectives because of our shared race while other informants might think that I was judging them because of our race difference. Whatever the perspective, race was present because we were present, even before we spoke the word- race. For example, I was particularly conscientious about my first interview with a White male student. My strongest desire was to obtain useful descriptive data, so I wanted to negotiate my racial identity in a way that would allow my informants-- and especially non-Black ones-- to be comfortable enough to share openly.

This negotiation of my race presentation was important. I could not and would not change the color of my skin, but I could somehow portray some kind of neutrality. This meant wearing clothing that did not particularly reflect my culture. I did not wear t-shirts with political statements, of which I had many. I kept my clothing simple—a basic pair of blue jeans, khaki shorts, plain t-shirts, casual shirts, sneakers, and sandals. More than anything, my hair (in locs) seemed to make me "cool." I kept a light tone of voice and was careful to present open and relaxed body language.

Yet, I was a part of their race talk. A section in the "Race Talk" chapter (5) describes how I was *involved* in the talk of a focus group with students of color. The shared sense of understanding about culture and our experiences with race/racism shaped our conversation. In that case, it was a matter of comfort. However, in another focus group where Nic and Tom shared lively discussion about racism, the shared understanding that caused Nic to exchange stares with me as he argued points with Tom was particularly uncomfortable for me as the researcher. As a Black man, I intuitively understood the stares to mean/communicate the

following at different points of the conversation: (1) Can you believe this? (2) Say something! (3) Am I making sense? (4) Help me out here; (5) *You* understand what I'm saying, right? In return, I communicated nothing. Looking away to view the tape recorder or returning blank stares while allowing the exchanges between Nic and Tom to continue were likely unsettling to Nic, but helped me to obtain rich data for analysis. However, it also left me with a feeling that I had betrayed Nic in some way. This was the most unsettling feeling during my research experience. I long for and resist the opportunity to share with Nic that I *understood* where he was coming from.

Additionally, there were other moments, especially during interview sessions with my informants individually, that I pondered how I might be perceived by every one of them. More than my attempts to suspend or play down my race, were my efforts to connect with my informants as students. This was an important reason for utilizing participant observation as a research method also. I introduced myself to students (potential informants) as a "student" conducting research. I was a "grad student" or a "doctoral student." I talked about the dissertation as an "assignment" that I was required to complete to earn my "Ph.D." This use of shared language (student, assignment) and the connotations I implied (that someone more powerful than I was making me do something to get my degree), seemed to resonate with my informants. Many of them wished me luck and cheered me on after our talks. I discussed the "hard work" involved in accomplishing this assignment and they engaged me in conversation about my educational journey. Yet, I wondered many times if my role as "doctoral student" and researcher, and the ways that I presented my self made me "conceptually white" (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p.9) in their eyes. How might this conception impact the ways that students spoke with me? As some informants told me about their families and views their families held

about race, I wondered how visible my race was to them. I wondered if my conceptual whiteness had been at work or their use of "distancing strategies" to defend their own "antiracist self concepts" (Case & Hemmings, 2005, p.607). These considerations would direct my probing questions and add to the ongoing analysis within the process of the interviews themselves. This additional labor to understand how one is being raced within a research process about race is particularly significant to this work. It is what I call *meta-race labor*. This labor includes the work of analysis without offense, the ongoing work to suspend identifying with myself or seeing myself in relation to others. It is an interception of identity and individuality. It is placing a pause on my positionality, while considering its potential for prejudice. As a researcher who has had practice with this through other projects during my studies, this labor sometimes becomes less conscious and in that way less difficult. However, the labor of analyzing the analysis and the analyzer requires a particular kind of energy and multi-layered thinking. As I listened to informants, I considered their language, their positionality, my positionality, the interface of my race and theirs, the related discourses and narratives that contextualized their meaning, the response of my suspended yet un-dismissed racialized self, and what all of this meant for my research. Such labor continued throughout the duration of this project.

SUMMARY

This chapter described the methods and procedures I used for the research I conducted for this dissertation. It explained the two phases of my data collection during the Pre-First summer program and the junior year of my cohort of Findings University students. Utilizing qualitative research methods allowed me to collect descriptive data that exposed the meanings students

make about race. My methodology also allowed me to offer critical insights as the ‘researcher and research’ in this process. This project draws from post-positivism, symbolic interactionism, feminist methodology, and Critical Race Theory.

CHAPTER 4 [DATA CHAPTER]

COLORBLIND ENTRAPMENTS

This chapter explores discourses, the understanding and organization of knowledge that emerges in spoken (and written) forms of language and is used as social practice (Wood & Kroger, 2000, p. 19). I use the vocabulary of social practice to describe what people do. This chapter highlights the discourses that are present in students' language to show how they construct meaning about race. I especially demonstrate how some students minimize race and racism through their "discursive formations" (Foucault, 1972) and how they negotiate racial identity and post-racial dreams within the dominant context of colorblindness.

Foucault (1972) presents discourse as a way of representing knowledge in particular historical moments as an exercise of power that regulates people's understanding and behavior. Further, language in discourse *acts;* it does something and has force (Hall, 1996; Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Discourses discipline people's thoughts and actions. As Biklen (1995) notes, discourses are institutionalized and "shape how people understand the world and therefore how they act in it" (p.81). Discourses determine acceptable ways of thinking, speaking and behaving, while restricting other practices that do not fit those acceptable ways. Hall (1996), drawing from Foucault, describes discourse as "a group of statements which provide the language for talking about…a particular kind of knowledge about a topic" (p.201). So, for example today I overheard a conversation between a group of friends—three men and three women—where a particular discourse of masculinity was presented. The group had a brief debate about the movie "Jumping the Broom." One of the men maintained that it was a "bad" movie while another maintained that it was "a good movie that dealt with issues." The man who suggested the movie was "bad" said to

the other man: “You cannot say that was a good movie or other brothers will think you’re soft.” Hence, meaning is constituted through the practice of language, through discourse. This works through a shared relationship or pattern of the language used, the style and message in the statements-- or discursive formation. It was not clear to me whether or not the speaker who framed the discourse was aware of how he may have silenced critical dialogue and evaluation of various themes from the movie being discussed or how he presented a particular kind of masculinity as acceptable or that he made a particular discussion of a movie a subject that could measure masculinity; but all of those actions were taken in his phrasing of what the other man could/not say in order to be thought of in a particular way. As Foucault (1984) has noted: “People know what they do; frequently they know why they do what they do; but what they don’t know is what what they do does” (p. 95).

The discourses that shape the talk of 18 informants presented here offered critical insight to my understanding of how students negotiate and construct their own meanings of Race. These discourses reflect the U.S. racial hierarchy that places Whites at the center, makes them the norm, or locates whiteness as the highest ideal, creating and perpetuating white dominance over all Others. These discourses also articulate colorblindness that pervades our society. Sampson (1993) states: “Talk is constitutive of the realities within which we live” (p.1221). What Sampson means by this is that talk or the language of discourse is not just simply expressive but that it shapes the way we understand our lives. Hence, I explore these discourses to understand the lived race realities of these students. The discourses that students draw on are constitutive of their everyday lives. All the data in this chapter are from the first phase of my study, where each informant was interviewed individually during the summer preceding their full matriculation at Findings University, during the Pre-First Program. In this chapter, data are organized to highlight

the themes of contemporary and color blind notions of race, as well as the spectrum of ideas reflected in the students' responses to questions about race, the diversity present in the Pre-First program, race matters in college, and how their parents/family members think about race.

In this chapter, I argue that students are negotiating various constructions of race and racism. We see this through their use of colorblind discourses that minimize race and racism, how they frame relationships through family portraits, and how they express identity or their aspirations for identity. The first section of this chapter presents data that demonstrate students' articulation of colorblind discourse and desire for a "post-racial" society. The second section reveals how race is made visible and confronted by the myth of colorblindness within relationships. In the third section, the data exhibit the ways that Asian Americans, Black Americans, and White Americans wrestle with or affirm their identities in response to the racial environment. In this process, students' talk reflects and re/produces postmodern racial selves—fractured and destabilized. The students articulate re/constructions of what it means to be identified with their race category and their desire to take charge of new constructions. These identity and discourse constructions reveal how Asian/Asian American students negotiate their place in the Black-White binary of U.S. racial politics and how Black students examine the racial landscape in search of a new blackness, in their attempts to negotiate colorblindness. These constructions also reveal how White American students resist their whiteness as a way of imposing colorblindness. Before I move to the first section, I give an overview of colorblind discourse.

Colorblind discourse asserts a race-neutral society where race does not matter. Differences associated with race should be ignored as unimportant. In this context, people who attempt to

discuss race or the inequalities that result from racism are stigmatized (Bonilla-Silva, 2001, 2003; Crenshaw, 1997). Yet, colorblind discourse allows for cultural explanations to replace biological explanations for racial disparities. Several studies indicate that colorblind discourse is prominently used and sanctioned by educators in diverse school environments as well as "almost white" school environments (Lewis, 2001; Pollock, 2004; Schofield, 2001). This approach disallows any productive attention to race and diminishes the realities of social life and evidences of patterns of racism or racist thinking and their reproduction in schools.

Bonilla-Silva (2006) argues that "frames" comprise one element of racial discourse. Colorblind racial discourse has a frame or "path for interpreting information" that minimizes racism (p. 26). This frame suggests that discrimination is no longer a central factor that impacts the lives of people of color. Within this frame of minimizing racism is a strategy of downplaying race as a significant social element within a system and society that is perpetually racist/white supremacist. By downplaying race as a significant element in society and social relations, people can minimize the discourse that comes with it, i.e. racism and its real consequences for subjugated people in the racial hierarchy of this country. The racial hierarchy is ignored or confused. Power is masked by colorblind discourse.

I. Colorblind Discourse and the Minimization of Race

One aspect of colorblindness is a discourse of sameness that trumps all difference that racial hierarchy and history have created within the experiences of people who identify differently across the race categories. For example, opportunities for acquiring a college education and substantial wealth are presented as equal opportunities for every American regardless of their race.

The history of segregation and unequal labor laws and practice based on race is ignored as having no impact on the present. Hence, with the presupposition that there is equality in the present (which is not true), neglecting the past suggests that we are all the same with unimportant decorative differences. Similarly, acknowledging a racist past while denying its legacy in the present or its contemporary persistence superimposes a fantastical notion of social truth over current race realities. Our social reality of race is reduced to the arbitrary variances in skin color among different groups of people. Colorblind discourse insists that it is the acknowledgement of race that creates differences or divisions among human beings. In this study, informants from all racial backgrounds tended to minimize race in their initial responses to discuss their thoughts on race, or to identify themselves racially. This is what is expected in a society reliant on colorblind discourse. However, the meanings of this minimization differed for students depending on their own racial identities.

In this section, I explore the discourse eight informants used to minimize race. These students, who represent a cross-section of racial and ethnic backgrounds, demonstrate talk about race as an arbitrary social element that does not or should not matter. Some talked about race as inconsequential. Others talked about it as something that is "overemphasized," or a misnomer to be dismissed as inaccurate and passé. They used common themes of race as an unimportant label to categorize people, or referred to the sameness of all people. Yet the meanings of these discourses are not common among them. Many students took a defensive approach in their comments and others, who attempted to embrace difference, demonstrated wavering commitments to sameness and difference. Students of color attempt to neutralize racism by proclaiming the humanity and inherent equality of all people. White students attempt to diminish the visibility of race and minimize the present reality and effects of racism, using colorblindness to maintain white

dominance. The informants' narratives amplify negotiated discourses of colorblindness. These discourses are so pervasive and dominant in our society that every individual must negotiate them in some way.

We're just human…

Rolando lived in Queens, NY four years before matriculating at Findings University. Born in Ecuador, he lived there until migrating to Queens, NY. Rolando, whom I observed as having a lightly tanned complexion, described the racial mix of the Pre-First Program students and staff as a "good thing" because it provided an opportunity to learn "more about the world, more about other cultures, more about other people." With these global interests, Rolando took a universalist approach to identifying himself racially. By universalist, I mean the approach that sees all as one, without individual differences. Rolando identified himself "as a human being." He resisted race as an identity marker for himself, stating

> I don't think race can change you, can make you different. I think that everyone is similar even though we speak different languages or have different cultures. We're still human beings so…

Rolando seemed committed to humanist, universalist notions of race or racelessness, as he continued on to say that "Your skin color don't make any difference. You're still being a human, you're still a person, so it doesn't matter." However, when prodded to share what he thought of race more directly, he responded:

> I think that it's something that defines an individual. The culture, the customs, something like that. I guess it's that. Or something to separate human beings, like to separate different races, like White people, Black people, Spanish people. Like something just used to separate people.

Rolando saw race as a social instrument with the distinct function of *separating* or categorizing people. He frowned on this idea of making distinctions between people. Although Rolando was the only one to identify himself as a "human being," there were other informants who responded that race was something *used* to separate people. That would be racism.

No big deal…

Bill, a Caucasian male from a "really white" suburb outside of Buffalo, NY, also minimized race as a social element used to create distinctions and divisions. He noted briefly that race "kinda divides people a lot" and he tried not to separate himself from interacting with others who are identified racially as different from him. For Bill, race was no longer significant because he did not allow it to separate him from people with racial identities different from his own. His thinking about race is connected to his ability or the ability of others to interact freely.

> I like to mingle, so I don't see [race] like obstacle as like, like it used to be. Like I read history books and stuff about segregation and divisions in schools and all that kind of stuff, but um. I don't know. I tend to get along with all different kinds of people so it's not a big deal for me in my life…. I think it's not a big deal anymore.

Bill described race as something that is no longer a "big deal" because he believes that it no longer segregates people, solely based on his desire not to allow race to prevent him from interacting with difference. He sees race as having a historical past of dividing people without such effect in the present, based on his choice as an individual to mingle with others. Hence, race is no longer significant, Billy claimed, because he was able to legally and conscientiously interact with people of color. Billy relies on colorblindness that presents contemporary race relations as a "new day" of erased racial differences and harmonious integration. He speaks from his own experience, shaped by white privilege where race is "not a big deal for [him] in [his] life." Billy reflected on the abolishment of segregation and the amicable cross-cultural interactions he has experienced as a post Civil Rights young person as symbols of the end of racism.

This theme of race no longer having significance was the most pervasive theme in the interview data. Most students (from diverse backgrounds) expressed that race was not important to them personally and that it no longer mattered in society as it did in the past. All of these frames were used to minimize race and racism in contemporary society. The following responses demonstrate this view from a White male perspective:

> …It's not an issue for me, to be honest with you. Um, I guess, I don't know, I don't really know how to describe it. It's just been a problem. Like, there are stereotypes, granted, but I don't think much of them…
>
> Well, I think in Pre-First [diversity is]…probably overemphasized. All of our classes have like a theme of dealing with race and like I don't think that's a bad thing especially

at a school as diverse as Findings…. Cause I guess it's good but I think it's just overemphasized.

- - Tom, White male

I think race is, I think race is an exaggerated issue at times. I think a lot of people give too much thought into it. In the end it's like, if somebody's cool they're cool. You know? Who cares, I think, ah, I think there's a lot of racism in the world and it kind of makes me sick at times 'cause I never had, um, not friends but a lot of people who I know I hear them throw around racial slurs and, um, it , I don't really say anything to them but it kinda just makes me look at them like they're ignorant.

- Don, White male

Don and Tom talked about race as an overemphasized topic in the Pre-First Program. While both White males also recognized the perpetuation of stereotypes and the ongoing use of racial slurs, they minimized these realities and suggested that less discussion and attention on race would be best. This kind of double talk to minimize race and racism is further explored in Chapter 5.

In the past…

Geoff, a Caucasian male from New York City, used similar language as he concluded his ideas about race.

> It has history to it, um, I think the more we move on, I think race is becoming less and less of a, is more and more of a non-issue…It's a really dead issue… So you walk around and it's just, race is just, it's like another word almost. (laughs) And it might as well just be, become a sound, not even a word. It doesn't mean anything.

Geoff's language suggests that race did mean something at one time. But it no longer does. It has "history" but now it is "dead," meaningless and hardly utterable. This idea of giving race utterance becomes an important theme in some informants' talk, which I will explore in chapter 5 (Race Talk). Geoff later gave examples of the "non-issue" that race has become, citing the interracial dating he has experienced and associations he has made with biracial people that contribute to his cosmopolitan friendships. Geoff stated that he "needs" diversity because New York City has always offered that to him.

This discourse of race as passé was presented by Black informants as well, though expressed differently, from a different stance, and with other motivations.

> I know the past about race and prejudice and all that stuff, but I say, you know, let the past be the past. And race, I see you as a family member, you know… If you're willing to sit down, you know, [converse] with me, I consider it like a friend, a family member. I don't' look at your race no matter what you are…
>
> - Terrence, Black Latino male

> Race, I just see as something that…It's just a word. Like, ok, you're Black, you're Spanish. But what are we after you look past that? What are we? People. And we all do the same things. A lot of us like the same things no matter what color, what race, where (we) come from. We like to do…a lot of us play basketball, softball…whatever the case may be, we like to have fun the same way. And of course we've got a few areas where we like to do different things. But same things, it's just the color of our skin. We just happen to have more melanin than some people, but that's just how it works out.
>
> - Natasha, Black American female

Terrence expressed his blindness to color and his desire to develop authentic relationships with anyone across racial categories through dialogue. He spoke about race and prejudice as a past reality. He talked about race as a static symbol of past injustices that has no relevance today. Natasha, a Black American female, shared her thoughts about the insignificance of race as skin color. She emphasized a discourse of sameness shared by all human beings. When Natasha said that race is "just a word," she explained that she views it as nothing more than a way to label or categorize people based on skin color. Natasha chose to focus on ways that different "races" of people are the same, for example in their appreciation of sports and fun. While she acknowledged difference, she maintained that people of different races as we understand them are only different (in perhaps a visible though insignificant way) because of skin color. Melanin is the cause of this difference; and Natasha's use of the term reflects some understanding of how biology is used to affect people's thoughts about race generally.

At first, these discourses of race as passé and insignificant terminology seemed to be only wrapped up in the discourse of colorblindness that pervades society and the educational

experience of these students. Not only were White students impacted, but Black, Latino, and Asian American students as well. This demonstrates the power of colorblind discourses to discipline the ways that these students talked about race. However, there was a nuanced difference in the way that these students of color, including Rolando, spoke about their *intention* and desire for colorblindness. Terrence urged us to "let the past be the past" with the memory of historical American racism that positioned him as a less-than-human subject and a threat to overt white racial power. So, he talks about "friendship" and "family" as present possibilities against the backdrop of color as an "enemy" of whiteness, racial purity, and civility. Likewise, Rolando asserts humanity to discount the dehumanization of people of color based on their darker hue. The humanity and commonality among human beings to socialize and enjoy similar activities are presented by these students to defend their equality as persons, rather than discount the inequities produced by racism. "We just happen to have more melanin than some people" is a statement that can be read as resisting racism and white supremacy because it at once recognizes a shared biological substance among human beings (melanin) and suggests that the varying amounts of it is what some have used as a foundation for belief about "races" of people. Presenting melanin as a common element in biology and the amount of its distribution as a minor effect in genetic processes, makes racial determinism and white supremacy seem petty. These students are delivering a neutralizing, pro-equality message that asserts humanity over race.

Essentially Speaking…

Even when students could acknowledge race, they simplified and minimized it in essentialist ways. For example, two informants talked about the dividing or separating function of

race without negativity. However, they viewed differences between groups of people in essentialist ways, believing that that there is some essence shared by various groups of people that should not matter enough to make one race better than another. This view is represented by both Amy and Jossette, who spoke of race in essentialist terms.

> I think it's very distinguished. It's something that's part of you, but it's nothing that should impair any kind of judgment [of people]. Like, I have huge respect for everyone, for all life…. To me race is not an issue. It should not be an issue. It should be something that identifies people not the other way around where it's stereotypical at all. That's what I think.
>
> - Amy, a Chinese American Asian

> Race? Distinguishes who you are. I like going to things like I don't know. Asian and like Chinese food… Ah, I don't mean, like, I mean food distinguishes like each other, like culture. Like, you know, dancing, or hip hop, you know what I mean?
>
> - Jossette, a Latino and American female

These comments were grounded in the idea that race as a characteristic of identity that sets one individual apart from another; that race does the work of *distinguishing* someone. Essentialism suggests that race has an essence, some fixed, object thing that makes one "race" essentially different from another. The ideas Amy and Jossette express resonate with an essentialist approach to understanding race. Much of the critique on race essentialism focuses on

fixed notions of race established in biological science, i.e. skin color (Omi and Winant, 1994; Moya and Hames-Garcia, 2004). However, race as essence can be applied to other characteristics as well. Jossette, who was president of the Latin-American Club in high school, began to talk about culture as she tried to make sense of her thoughts regarding race. She based her perspective on cultural artifacts like food, dance, music and lifestyle to explain how we can distinguish between the races. In her comments, Jossette conflated and essentialized culture with/as race. This approach is problematic because it raises further questions about race and could be used as a tool to uphold racist ideas. Is an individual less Asian if s/he does not eat or cook Asian cuisine? Do dancing and Hip Hop allow us to determine if an individual is Black?

Jossette did not essentialize race with skin color as many of the other informants did. She suggested that cultures provided the difference between races. However, she went on to reinforce the sameness discourse even as she acknowledged difference.

> Ah, it doesn't distinguish them because we're all, you know, the same…But, I mean like, diversity can be, you know, it would be boring if everyone was just one thing. Like, every distinct, not distinct, but it makes you different, in a good way.

Like Amy, Jossette believed that these essences of difference are "good" and should not make people treat each other differently. The struggle to negotiate discourses of sameness on one hand and race difference that celebrates diversity on the other hand was apparent in Jossette's comment. This struggle to make sense of race as a concept without an essence but having a social function (significant or not) seemed to be the critical activity for these informants, reflecting the tension between unity among and division between groups of people. Yet, the students were aware that

constructions of race are built on skin color, geographical or national origin, tastes, culture, and customs, among other things.

In this section, I demonstrated how informants from across the racial spectrum minimized the salience of race. They employed discourses that upheld the notion of a colorblind society. These discourses included discounting the social significance of race by concealing it in the humanity of all people, viewing race as an artifact of society's past, and articulating race as a positive descriptor of cultural essence. Some students of color used similar language that White students employed in their minimization tactics, but for the purpose of neutralizing racist discourse. The informants took an individualized or personalized stance regarding the significance of race and presented sentiments of race insignificance based on their desire to project a self-image that was "colorblind," though with mixed motives. Their language reflected a discourse of post-racial desire (all informants) and present racial denial for themselves and society (especially White informants).

Minimizing race and racism is just one of the colorblind entrapments demonstrated in the discourse of my informants. In the next section, I will show how dysconscious racism, which I will define below, operated within family portraits of these informants to maintain a less visible racial hierarchy of eligible associations and relationships. The family backgrounds of these informants reinforce racism and reveal the racialized picture of the informants themselves. I will also show how racism, when internalized by people of color who claim colorblind perspectives, is contorted to meet the demands of colorblind discourse.

II. Family Portraits

In this section, I present informants' representations of racism through six sets of parents or family members as they were portrayed by the informants. These informants provided the richest data and compelling stories about their family's or parents' views about race. Their comments were in response to my question: What do you think your parents think of race? The themes that emerged from all the informants' responses are captured in the data presented here. I have chosen to use the motif of portraits- negatives and frames- to convey underlying themes about the *picture* of race, through the informants' eyes. The critical conclusions that are drawn must center on the informants themselves. While providing a snap shot of their family's views, the informants widened my view of their racial pixilation which includes their family discourses on race matters. How informants negotiate these discourses animates their own racial constructions. I assert that the informants reflect "dysconscious racism" and "internalized racism" in their family portraits (King, 1991; Watts-Jones, 2002).

King (1991) describes dysconsciousness as "uncritical habit of mind" that accepts the existing order of things or the status quo and dysconscious racism as a form of racism that "tacitly accepts dominant White norms and privileges" (p. 135). This form of racism does not mean a lack of consciousness but an uncritical identification with the social order. This kind of racism does not allow subjects to recognize injustices in the world much less to act against them. Such dysconsciousness also serves to hide beliefs that govern interpersonal dynamics from evaluation as racist, even if there are messages that counter such beliefs, i.e. colorblind ideologies.

Watts-Jones (2002) describes racism as the "institutionalized emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and social policy practices that assume and/or promote the cultural, biological, and socioeconomic superiority of people of European descent (p. 592)." Watts-Jones suggests people

of color may either actively reject racism or internalize it. Internalized racism can be described as the identification with or the incorporation of racist beliefs, white norms and Eurocentric views; as well as accepting negative messages about subjugated people in the racial hierarchy (Akbar, 1996; Fanon, 1963, 1967; Jones, 2000; Watts-Jones, 2002; Yamato, 1998). Though the term is mostly used to describe the phenomenon experienced by some people of color, racism can be internalized by Whites as well (who are commonly called "racist" when this internalization is evidenced). Internalization of white superiority for Whites suggests belief and commitments to racism as right and natural. For Whites, internalizing racism may be empowering and enjoyable. However, for people of color it leads to self-degradation, assumptive inferiority, and self-hatred. Hence the internalization of racism has different consequences for Whites and for people of color, consequences that have severe repercussions. Examples of internalized racism among people of color include engaging in risky health behaviors as a result of devaluing self-worth, attempting to look or act more white by bleaching the skin or disconnecting socially from other race/ethnic group members, or implementing "colorism"- the social stratification by gradations or skin tone (light to dark) in communities of color (Herring, 2004).

These issues are present in the family portraits outlined below and clarify my analysis of the informants' views. Negotiations of discourses, ideologies and worldviews are illuminated as a result. This demonstrates the ongoing racial formations and constructions even at the micro levels of society.

A. Friendship and Dating Frames

Here I introduce the portraits of 3 families as described by the students who reflected on friendship and dating codes in response to my inquiry about their parents' views about race. In section A, I present data from three informants (two White males and one Latina) who describe their family's or parents' view about friendships or dating relationships. Then in section B, I present data from three students of color who interrogate their family's or parents' views from a particular generational stance. Rather than a response to direct questions about friends, boyfriends, and girlfriends, these comments were offered as key pieces of evidence to (un)frame their parents/grandparents as racists. The family portraits examined here demonstrate that the U.S. American racial hierarchy dominates people's psyche in conscious and dysconscious ways that set parameters for friendship and dating relationships within family practice. "Friendship and dating frames," as themes of my study, suggest that these relationships were used to define the picture of race that these informants developed with their parents.

Don's Family-

Don's discussion of the views of his parents revealed his own views and reflected the types of social interactions that were acceptable in his White family. Race was framed in binaries and a false notion of a purity that should be protected to perpetuate the family racial portrait.

> My parents, I think, ah, that some of my parent, my, um, my family is a little bit racial but my parents, no. My parents, ah, my parents just have one request, I don't, it's not racist it's just I think they want a similarity in the family and one request was, don't bring

> a girlfriend of, um, pretty much the opposite color. Don't bring home an African-American girl. That's pretty much my mother's only request as far as race goes. She said, you can be friends with them, all kinds of races but when it comes, but, you know. I want some grandchildren who will remind me of me. So, that's what she kinda said.

Although Don described his larger family as being "a little bit racial," he juxtaposed that his parents are not so. Then he described the "one request" made by his mother to perpetuate the family's racial legacy. He continued to qualify the behaviors in his narrative with modifiers such as "it's not racist it's just," or "pretty much my mother's only request." These modifiers were all part of Don's strategy to minimize the power of his family's racism in the portrait he shared. "Don't bring home an African American girl," his mother said. I asked Don what he thought of this view. He replied that he agreed and that he did not prefer African American women so his mother "didn't really have anything to worry about." However he continued to explain a structure of preferences that reflect a system of racial and color hierarchy in his family that he tacitly accepted. Don "preferred" White women and told me that he could "possibly" date a Hispanic woman. He explained that his preference was based on "similarity."

> The majority of people I've seen in my, as growing up because, you know, you grow up at home with brothers, sisters, parents of your same, um, of your same race and so then I think you can actually develop a greater attraction to that race.

> I believe that on the majority scale, um, you don't see too much of white interaction with black when it comes to dating. Not that there's anything wrong with it but it's just not

> common but when it comes to Hispanic, ah, people from Hispanic descent they can go traditionally, tend to go either direction. I mean sort of like, like neutral, like a neutral race thing. Pretty much has never been judged of going either way.

Don attempted to present a normalized and uncritical view of "allowable" interracial dating. He tried to explain that same race attraction is based on familiarity, that he was inclined to reproduce the racial composition of his family in his dating life. Yet African Americans were the problem. Don was mystified by blackness. He claimed not to see White-Black couples as much as other interracial dating scenarios. He viewed Hispanics as a "neutral" ethnic group that is allowed to date the racial polar opposite groups: Black and White. However, Black-White interracial dating was off limits.

Before I asked Don what he thought his parents think about race, I asked what he thought. Don diminished any significance of race in his own life in terms of relationships with others.

> I think race is, I think race is an exaggerated issue at times. I think a lot of people give too much thought into it. In the end it's like, if somebody's cool they're cool. You know, who cares…

Supposedly, Don didn't care about race. However, after he shared his parents' views, which reflected his own, and I asked for other thoughts he might have about race, he said he did not have much else to offer. This talk demonstrates how Don not only exposed but shifted his family's code regarding race but also used this code of conduct to frame his parents as the ones who were more concerned with race than he was. In actuality, he used his parents' views to mediate his own

racially narcissistic ideas. Although Don demonstrated dysconsciousness about his (and his) family's racism, he sought to negotiate these ideas in the context of a society and campus program where colorblind discourse dominates political correctness. By doing so, he aimed to distance himself from racial exaggerations that are white supremacist or racist in their construction.

Jennifer's Family

Jennifer, a Latina raised in Puerto Rico, framed her mother in a different way than Don did. In Jennifer's case, her mother's views did not match her own and created problems for their relationship. However, similar to Don's parents, Jennifer's mother had clear ideas about a racial hierarchy for Jennifer's dating life.

> My mom is the only racist person in Puerto Rico I have ever met…
> And we had a lot of conflicts because of that because I'm a very open person and my ex-boyfriend was Black and yeah a little bit of conflict there. She says, she says, it's funny what she says, she says, I'm not racist but I don't want to see my daughter with a Black guy. Well what are you then? You know?

Jennifer called her mother out as a "racist person." Later in the conversation, Jennifer also shared that her mother is "open" with Black men in friendships but when it comes to romantic relationships, "she doesn't let it pass." This was a similar stance that Don and his parents took, permitting interracial friendships but placing clear limits on sexual or romantic interactions. As a Latina, Jennifer's mother adopted racial ideologies and discourses that she utilized to set social parameters for herself and her daughter. Noted below is a thread of the conversation that

demonstrates the recurring theme of racial hierarchy and colorism that is present in the Latino community.

I asked: *How does your mom feel about that, if you were to have a white boyfriend?*

> She'd be great with it. The first thing, it's weird, the first thing she asked me when, before I had my boyfriend well I'm going out with this guy. The first question she would ask me is, is he White, is he Black, is his, is his hair? 'Cause in Puerto Rico we say bad or good. Is his hair bad?

But what kind of hair would be bad?

> Like her definition, like straight hair would be good and like curly hair would be bad. Like that, bad hair good hair.

This theme of "good" and "bad" hair is an old recurring trope among people of African descent and racial/ethnic groups that serves as identity marker, status and race identity politics. A Latina's rejection of curly hair as "bad" demonstrates a rejection of Black or African connections and preference for White. These comments only affirm a hierarchy and normalcy of White superiority in notions of beauty. Jennifer's mother even displayed a racial aesthetic phobia in the choosing of a dating mate for her daughter and herself. Jennifer's mother's issues reflected an internalization of racism, which Jennifer rejected.

Geoff's Family-

Finally, Geoff discussed the dynamics of his family around racial themes, including his White grandfather's and mother's responses to his Black and Hispanic friends, as well as his grandfather's relationship with Geoff's Jewish father. In this case, we find that although he recognized the racialized frames in which his grandfather operated, Geoff retreated from challenging his grandfather on his angles of racism. Further, Geoff resisted calling his family members racist and used more neutralizing terms that helped him negotiate all the relationships he wished to maintain.

> My mom, though, who's influenced a lot from my grandfather, who's 93 who she basically, yeah her father. Who she basically nurses, he's so conservative it hurts. Like I have, I went, I'll bring, ah, I'll have a few friends over, black and Hispanic whatever and he'll say to my mom, which my mom will relay back to me, that I had some thugs over to the house…

Geoff chose to characterize his grandfather's stereotypical criminalization of his Black and Hispanic friends as "conservative." He went on to provide a specific example of another interaction between his grandfather and one of his friends where his friend was stereotyped again. His example demonstrated his grandfather's commitment to seeing young people of color in a particular way, framing them as people of the streets- gangsters and thugs.

> If I'm not at the house and my friends, this actually happened, this one friend of mine, ah, he is Columbian. He came over to my house in a pair of jeans, like a big jersey, like a

> throwback jersey, you know, style and a, um, and a baseball cap on. I come home like 5 hours later, he was told that I wasn't there. My grandfather who lives with us, he, um, he told 'em I wasn't there but I come home and my mom says, your grandfather told me that a gangster came over here looking for you and I'm like, and that's no shit, like. (laughs) First of all I don't know any gangsters and secondly, how, when I do find out, when I did find out who it was he was talking about when I realized it was my friend Todd. I said, how can you generalize my friends especially him who, who of all people is not like closest to the streets of all the people I know. How are you gonna call him a gangster? Like, he just came here looking for me. I called up Todd, what did you ask, what did you say when you came to the door? He said, I just asked if Geoff was there. Because he, he was intimated when my grandfather was at the door. An old white man, like, I'm not sure, I'm not trying to make it a race thing but my friend from Columbia from Queens comes into the city walking in the neighborhood where I live coming into the apartment where I live, having the door opened by an old white man is not the most welcoming thing. So, I was like, I went back to my mom and I said, you have to tell him something. You have to tell him not to, not to generalize people like that, like that's not. He's not a gangster, he has no reason for him to think he was a gangster. He didn't ask for any money, didn't have a gun in his pocket he didn't do anything. He just, he was not trying to do anything but find where I was.

Geoff described how the grandfather stereotyped his friend as a street thug without reason (except racism). Geoff shared that most of his friends are Black and Hispanic (or Latino). Therefore, his mother had to be exposed to them as Geoff participated in a variety of activities with his friends.

After one of his spring break trips with his friends, his mother actually thanked him "for letting me see what they're really like." However, Geoff's grandfather's "conservative" and racist thinking seemed to be well internalized.

> I don't know what my mom thinks anymore, I mean after that, whatever. (laughs) It's, it's really, it's not brought up too much ever at all. But I know that my grandfather, he, old-fashioned as hell, he's 93, old-fashion as hell. He, ah, very conservative. All he cares about is White, Christian, straight people, that's about it and I just don't know where my mom is. (laughs) She'll sway back and forth, sometimes she'll agree with him sometimes she'll agree with the rest of the world. She's a White, Christian…

Geoff painted his grandfather in interlocking frames that suggest a narrow view on race, religion and sexuality. It seemed Geoff's mother shared similar views. The grandfather was "old-fashioned" and "conservative"—coded language for a man who maintains old explicitly racist ideas that he vocalizes. Geoff is unable to admit this, however. Geoff's mother was influenced by the ideologies represented by her father and embodied in her person as a White Christian woman. This is especially important to Geoff's family experience when we consider that his father, the man his mother was once married to, is a Jewish man. I picked up on this and encouraged him to say more.

> Yeah that came up, well my parents are separated for reasons relating to my grandfather and again my grandfather. My mom takes a lot from my grandfather, meaning she takes a lot of his views… she's very easy to manipulate. I remember the almost like the last time

> I really saw my mom and dad really together in an official marriage she says, she called him a kike. I found out two years ago, they've been separated for like 8 years. I've had like two, 12, 10, years, I find out two years ago that my grandfather, my mom's dad wrote my father a letter back like 15, no. Like, a couple of decades ago, it was when they first got married or whatever and he told me the contents of this letter which were ridiculous. He said, um, you're marrying her, okay that's cool. I just want you to know that I don't like it and I said, he would come over, he'd come over for my, my father would go over, we all go over to my grandfather's house, Christmas, like, whatever. My grandfather would just basically slight him supposedly. He would say things like really nasty stuff there in front of everybody in my mom's family almost making him a scene, making him, like. You might as well put him in the, um, a ___ ___ like in the street having his head in arms locked up, tomatoes thrown at him and stuff like that. He was making him a public mockery…

Geoff's comments provided a clear sense of how these views have been shared within the family and their impact on the current family structure—of major consequence to Geoff. He had been witness to racial epithets shared between members of his family. Race and racism had been present in the family's history and exhibited at family gatherings. His grandfather was actively anti-semitic toward his father and made a spectacle of him before the family. Geoff's response and awareness demonstrated his retreat from confronting all that his grandfather especially represented. He would not take a stand for his father or his friends, while he framed his grandfather's old-fashioned, "conservative" views as persistent, permanent, and perhaps too strong to do anything about. These perpetually racist views were in the fabric of his family structure, like

it is in our nation's history; and perhaps the best way he thought he could handle it was to negotiate his postmodern and liberal ideas around them.

> He was making him a public mockery and like, whatever I don't, I don't think that. I don't believe in "an enemy of a friend is an enemy" and all that stuff. An enemy of me is an enemy, a friend of mine is a friend, that's all it is. So, I, I just, I let go but I think about it and I just realize that people, people are gonna be the way they are. (laughs) And that I just react to it, I'm not, I've learned not to let my grandfather see the friends that I bring over sometimes. I'll say to my friends, run into my room, don't let him see you basically and. But as far as my mom and my dad, my dad it's again like race, it's a non-issue like it doesn't matter to him so much. It's just my grandfather.

By framing his grandfather as the only person with an issue, Geoff absolved himself and others of any responsibility in the manifestation of racism. The cost to his friends or his father was not measured in any way. Geoff was dysconscious about the injustices his father continues to suffer. He denied complicity and collusion. The issue was not named, but excused. Although it may have been difficult to negotiate the dynamics of family relations, Geoff took a passive position in all the stories he shared. Families create environments for children and youth that are difficult to challenge. Although Geoff expresses some disdain for the racism that his grandfather sometimes demonstrated, he was unable to confront him directly without compromise in some way. He settled it with "People are gonna be the way they are." Therefore, when his friends came to visit, Geoff hid them from his grandfather. Seemingly, Geoff protected his friends from the grandfather. Or perhaps he protected his grandfather's emotional stability from his friends. Yet

another possibility is that Geoff protected himself from the work of uncovering *and* dismantling the racism within his family's psyche and micro-interactions with others.

B. Negatives

"Racism is a principle of social domination in which a group that is seen as inferior or different because of presumed biological or cultural characteristics is oppressed, controlled, and exploited- socially, economically, culturally, politically, psychologically- by a dominant group." - William Julius Wilson

It is important that I revisit the definitions of racism that I utilize for this dissertation to properly articulate the concept I introduce in this section. Racism as a principle of domination underscores the element of power that provides the context for relationships and shared understanding of race. This important element of power does not find a place in the families portrayed in the following pieces. However, the internalization of some aspects of racism is manifested in the stories that are told. These students provide insight into their understanding of race and racism as they reflect on the views of race they believe their families hold.

In photography, "negatives" are those film strips that capture the image in color reversal, making light images appear dark and dark areas appear light. I use this concept of the negative to explore the family views as represented by the informants in this section and to provide a sense of the skewed comprehension of racism and prejudice by students of color. I take a brief look at the picture of racial discourse portrayed by the families of three African American informants--Clayton, Leslie and Natasha. As I explore the views of their parents, grandparents or other family members, I work to show the ways that generations experience and interpret race and its racism differently.

Clayton's Family –

Clayton discussed his parents' views about race, locating their views geographically and temporally. While time and place were reflected in ideas about race for his parents' generation, Clayton did not use these elements to let them off the hook but continued to question their perspective on the matter.

> Well, okay, like my mom is like, not my mom, but family, 'cause the family thing seeing that they're from the south, they experienced race, racism is deep in the south. And so, you know… they will say, oh, that's a Black man or a White man, you know, they see their face. They see difference.

Clayton seemed to understand that his family holds a perspective that differs from his based on their experience with race and racism in a region of the country that has a history of overt discrimination during the 1950's and 1960's. Clayton captured the particular brand of southern racism as "deep." Clayton's comment that his family *sees* the faces of Black and White people and sees the difference made a statement about his aspiration *not to see* race. He had been impacted to some extent by colorblind discourses. However, I still wanted to understand more clearly what he meant by seeing difference and more about his parents' view of race and how it has influenced or shaped his ideas in some way. The following excerpts of the conversation will explain with greater accuracy just what Clayton meant.

> [My family] knows what race is and it does play a part in their judgments of people. It does. That's what I mean by they recognize what race is and they know what race is. Ah,

there's… That's a White person, a Black person, a Japanese person. You know? They will recognize it, they don't just see it as a person.

Is that different from how you see race?

Is that different from what I see? Yes, the simple fact is I'm re-educating myself not to see race. I'm trying to change myself not to see that, that's just a white person so I'm expected to be at this level and they need to be here. You know? Or that's a Black person, expected to be down here or, you know… still typical thing about race.

Clayton's family saw race by their application of racial ideas, judgments, and discourses to those raced persons they saw. Clayton did not simply wish to ignore race, but he wished not to internalize the dominant messages that accompanied the racial hierarchy in this country—messages that placed him in an inferior position. In contrast to his family, Clayton wanted to see race without seeing racial status or associating people with racist ideas of who they are and the kind of life they lead. He wanted to disentangle race from racist views. He explained further…

Well sometimes like, you know, sometimes my mom will see, not my mom, my parents, my family would see, you know, a typical Black person and say well "Maybe he's a thug" or something like that. Or they see a certain White person and say "Maybe he's a businessman" or something like that. And I said, what does that mean? I mean, what is that, and I'm trying to re-educate myself. No, that's not White, they could be opposite,

> you never know. So I'm trying to re-educate myself and sometimes my mom will see that but most of the time, you know, she sees other things…

Clayton clarified that his family does not simply make judgments about different racial groups, but that their judgments are reflections of a racial ideological structure. More than stereotypes of racial groups, Clayton's family members adopted binaries of good vs. bad or successful vs. failing or superior vs. inferior. These values are aligned with a system of white supremacy and racism. Clayton's family members have internalized racism and Clayton desired to break away from that kind of thinking that reflected an internalization of racial discourses which maintain the status quo. This self "re-education" was about seeing others and himself in ways that were free of unfair and inaccurate expectations. Clayton went on to explain that he had many eye opening experiences that helped him to reevaluate some of his thoughts about race.

Leslie's Parents-

"Sometimes they are racists." Leslie portrayed his parents as similar to other people who describe their experiences in racialized ways and who are in fact "racists" from his view. What did this mean for Leslie, an African American and Asian male, to state that his parents are racists?

> Well, for them they're the ones who taught me that everybody is different. Like, sometimes they, they are racists like they'll say like. They'll say little things like don't chill with these Black kids, they're bad influences and stuff. But, I know where they're

> coming from ‘cause I’ve seen like some of these kids join gangs and stuff like that so I see where they’re coming from but like they’re just like everybody else kinda if like they still make those stereotypical comments and stuff, but, I understand it’s from experience.

Leslie both accused his parents then excused them when he said that some of the kids that his parents warned him to stay away from actually behaved in ways his parents were concerned about. However, it seemed that either prejudgment or the simple acknowledgement of race was “racist” for Leslie. I wanted to understand more about these judgments, so I asked: “Who do they make those stereotypical judgments about?”

> Like Jews. Like my father he works in the supermarket with Italians and stuff and they promote all the Italians even though they’re not like proficient in the knowledge of their jobs, they’ll promote them ahead of them….So, sometimes we make stereotypical comments like, “Italians they stick together.” And it’s just from experience. It’s not like he’s saying it out of nowhere. He’s actually experienced this racism so sometimes like my father he’ll make some racist comments. My mom, she’ll tell people like stuff like “Germans, they’re, they’re hateful people but they pay well” ‘cause she works with, for them as, ah. She’s worked for them as a nurse’s assistant. So, she’s worked for a couple of Germans and she worked for lots of different people and she’s telling me like this group of people are nice to us while those groups of people aren’t as nice to us kind of thing. So, you pick up on it sometimes.

As Leslie's parents shared their interpretations of negative and positive interactions with different races of people that they worked for or with, they presented ideas in ways that Leslie interpreted as generalizations that suggested whole groups of people were a particular way. Leslie recognized the personal experiences of his parents while resisting the temptation to generalize these experiences as expectations he should have for any particular group. Interestingly, he at once acknowledged that his parents experienced racism and he denied the conclusions they drew as a result. Leslie sees them as racists.

It seemed that neither Leslie's parents nor Leslie had the vocabulary to clearly describe being victimized by racism and responding to that victimization without being viewed as perpetuating racism themselves. As subjects in a society where colorblind discourse is dominant, this family had not yet figured out how to talk about the reality of racism in the parents' experience, the relevant and similar experiences that Leslie could potentially encounter, the reality of contemporary racist manifestations, and the possibility of progressive change. Leslie did not use the term "prejudice" to describe his parents' responses to their experiences. Leslie did not understand or consider the reality of some group's historical and perpetual power (by their identification with whiteness) to oppress other groups in contemporary society. He viewed racism as an activity that everyone could equally participate in, yielding the same consequences (the Crash-syndrome). Yet, he demonstrated commitment to resisting stereotypes and generalizations that he heard from his parents. As a post-Civil Rights era student of color in the color-blind era, Leslie is not sure how to interpret race or racism. Colorblind discourse suggests to him that everyone, including his parents, has fair opportunity to be racist even by simply acknowledging race or racism.

Natasha's Grandparents-

Natasha did not call her grandparents racists. However, she presented their views as markedly different from hers. Similarly to Clayton's assessment of the importance of history, Natasha placed the views of her grandparents in the context of Jim Crow racism that dramatically shaped their lives.

> Since I grew up around my grandparents you couldn't really take in what they said because of the time that they grew up in. You know they saw things differently from how somebody my age or somebody your age or you know, old enough to be my parent, which is like a second generation compared to my grandparents. We'll dig up things that are totally different because they grew up probably around the time of slavery they see things differently (chuckle). So they still on that type…they still on that aspect of blaming the person that is White for their downfalls and stuff like that. But, how I see things you can't blame anybody else for what you can't achieve right now cause right now, you know, it's still some racism going on out there, but we still have opportunities to make ourselves successful just as well as anybody of a different race. White doesn't really matter. But they still on, you know. But they're still on [the idea that] you know, the White person got it and I didn't because they're White and this and that. And the reason they're raising our taxes is because we're Black and stuff like that. So it's like you got the wealthy…White people still seem to be the wealthy ones, so you know, they're still blaming White people for a lot of things that I don't think that that's what it is right now.

Natasha described the age of her grandparents with some humor, as they were not over a century old to have experienced slavery. However, she created a picture with her words that portrayed her grandparents' views as old, even archaic. Yet she seemed to respect her grandparents' views that "blame" Whites for barring their achievement in the past while challenging that such a view could not be true today because there are greater opportunities now. She invoked the discourse of individualism. Natasha spoke as a post Civil Rights generation member who believes she has access to new opportunities that were not available to her grandparents. However, she did not analyze the current state of racism, although she admitted to its existence and impact on her generation later in our discussion. Natasha mentioned White wealth but seemed not to understand that wealth translates to economic and social power. Neither did she understand the consequences of White economic entitlements and maintenance to other people. Like Leslie, Natasha is ambivalent about race and racism today. By contrasting her experience to that of her grandparents, Natasha attempts to position herself as more racially responsible and better able to succeed on her own merits as an African American woman.

The family portraits that we have just explored illustrate how "colorblind" students reproduce, resist, reinterpret, and reflect their family's thoughts and ways about race. The constructions they made of family—whether "good" or "bad"—are within the context of colorblind discourse. This discourse guides how students frame family members as "racist" or "racial" or not; and serves as the catalyst for casting themselves as choosing the more enlightened or progressive way. Black students especially attempted to accommodate the reality of a particular kind of racism that shaped the lives of their parents and grandparents in their own narratives. However, past challenges or even current challenges of their parents are interpreted

through the lens of a "new day," when racism is not how it was. Race is different, they say. Part of the difference is the lens of interpretation. This younger generation of Black people is *hopeful* for a post-racial society that moves race from the center to the periphery of their experience. Colorblindness is the discourse of the day. Its impact reaches every ethnicity within the borders of the United States. The silent claim all these informants make is that they do not think of race in the old and barbarous ways of their parents or the rest of the world. Hence, students wrestled with identity scripts and development of a racialized self within a society that has a racial power structure that it denies with its racial ideologies.

III. Wrestling with Whiteness, Asian Ambivalence, Black Reconnaissance

Homes, Safe houses and Host bodies

In this section, I explore how some informants negotiated identity in their discussions about race. I demonstrate how students from different race locations position themselves to embrace, reconstruct, criticize, or suspend identity. By this I mean that these informants vacillate between a self-determined racial identity, connected to and distanced from historical and collective identities, or resistant to perceived parameters, or fixed racial definitions. In so doing, these students helped to articulate a postmodern theory of Blackness, Whiteness, Asian-ness that illustrated contemporary struggles of race formation within a colorblind society. Each subsection will explore these identities and communities as they were approached by informants and the

definitions/theories they articulate. I highlight the theme of *homes, safe houses, and host bodies* derived from the informants' own language to elucidate the students' personal negotiations of race politics. Racial identity offers a "home" or "safe house" for some, while exiling others to a foreign body. Home is the central place and argument that suspends or reformulates racial identity for others. The complicated nature of identity and politics in the racially structured identity is revealed.

White. It is usually unnamed in discussions about race and left in silent dominance as the normative element by which Others are marked. Frankenberg (1993) argues that whiteness has three linked dimensions: a location of structural advantage or race privilege, a standpoint from which Whites look at themselves and the world, and a set of usually unmarked or unnamed cultural practices. Whiteness is also property in the traditional sense as something to which value can be attached and that provides rights to its owner; and in the modern sense as a host of intangibles that define social relations (Harris, 1993). Hence, whiteness once determined one's legal status as a free person or slave. Today, whiteness is accompanied by a set of expectations or privileges for those who own it. Further, white privilege, as a bi-product of the advantages of white supremacy, reproduces black subordination.

The white "standpoint" or worldview is often not accounted for by Whites themselves. They do not acknowledge seeing or projecting a white perspective. Studies have demonstrated that White subjects struggle to find an ethnicity except to claim "American" (Phinney, 1989). They simply claim their perspective as *what is*, normalizing their view as the natural state of all things. Ironically, this white supremacist perspective often leads to difficulty for Whites to claim a racial identity.

In the following subsection (A), I focus on two informants— Wilson, a Chemical Engineering major from New Jersey and Angela, a Communications and Rhetorical Studies major from Long Island, NY-- who present perspectives that highlight tensions in racial discourses. They talk about race in ways that push against the borders of whiteness while reifying whiteness and racism. In both cases, identity is an important element in my analysis of the data and the critical messages about race that they reflect. They demonstrate that some students take a self-determined approach to the concept of race, seeking to create their own definitions, and thereby illuminating how one is raced and their resistance to it. That is, they do not necessarily embrace the common (non)sense of race that would identify them as White students. Rather, these students present fragmented, anti-essentialist, and rearticulated notions of racialized identities. In part, they take a postmodernist approach to race that denies social location and power. On the other hand, they reify whiteness with denials of it.

A.

1. White Resistance- Homes and Safe Houses

The Color of Fear (1995) was produced by Lee Mun Wah and records a focus group of racially and culturally diverse men as they discuss their fears about racism and other forms of oppression. Wilson, a White male, Chemical Engineering major from New Jersey, shared his thoughts about the importance of holding on to identity as a “home” or “safe house” after he was exposed to the documentary film *The Color of Fear* in one of his Pre-First courses. I find it

necessary to place most of the relevant portion of the conversation here without any breaks to demonstrate Wilson's standpoint in his discursive construction.

How do you identify yourself racially?

> Uhhhm. How? I mean, after watching the "Color of Fear," I've always first said I was American. But after watching that you realize American is too much associated with white, and how, I mean as horrible as it sounds, it's true, you know. When anyone says they're American everyone first thinks white. So I don't know. I mean my dad was Ger, was Austrian. My mom who is European, she's part Polish with Latvia. So, I mean if you wanna ask, that's where I come from, but I'm not really sure now where I'd actually verbally state I am…

But if you were to say that you were a race, what race would

> I'd have to say I was American. I was born in America, that's my, I mean I can say I'm mostly German so I could say I'm German, but. I mean, nowadays, I mean I don't think it's as separated as it was in the past. So nowadays there's so many people that are different things, you really can't classify yourself as one race, one being, because I mean you've lived in America your whole life, in the United States your whole life, you've adopted that culture. That's part of your culture as well as what you come from. So…

So, if we were both born in the United States and lived in the United States for our entire lives, would we be the same race?

No because you carry identities from the past as well. And I carry identities from the past as well. We share a common, like, do you wanna think of it like a Venn diagram. I mean I think that's the perfect, the two circles are there the middle is shared, there's one shared section. But you can't look at a person and say I'm the same as you. Because it's, part of me is the same as part of you. I mean, we have things in common but you can't say that, I don't think you can really say that anyone here is the same. Cuz there's much movement that's going on in the world.

What do you think about race?

I used to think that it caused boundary lines between people. But after watching the film and thinking about it a little more and, having to separate myself from where I grew up to a new area and a new environment and mixing with everyone, I think actually it's kinda good to hold on to them. I mean I've always thought why can't everyone just say they're American if that's what you are. But, that's saying that everyone should act the same and everyone, that's almost forming a utopia. But I think when you acknowledge what you, if you're. If you feel you're strongly one race over another, and that's what you express. Or if you're gonna express all of them, it kina sets you up as an individual, as one person working in one unit. So I think it actually helps us because we're not really a melting pot per se, because everyone still has their identities. So I think it more identifies yourself as,

> it almost gives you a home. It gives you all your homes. You feel like, it's almost like a safe house that you wanna go back to. If you wanna call America your safe house. You're in one. If you wanna travel somewhere else, you can go to another safe house.

Wilson speaks from his social location as a White American male. He admits that he used to think that race created boundaries between people, but he is saying more specifically that he used to think that acknowledging *other* races than White created boundaries. He says, "I mean I've always thought why can't everyone just say they're American if that's what you are." Wilson does not consider the fact that many people of color claim their American national identity and distinguish that from their racial/ethnic identity, while others do not view their nation and race in a disconnect or distinct way. In his earlier comment Wilson also shared that he understood from the *Color of Fear* that the term "American," for many people, is associated automatically with "White."

> … When anyone says they're American everyone first thinks white…

Yet, Wilson refuses to say that he is White and that there is a difference in terms of race identity between him and me (Black). But Wilson seems to be in a new phase of awareness about race. He codes his need to maintain an identity niche, while sustaining connections to a shared identity, in this case nationality – "American." This would be the "home" that he speaks about. However, he resists naming his whiteness and still suggests that race itself be hidden in nationality. For Wilson, nationality serves as refuge, a "safe house," for normative whiteness not to be acknowledged. See my next question and his answer below:

So for you, your safe house is?

> My biggest safe house would be the United States. Another safe house of mine would be if I wanted to go to Austria and look at it. Another one would be if I wanted to go to Poland and look at it…

To be sure I understood Wilson correctly, that his listing of countries was indeed connected to his idea of the "safe house" as metaphor and not geography, I asked:

So you think race is determined by where you live, where you're from?

> I think race is determined by the individual who specifies it. I mean, it's the individual's views of what, of what they are, who they are. You can't just, I don't think you can classify race as anything. It's one of those things that's just up in the air and, how you wanna view it is totally different than how I wanna view it, I think.

Wilson found refuge in postmodern thinking about race—erasing differences and dismissing varied experiences based on social location—but with white supremacist reinscription. He suggested that race could be constructed in whichever way an individual chose. However, this is an especially advantageous ideological position for a White male to hold. Precisely because whiteness is the dominant and normative racial identity in the United States, other bodies are inescapably racialized. Wilson's "safe house" is a strategy of white denial (see Chapter 5). This

idea of a self-determined racial identity was not unique to Wilson, however. Several students suggested this philosophy of race determination in their discussions. Some stated this idea explicitly as Wilson did and others made it implicit. Angela's story suggested self-determinacy implicitly as she describes race as something more than appearance.

2. White Resistance- Host Bodies

Angela is a White female Communications and Rhetorical Studies major and a member of the lacrosse team from Long Island, NY, where she attended a predominantly White high school. She describes the demographics of the school as 60/40, with Whites dominating and then mostly Blacks (25%), Asians (10%), and Hispanics (5%) making up the other forty percent. Angela resisted her whiteness by constructing its (in)significance as deceptive skin covering. She did not re-conceptualize whiteness, but suggested that she did not meet the standards of white identity as she understood it. When I asked Angela about the diversity represented in the Pre-First Program, she made a quip about there being "a whoooole lot more white people" during her official campus visit some months before. She then went on to say:

> And I'm the type a kid who doesn't hang out with the white people. I hang out with the Black people…So I like it here. Cause basically, I consider myself Black under White skin. No, seriously, because that's who I hung out with when I was in high school, cause I relate to them better than I relate to the White people.

Angela is a visibly White female with blond hair and blue eyes. Her self-identified "Black under White skin" was stunning to hear initially. But what did she mean? Was this simply an issue of

social comfort from her high school years? Had she applied the proverbial "Birds of a feather flock together" statement to race? What does it mean for a White girl to be Black? She continued…

> Because the white people were always stuck up on like "do-you-have-the-latest-bag or the latest clothes." Black people are just like…real. They don't care what you have or don't have.

Angela generalized Whites and Blacks, as she reflected on her own experience in high school. However, she described a clear association of race with class and related values. Further, she identified with Blacks because she wasn't scrutinized (at least not for fashion) by those Black youth she knew in high school, as she was by Whites. At Pre-First, Angela said her closest friends were Black, although she "talks" to everybody. I asked her to say more about what she meant by this identity she embraces.

> Basically that like my ways of viewing people and viewing situations is [sic] habits Black people use to view them. Um, this school, they weren't as motivated as the white people. But like with materialistic things they didn't care what they had, as long as they had like clothes on their backs, food, and sleep in everyday. They didn't need a car because they had bus transportation. They don't need like the newest type of fad or the newest like outfit out there.

Angela believed that she sees the world as Black people do, shares Black perspective and values that were not fixated on consumerism. As she continued to talk, her ideas become more problematic. When I asked her to recall the first time she started to consider herself or say that she was "Black," she recalled that she started to think of her blackness when she started to rebel by talking back to teachers or "giving trouble." Angela equated rebelliousness with being Black. She associated negative behaviors- missing class and talking back to teachers- with acting Black. For her, giving trouble is "Black." These ideas are problematic, as they are ascribed stereotypes and pathological discourses about Blacks in schools. Angela appropriated and performed stereotypes of Blackness. When I asked how her only sibling, a brother seven years her senior, relates to her, she responded-

> I don't know. Because I used to dress like with big baggy sweatshirts and big baggy jeans and like a matching t-shirt to match my shoes and like a hat, and like a ah bandana or like a head band. And he'd be like "why do you look like a thug" (she gives a goofy sounding voice) or like "why do you dress like that, why can't you dress like a girl?"

So, how did you respond to that?

> I'm just like this is who I am. This is how I relate to people. I'm not gonna like stop and pretend I'm something I'm not.

Performing some aspect of blackness provides a privilege to Angela. She is able to relate to people, certain people, through her behavior and ways of representing herself (clothing). The

clothing she describes can be either artifacts of Hip Hop lifestyle in popular culture, street "thug" culture, or masculinity. Her brother's use of the term "thug" is not necessarily criminal, but gendered- "why can't you dress like a girl." At the time of our interview, Angela wore a large t-shirt, athletic shorts, and sneakers.

When I asked Angela directly about her thoughts regarding race, she invoked the theme of sameness. However, she went on to reinforce performance or acting as the critical marker of race identity.

> I think everybody's the same. It's just that there's black and white skin. And everybody has the same red blood. Everybody has the same heart, feels the same thing. Everybody has two feet, or most people have two feet, two hands, arms. We all breath the same air…

So, as you believe everyone is the same, then how do you make sense of being a blonde blue eyed lighter skinned, according to you 'Black' person?

> Cause none of my friends had cornrows and …. It's how you act, it's not how you look…Um, physically, like how you represent yourself. … And the people who live in my town, well, the town that I live in is predominantly white. But the people in my school were made up with like a lot of Black kids… So um, like the neighborhood that I live in, people, they dress like, live with their money, act with their money. It's like they use everything, and that's like who they are is like determined by their money. Me on the

other hand, I act how I wanna act, -----people who understand me. I don't care what you have or don't have.

Angela underscored the point that representation is more than what one wears, but how one acts, what one does. Again, Angela associated Whiteness with materialism and money. Blackness was liberating for her, giving her the freedom to act however she wanted without concern for people's material possessions. Angela was committed to the idea that the external is insignificant, whether it was a body or other material. Angela viewed her body as host of a different racial self than what her biological traits suggested. She contended that her ways of thinking, behaving, and her clothing expressed blackness, as opposed to the whiteness she saw demonstrated around her by others with similar bodies in white skin. However, Angela also relies on the very skin privilege she denies in order to represent herself as Black. She denies the power she embodies and exudes in her own skin that pronounces her "black" performance.

B. Asian/Asian American Ambivalence—Finding Home

Amy's clarification of what it means that race is "something that identifies people, not the other way around" is in clear contradiction to Angela's notion self-determined racial identity within whatever host body one occupies. Further, Amy's explanation may help to illuminate how the "safe house" and "host body" concepts contradict what it means to have an identity of origin that one claims, although both concepts highlight Angela and Wilson's resistance of whiteness.

So when you say that race should be something that identifies people, what do you mean?

> As a person, as a heritage, as the culture. That's what it should be. It should not be I am Chinese, but I like, for example, Italian: I embrace that culture, I act like that culture, and you, know, and I want to be in that culture. No, I think you keep your own origins intact. I think you should keep some respect for it because that is something that is passed down to you.

Amy, an Asian American woman, sees a certain respectability and responsibility to owning one's origins. This idea is aligned with Wilson's first phrase about race as a home when he says that race "actually helps us because we're not really a melting pot per se, because everyone still has their identities. So I think it more identifies yourself as, it almost gives you a home." Though Amy conflates race with culture here, she is clear about the notion of respecting one's own race as home. Amy seems to advocate "visiting" or sharing different homes, but carrying an essence of identity with you.

> I don't mind, you should open up to other cultures, but you should also keep your own. It's just I think it's an identity. It's part of your identity. So it's like some people want to run away from it because there are problem like racism and all that stuff, but I think you should be prideful even if there are other people that don't like or think a certain way.

Amy and Choon-yei, a Korean student, discussed their perspectives about race, their cultures, and the American viewpoint that suggested they were wrestling with notions of "home" and attempting to locate themselves intra- and inter- racially. This important struggle to locate themselves within the U.S. American matrix of race and race relations was centered on their

orientation to "home," the translocation of home, and how they expressed home as a point of origin. Specifically, both women had to negotiate their identities around their place of birth—in an Asian nation or in the United States. The importance of nativity for Asian Americans emerges from and is complicated by the fact that they are racialized as "unassimilable foreigners" (Pyke & Dang, 2003). In attempts to receive acceptance from the dominant culture, Asian Americans may engage in expressions and behaviors against their coethnics to deflect stigma, a process referred to as "defensive othering" (Osajima, 1993; Schwalbe, Godwin, Holden, & Schrock, 2000).

One way that defensive othering is expressed is through language, specifically name calling or categorizing. Amy explains "FOB" (Fresh Off the Boat) and "ABC" (American Born Chinese) as terms that are used intra-ethnically among Chinese Americans and Asian Americans. Asian Americans' use these phrases as defensive othering.

> Ok, with Chinese people there's this little acronym thing that goes um one's 'ABC' which is 'American Born Ching' or 'Chinese,' Ching for slang. And then there's another one that's 'FOB' which is 'Fresh off the Boat.' And within the two they have different ways they approach people, the way they act. Because 'ABC' (couldn't understand) would be, you know, the general population where you were born here and you would hang with people who were like cool you know pool buddies, ping pong buddies, more into the techno and rap, a little bit of rap, and um pop music…like the stereotypical response… And plus we are considered disrespectful by it. …and then there's the immigrant group where they are very silent, they are very personal. They…have you noticed some people, sometimes people especially they're just very, very shy. They don't like to talk to people unless they're introduced. Because in China, that's how you

> meet people. You don't jump into a conversation like I do, but…and they have a lot of respect for a lot of things like nature, people, so on so forth.

Amy provided an overview of the stereotypical sub-groups of Chinese and Chinese American people. Chinese people (who were born in China) are assumed to have traditional cultural qualities, as a generalization. In contrast American-born Chinese and other Asian Americans have other "American" qualities, including disrespect for their traditional cultural ways and lack of discipline, attached to them as generalizations. Amy discussed how she negotiated these intra-ethnic categories.

> I'm like a fusion of both. Like I have a lot of respect [for people] but meanwhile I'm very open with a lot of people, so yea. And then, cause people they…yea I got asked the other day by one of the immigrants…she's and immigrant, but she's been here for years, like 3 years, 5 years I think. And she's like, "Are you, ya know, like an immigrant or are you like from here?" And I said from here. "Oh, that's interesting." Cause, and I'm like what do you mean it's interesting. She's like, "You got a lot more respect and self discipline for your own work, you know like your own priorities more than ABC's." I was working. I don't know, I guess I don't fit the category. I don't seem to fit any category, but I don't mind not fitting into category, so…

Amy expressed feeling confident about her identity although she felt that she did not fit into the bifurcated categories that were presented to her. She was a fusion of both and a separation from

both. Choon-yei, who was born in Korea and lived in the United States for three years prior to Pre-First, described her sense of what the American-born Asian American person experiences.

> Um, I have some friends who [are] born in America but they're Asians. I kinda saw them going through like harsh times because umm I heard that they have more friends who were white when they were young. Then as they grew up, they just stick around, like, Asian people. I don't know because I never been in that situation. But I think they are having hard time identifying themselves because some of their friends are from Asia and they are bilingual but they're more fluent in their language. They are American but like how they look is Asian, and the kinda culture they have is Asian because of their parents. So I think they are [having a] really hard time identifying who they are. Because for me, I'm born in Korea, my parents are Korean, I just came here to study. So, I'm not American. I could just Oh I'm Korean, but for them, probably they call themselves Asian American I'd say. But probably nobody calls them that. They just call them Asian.

Choon-yei described the challenges she saw her U.S. American-born friends facing as they negotiated their identity within the Asian/Asian American collective. Choon-yei's American-born friends must negotiate birthplace, language fluency, and the U.S. American schema of race that is ambivalent toward them. Choon-yei appropriately noted that her friends are viewed by many U.S. Americans as not having a home here. American-born Asians struggle with a dilemma of identity, not being American enough or Asian enough by traditional standards of their culture. Meanwhile some Asian immigrants are ambivalent about seeing American-born Asians as ethnic equals. Further, intra-racial conflict and confusion exist because Asians/Asian Americans must fit within

an American schema of race, even if it doesn't make sense to them. Choon-yei shared a few experiences that demonstrated to her and to me that race was complicated and illogical in many ways. One story she told was about a visit to one of her professor's office hours to get an explanation of "minority" and "majority."

> And basically what he said was they just consider minority [in terms of the various race] populations in the world. But, you know, I kinda disagree with that because there are a lot of Black people in Africa too. I don't know how many, like what's the ratio of Black and White and Asian. But, so when they say minority they combine Black and Asian people. So I was thinking, you know there can be more of Black and Asian people so they should call us majority. But in America they are called minority. So I just didn't understand….

Choon-yei attempted to understand U.S. American language around race and how educators could explain these ideas and conceptions. For example, one of Choon-yei's professors attempted to explain "minority" in terms of the number of people associated with the group globally. However, Choon-yei didn't find this explanation to be satisfactory. With these explanations, she sought to find a place within the discussion and to locate her own experiences as an "Asian American" subject. She soon discovered that her experiences would not be quickly acknowledged by other racial subjects, even in academic environments.

> And then in my writing class they also talked about race but I was the only Asian in there and there's not many Asians in Pre-First but I kinda felt like when they say race they

think it's White versus Black. Then there's Asians, so I'm like "Ok, then, where do I belong?"

The Asian/Asian American experience is further marginalized within race discourses, as the group is often viewed as the "perpetual foreigner" or the "model minority" (Kim, 1999; Wu, 2002). They are placed within the racial hierarchy of the United States, kept out of the white mainstream; yet also suspended from general discussions about race and racism. The ambivalence with which other groups approach Asian Americans contextualizes their wrestling to demonstrate a grounded identity and position within the national discourse of race that so often becomes polarized by White and Black concerns and constructions. Latinos may be faced with similar challenges. Yet the bipolar racial categories of White and Black can best be understood when we consider that White represents a power that has positioned "Black" as the dominated other.

C. Black Reconnaissance-- Conflicts and Conflations

In contrast to the resistance demonstrated by Wilson and Angela to their own whiteness, there were two Black students who discussed race in terms that suggested they were intentionally examining race and its socio-historical meaning to understand it and themselves as racialized subjects. Both students, African Americans, discussed their interpretations of race and its social significance with themes of conflict and struggle. These students were fully engaged in a process of learning about race and Blackness beyond discussions in the Pre-First seminar course.

Christine is an African American woman from White Plains, NY. In her diverse high school where she could always see a fair mix of African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, and

Whites, race only seemed to be an issue in the classroom. Christine discussed how separate Regents Exam Preparatory classes had a segregating effect along race lines. Additionally, she described her experience in Advanced Placement (AP) courses as both an opportunity to get to know a more diverse group of students as well as a situation that made her aware of being a "minority." Her classes would be filled with mostly "Caucasian" students with approximately 4 or 5 African Americans or Latinos.

Before describing her racial identity, Christine noted that "a lot of times I sit back and say, what is race?" On the day of the interview, a portion of the film *Race- The power of an illusion* was shown and discussed in Christine's seminar class. This helped Christine to be more thoughtful about our conversation.

> My thoughts of race? (pauses) When I think of race, I think of conflict, um. Based on that movie that we just saw, basically…. Most scientists, I guess back in the day they, they based it on. Basically they took your race I believe in that was [what] legitimized slavery and labeling of the based on your race, like. It's the myth of your brain is more alert or cannot hold as much sand as the Caucasian, you know, things of that nature. I think that, ah in general, caused a lot of conflict and I think a lot of people especially this day and age cannot accept what is different. Like, I don't think the problem is seeing people who are different, I love seeing people who are different cultures, different ethnicities, and who come from different countries. But, I think where the problem comes in is that people can't accept that people are different. You know, you always have to other someone because they're different. Like, you can't say they're different and that's okay. They're different, but I'm better, you know? That's, that's the notion that okay. You're

> mocking his turban, oh, he's this, that, I'm better…. People cannot deal with differences and it's sad that when you see someone who's different than you or, you know, comes from another way of life. You automatically have to put yourself on a pedestal as opposed to embracing them as well and I think that's, that's the problem.

Christine demonstrated an awareness of the functions of scientific racism and the fact that biological myths were used to foster particular notions of race and racism. She also acknowledged and complicated the discussion of difference by suggesting that acceptance or rejection of difference was the key challenge. Christine suggested that some people recognized differences and subjected those differences to various judgments of value such as better or worse, more or less superior or inferior. Further, she implied the issue of superiority/inferiority with the word "pedestal." She goes on to explain further her thoughts on racism, which she conflates with race.

> I think it's still an on-going issue, um. I do think in terms, racism is such a strong, a. I mean you can talk all day about racism and its effect but I, I've read *Breaking the Chain of Psychological Slavery* and that really opened my mind. I'm like, oh my gosh, because that I guess it, wow, it's just so deep. It explains, um, the, the effect of slavery on African-Americans, and I think in terms of, of race and racism I do think that has contaminated our, our heads I believe.

Christine explains that notions of race and racism have "contaminated" the psychology of people. Specifically, she draws our attention to the impact of slavery on the African American psyche. Racism has contaminated Black thought to adopt Christine is fairly well read on matters of race

and/or racism as a student entering her first year of college. Throughout the interview she mentioned various other books like the *Willie Lynch Letter and the Making of a Slave* and others by Jawanza Kunjufu, a prolific educator and consultant on issues that impact the development and schooling of African Americans. Many of these books were a part of her mother's library and she took an active interest in them. Hence, Christine expressed herself with a sense of confidence about what she understood and believed as a young student. She was comfortable with the idea that she was "different" and saw the "problem" of race as an issue of acceptance of difference within society.

Similarly, Clayton, an African American male from New Jersey, admitted reading some literature about race because he finds it to be a "deep subject." His reading included *Race Matters* by Cornel West and *Facing Up to the American Dream* by Jennifer L. Hochschild, which he was reviewing for a paper. Clayton presented the most complexity in his response to the question about race— noting the politics of race in education, home life, dating life, politics, etc. He emphasized that race permeates our society.

> I mean it's very important, um, I think race plays a lot into everything. Um, you know, W.E.B. Dubois said, the problem of the 20th century is the color line and he is so correct, um, light, light versus dark and so race is in everything. Race is a lot, admissions counselors, admissions to the college, race is, ah, that are the schools, race is, race is in our homes. I mean you see a white couple and a Black couple or a Chinese couple and a Black couple or whatever it is. It's inter-racial things like that you take a second look at because just 40 years that Black man would have been hanged, that Chinese man would have been hanged, you know. During the civil right movements 20 years ago we just come out from,

> you know, dogs being unleashed on and stuff like that. So, race plays a very important role into everything. It's in our politics; it's in our Declaration of Independence if you want to say. If you want to go that detailed. Race is in everything, I think race and what people think of other people, you know, kinds of intertwine with how we are today…

Clayton explained that race permeates our society in significant ways, from college admissions to romantic relationships, from politics to social psychology, with changes over time. As Clayton continued, he emphasized the permanence of race in our society. He saw race taking permanent residency in people's minds. He suggested that most people struggle with bigotry in their thoughts by acknowledging race.

> But I understand a little bit and I take away from this that race will always be in our minds. There's no way of getting out of it. The only thing we can do is we can educate ourselves about it. We can't stop it. We can try to but deep down inside sometimes race will always be there and we will always sometimes be looking at, oh, he's Black and he's White or something like even though sometimes we train ourselves not to but we still look at it. We still see it, it's something that is always seen throughout the world and we can try best not to acknowledge it and that's great. I mean if you can say, you can sit here and say, I'm not a racists. I, seriously I'm not a person who's a bigot or I won't have bigotry in me, that's great, that's good and you acknowledge that you try to say that you don't have it. However, in some instances you're lying. (laughs) You know, you might say that you don't have it but it can still be in there with you. You just don't acknowledge

> it as much as other people do and, you know, acknowledge as much as the Klu Klux Klan or the Knights of Columbus or something out of that organization.

Clayton articulated a perspective that emphasized race permanence and pervasive racism. He asserted that race is always present in people's minds. He suggested that racism can be observed on a continuum. Most people have it at some level and then there are those on the extreme end, i.e. the Ku Klux Klan, who focus on race in barefaced and flagrant ways. However, as Clayton continued this thread of the conversation, he said that he did not want to try to tackle "this idea of what race is." When I asked why, he responded-

> No, because sometimes I refrain from trying to say what race is because like now I'd be shooting myself in the foot…that's why I read Dr. Cornel West, *Race Matters*. I want to, I mean not fully understanding what race is, you know. I've experienced racism, I've experienced racial division within our people. I've experienced racial division towards others but I don't understand and you can't put it to or conceptualize what race really is and, you know, it's just too dangerous for me right now. So, I will be trying to do that over in the next couple of years.

Clayton was clear about his *experience* with race and racism, but he was not certain about how race is defined. He knew that race is real, that it matters. He knew that he has experienced racism and witnessed others being treated in racist ways. He could reflect on the divisions that race has created between and within groups of people. However, he was not yet willing to commit an

opinion or interpretation to something he did not fully understand. He recognized that race is complicated.

I suggest that these students attempted to articulate a postmodern theory of Blackness in their comments as they reflect pushback against their generational race thought. In the context of a society claiming colorblindness and a generation seemingly less concerned with history and historical attachments, these students were seeking to comprehend race matters and Black people's struggles. While they sought to resist stereotypical notions of blackness and embraced new realities and possibilities for their generation, they were reading literature of Black scholars that would help them to understand their historical connection and its meaning for the present and future. Their approaches reflect the postmodern blackness musings of bell hooks (1994) who discussed anti-essentialist, decentered blackness, commitment to the underclass of the Black community, critical thought connected to finding new strategies for Black struggle, and a "yearning" for all of these. In their comments, I sensed a yearning among these two informants to find what "Black" could mean for them in this era.

Race is. Race is not. Race might be. These conceptions of race and race identity were taken up by students in a variety of ways. The White students in this section tended to resist naming or embracing whiteness. In Wilson's case, he reinscribed whiteness in his "safe house" of nationality as he attempted to negotiate new information about race he learned in class. Angela reconstructed her racial identity as a Black girl hosted in a white body. However, the Asian/Asian American students demonstrated "respect" for an identity space of origin called "home" where traditions are honored. Home is a contested concept for Asians/Asian Americans who wrestle with finding or maintaining it in the U.S. American society that holds them in exile continually.

Finally, Black students demonstrated their desire to deconstruct race and find their identity through inspection of history and experience. Both Christine and Clayton began to explore notions of hierarchy and the legacy of oppression based on race. Black reconnaissance for these students meant reading to understand the historical impact and present articulations of race, as they sought meaning for themselves as post-Civil Rights young people.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have explored the discourses used by a portion of my informants who offer critical insight to notions of race and racism as they see it. Colorblindness is apparently embraced by many of the informants and is manifested in their language and interpretations, including their understanding of race as a construction as well as their comprehension of events. This was demonstrated by their minimization of race and racism, how they discussed their family perspectives relative to their own, and the ways in which they negotiated conceptions of a racial identity. Colorblind discourse, though present in a cross-section of the informants' language, is not uttered with equal motivations or aims. Some students of color utilize minimization tactics as a way of neutralizing white supremacist or racist discourse. Black students do not embrace colorblind discourse in the same ways that their White peers do, but they are impacted by it and negotiate colorblind discourse for their anti-racism assertions. The element of power is elusive in most of the informants' explanations, reflecting the colorblind discourse and approach to addressing race and racism. Further, informants expressed a lack of understanding about different beliefs that make terms like prejudice, stereotypes, discrimination, and racism distinct. I also

explored the family portraits of some informants that exhibited their own racial ideas and how they responded to family racial discourses. Through family portraits, we saw that racial hierarchy and various race discourses that were either racist or denied racism were reflected in dating preferences.

In the last section of the chapter, I explored the meaning of race for particular individuals from their point of identity, which revealed how race *functions* differently for people, based on their social location and ideological leanings. White students seemed to be taking on fragmented identities that resisted white confinement and embodiment, disconnecting their bodies from their identities. Asian/Asian American students wrestled to find their footing in the U.S. racial schema that at once positions them within its hierarchy and holds them at a distance as "foreigners." Black/African American students on the other hand seemed to be seeking out an achieved Black identity that allowed them to struggle, at least mentally, against racial imperialism.

I view these strivings in identity constructions to be intimately and inextricably connected to the colorblind discourse that pervades society. Colorblindness conceals white hegemony by its formation of an imaginary "sameness" and pseudo-equity among the races. Students, under this banner of colorblind imperialism, understand inherently that race is passé and not an appropriate topic to interrogate in contemporary political correctness. With this projection of race neutrality or colorblindness, post-Civil Rights generation students are encouraged to reject racial acknowledgements and perceive obvious acts of racism as aberrations. Hence they diminish these social realities even as they recognize them right at home. This racial environment, with its racist stealth, reasserts individualism over all groupings as the American way. At once, students across all racial categories are given a sense of empowerment to see themselves and the world in any

number of personalized ways; and they struggle to find meaningful identities that are authentic and meet multiple interests of desire and denial.

CHAPTER 5 [DATA CHAPTER]

TALKING RACE, RACING TALK

During the second semester of my informants' junior year, I started to conduct focus groups to again examine their understanding about race and how they might employ various discourses in conversation with each other. Three focus groups were conducted. The third focus group was conducted in the Fall semester of their senior year. Each focus group held 4-5 informants in engaging conversation from 60 to 75 minutes. This chapter examines data from this second phase of the research.

Where do students talk about race? How do they talk about race? What meaning do they make of such talk? I wanted the answers to these questions for a better understanding of their interpretations and how they came to such meaning. They talked race in class, in their recognized student group meetings, in their rooms and apartments with friends, with fraternity and sorority members, with family, and even in the gym with their athletic teammates. This chapter explores the mechanics, nuances, implications, and challenges of Race Talk.

Toni Morrison (1993) describes race talk as the "explicit insertion into everyday life of racial signs and symbols that have no meaning other than pressing African Americans to the lowest level of the racial hierarchy." My work in this chapter uses a broader definition to include any talk about race that either deciphers or resists contemporary ideologies about race in our society. Race talk can be an insertion of active resistance to or re-articulations of dominant ideologies about race, as well as reflections or expressions of those ideologies. For example, you will read about Nic, a young man of color, who actively resisted surveillance by white authority

and the persistent racist suspicion of people of color in several contexts- whether they are walking, learning, or talking. Also, race talk can be the re/production of social relations in the matrix of domination. You will also read about Tom, a White male, who assumes a position of (white) authority during the discussion with Nic and attempts to reproduce white dominance in denial, while making visible the racial dynamics of the encounter.

In this chapter, I argue that students are talking about race and in their talk they theorize about how race functions in society by calling on popular culture, humor, and utilizing argumentation. They engage in race talk in the classroom, but also initiate race talk in their own spaces on their own time. Race talk can be understood in utterances about race in content, mechanics, and the style of my informants' talk. This chapter analyzes such race talk that is used by students to resist and to reproduce racism—whether or not students are aware of these effects. Through an investigation of white talk, talk generated through Hip Hop, boundary making through race talk, and race talk performance, I show that race ideology is continually resisted, rearticulated, or re/produced by students.

All race talk either resists, rearticulates, or re/produces race ideology. As I examine these students' talk, I look for discourses about race, ways in which their positionalities are expressed, and the dynamics between speakers and hearers of race talk. White race talk (defined below) reproduces white supremacy by masking itself and actually demonstrating its power within conversation. Other race talk is generated to resist and interrogate race and racism, to make sense of them or to make visible the nonsense of them. For example, Terrence resists essentialists notions of race by examining figures in Hip Hop and the wider popular culture. He also resists colorblind notions of Hip Hop ownership and reclaims it as an artifact of Black culture. Jossette and Greg discuss the use of talk to negotiate racial identity in different spaces,

and to question the determination of race identity through talk. Throughout this chapter, you will observe that race talk is always acting in some way, demonstrating its power and strategy. I will also illuminate the power of listening, a strategy used by students of color, to move white race talkers into reflection. Listening emergences from and contributes to the particular gaze, or ways of knowing and perceiving, that people of color develop in a racialized society. As subordinated people, they acutely observe those with power as a way to survive. Listening to white talk is also an exercise of gazing.

White Talk, Back Talk

McIntyre (1997) describes white talk as "talk that serves to insulate white people from examining their individual and collective role(s) in the perpetuation of racism" (p.45). Some race talk is light, subtle, and comedic. Other talk is less humorous, more serious, even tense. Such was the case in Focus Group 1 (FG1) between Tom, a White male informant, and Nic, a Latino/Black male informant, during our discussion about experiences of racism on or off campus. By an examination of the exchanges outlined below we will see how Tom expresses his social position and white talk throughout. Prior to this particular exchange, there were two other discussions in the focus group where Tom asserted challenges against the interpretations Nic made of his experiences with race/racism on campus. In these challenges, Tom argued that Nic rushed to conclusions of racism; that his conclusions were not logical; that he was paranoid; and that he should be responsible for finding common ground during racial conflict. In the following exchange, I try to capture disruptions and pace of speech in the way I use line space for informants' comments. I want to show how energized the conversation was with overlapping statements and interruptions from one speaker to the other.

P: Have you experienced racism off campus since you've been a student at Findings?

N: Yeah, I actually experienced another incident I forgot too, here during PreFirst. Uhm, we were out on Foothill (Street). It was me and a couple other friends. We were going to East (campus) to one of the football player's house to hang out and FPS (Findings Public Safety) stops us like "What are you guys doing here?" We're like "Oh we go to school here. We live right there in Roosevelt (Hall)." We were right across the street from um, on this side like by Hoover (Hall). And the cop stopped us, like "What are doing here?" "Oh we go to school here, we're in PreFirst." "Well you guys shouldn't be out here? Why aren't you in the building?" …Like does it matter where I'm standing, where I'm at? Like what's the point?.. Like I mean, that was frustrating. Then also just not being um, being stopped by the police like 3 or 4 times driving with friends, but that wasn't up here though.

P: Uhhm. Could you say more about that?

N: Well, recently I went home, like two weeks ago. And I was with a couple friends. And they stopped us was like Oh we're looking for a stolen car…Alright. I had all my papers and everything. Then they was like "Can you guys get out the car?" It was me and two other friends. They made us all sit on the back bumper, they said "Just sit there and wait." Searched the car, and then said "Alright you guys are fine." And then they left, and left us there. Then another time I was with some kids from this school, and we're coming

(OC: I notice Tom sighing and taking long breaths.)

home from the city and one of my friends was driving and we got stuck cause the kid didn't put oil in the car or something like that. So we were like right by [Warren City] and like right before you get on the 270. And it was dark and then we were trying to wait for a tow truck; they said they were coming. And the police came behind us, they come to the car like, "Oh, you guys have alcohol?" Like, "No, we're stuck." They're like, "Oh. Give us your license." They took everybody's license that was in the car, like not just the driver, they took everybody's license in the car. They went back there, like fifteen minutes. "You guys, you sure you don't have alcohol? I smell it."

T: Do you think that has

N: There's nothing in the car. We're like We're waiting for the tow truck cause we're stuck. "Well alright, well I can't help you." Left. They give us back our id's and left.

T: Do you think that um that necessarily that has to do with race though? … Like I mean like what makes you think like if I got pulled over with a bunch of like other friends, like with a bunch of like 21 and 22, teenagers in their car late at night, there's a bunch of us in the car, on a highway. I mean like, I feel like the first instinct of any officer is to ask if there's alcohol in the car. Like I mean I don't understand why he was taking down everyone's driver's license

N: Why would that be the first question? Why wouldn't it be "Are you guys stuck?" Being that we're on the side of the road in the middle of the night?

T: But I don't think it has to do necessa(rily), I don't think like. There's nothing new. There's nothing for you to like, again like logically speaking that you can't conclude that it was race that did that. I don't see like a right. It doesn't logically make sense that it was. I can't say that it wasn't race, but you can't say that race was the factor for it.

N: So what's the idea of taking everyone's license?

T: Maybe in Pennsylvania like

Other Informants: No, no …

T: Or 2:00 in the morning. I dunno, maybe it's just the way the cop does things. Every cop, was the cop White?

N: Yeah. Both times.

T: …I mean, I dunno. I guess, I mean, maybe it was race, maybe it wasn't. And if it was race then that's awful. But you can't necessarily. I don't think you can go on saying that cop was necessarily racist cause you don't know for sure. Cause you don't know that cop.

N: When you grow up in a certain situation under certain situations, you understand race in whole different, way

T: I understand that

N: And it's like you know when you're being targeted. Like it's something that you learn, something from experience. Like you *know*. And then you also know when people are being genuine. But it's a feeling, you can't describe it (Tom says something while he is talking- Like an instinct??). It's an instinct. It's almost human nature for us to know like alright we're being targeted.

T: Do you, but do you ever think? I agree like that there is that instinct that you're being targeted. I'm sure that, I know for a fact that that exists, but do you think it gets to the point where that instinct is so ingrained into you that actually until one point that it's like you're over-analyzing things and it's just sorta like that instincts is like gotten to the point where it's kind of like consumed you to the point where you've gotten maybe kind of paranoid about it.

N: No not at all. Cause I'm very down to earth as far as everything is. I always analyze a situation you know a hundred percent for everything that it is. And in that instance, everything was uncalled for.

T: Yeah

N: There was not one thing there that was called for.

T: I understand what you're saying

N: That's why with the other one with the car, no. "We're looking for a stolen car." All my papers are legit. You see my license, you see everything. "Well I still need to search the car"… Cause you obviously see a group a kids you think, "Alright they're up to something."

T: Well I'm not, yeah he was definitely generalizing, don't get me wrong, like he was definitely being prejudiced, but I don't think. I think that's like what our cops like that's what cops do, in general. Like they see a group of kids, like they saw a group of White kids in a corner or whatever, like on the street or pulled over. I feel like a cop would've suspected that they were up to like the White kids are up to no good too. You know? Like whatever. **I don't feel like it necessarily has to do with race** (Author's emphasis).

M: This is what

T: Granted I've never been in that position so I can't relate. But it's just like my, it's just what I'm saying.

N: Now this is my question. Why do you think you've never been in that position? And I've been in it plenty of times… Plenty of times.

T: I don't know. It's a good question…. I mean, I just, maybe I've grown up, like I've. I dunno. I just never thought that, me personally, I just never thought that people were out

to get me because of my. Like I, I, I was always thought that people were on my good list, again, like going back to what I was talking about before people generally have like certain core values that are all the same. Like a lot of people. There's some people who don't. Don't get me wrong. But a lotta people just have respect. You know, I just grew up respecting other people. I just feel like no one was really ever out to get me. You know, like no one really had a reason to come after me because of like me being Jewish. I've had like anti-Semitic remarks like directed at me before, but I never like, you could tell when, I mean, granted the joking is not good but so like, it's still like insulting. But you can tell like when someone genuinely means something, or kinda getting off topic, but I never thought that someone was ever really out to get me. You know? Now maybe it's different, cause I haven't had the same experiences any of you had. You know? I, I just never thought someone was really out to like ostracize me or count me. Maybe, I dunno…

In this provocative exchange between Nic and Tom, there was a battle of views and positions. Nic was determined to share his experiences and the conclusions he drew from analyzing them. Tom challenged Nic's analyses and conclusions. The entire exchange was engaging and allowed little space for other members of the focus group to share their perspectives as well. The exchange was filled with disruptions of one by the other and very quick responses by both Nic and Tom. However, it is their choice of language and sharing strategy that is important in understanding the depth of the exchange recorded here. I now analyze this interchange in more detail.

Nic's Talk

Nic began telling the story of being stopped near the residence hall where he and his PreFirst cohort were living during the summer and repeats himself as he relived the frustration of being stopped by Findings Public Safety (FPS) officers and other police officers.

> FPS stops us like What are you guys doing here? We're like Oh we go to school here, we live right there in Roosevelt (Hall). We were right across the street from um, on this side like by Hoover (Hall). And the cop stopped us, like What are doing here? Oh we go to school here, we're in PreFirst.

In this brief first account, Nic reflects a frustration often felt by people of color of being policed and held under surveillance by White people in and out of uniform. Collins (1998) asserts that people of color are under surveillance in white-controlled public space. People of color are being watched and controlled. The White campus cop viewed Nic and his friends (who were people of color) as "unwelcome intruders" even on the sidewalk (p.5). The campus cop demonstrated surveillance in his language by suggesting that Nic and his friends did not belong on the campus street to begin with. They are out of place in the cop's view. His inquiry—"what are you doing here?"—was actually a rhetoric of exclusion, of uninvited presence. Nic's frustration was the result of deciphering this rhetoric, this oppressive race talk.

Nic was able to quickly share one story and move to the next. Each report presented a similar theme of racial profiling by law enforcement. However, each story that Nic narrated had a different physical setting that expressed the universal nature of these experiences for Nic: on campus (his academic home), in his home city where he grew up, and places between the two. Nic shared his story in almost bulleted format, presenting the facts as he recalled them- the setting, characters, sequence and quotations. However, when Tom interrupted Nic with his questions and talk of denial, Nic was compelled to employ his own strategies for making his points clear. I will explore these strategies after investigating Tom's talk.

Tom's Talk

Tom entered the exchange, after a few attempts to interrupt Nic, with a question: "Do you think that necessarily has to do with race." Tom did not question that the sequence of events took place but questioned the interpretation that Nic asserted. Tom did not initially state outright that he disagrees with the racism that Nic charges but questions Nic on what he thinks. Yet, Tom shows in many ways that he disagrees. Tom utilizes three main strategies in his talk with Nic: (1) Microaggressions through specific microinvalidations; (2) dominant denials; and (3) retreating mechanisms. These strategies work in combination with white talk tactics such as derailing the conversation, evading questions, interrupting the speaker, and dismissing counterarguments (McIntyre, 1997). I will take the reader through each of these strategies Tom employs.

The language Tom used was a part of his overall strategy to invalidate Nic's experience. D.W. Sue et al. (2007) describe racial microaggressions as commonplace verbal, behavioral, or environmental dignities that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color. Microaggressions may be intentional or unintentional. They are "subtle, stunning, often automatic" exchanges that are derived from attitudes of white superiority (Pierce, Carew, Pierce-Gonzalez, & Wills, 1978, p.66). The subtleties of Tom's exchanges can be found within the language he used in his arguments. Tom questioned whether race was *necessarily* involved. Then he asserted that he did not think it had *necessarily* to do with race. To further invalidate Nic's attestation that his experiences were informed by race, Tom argued that Nic's conclusion "doesn't *logically* make sense." Inherent in this conclusion is a

microinvalidation that "negates or nullifies the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a person of color" (Sue et al., 2007, p.274).

The microinvalidations that Tom expressed were both subtle in language and sometimes more direct in delivery. For example, in the first half of the exchanges, Tom insists "I can't say that it wasn't race, but you can't say that race was the factor for it." Phrases, even demands or commands, of this kind reinforce a position and perspective of superiority. Tom's language *dictated* to Nic that he "can't" state his own experience. Later in the exchanges, Tom utilized other invalidating vocabulary in his suggestions that Nic was "over-analyzing things" and had "gotten maybe kind of paranoid" about what happened to him. These microaggressions focused attacks on Nic's mindset, psychological condition, and mental ability.

Dominant Denials

The second strategy that Tom utilized was a dominant denial of racism. That is, Tom manifested his dominant position in a racist society while denying the reality of racism. His dominant denial included offering hypothetical stories, justifying behavior as normal, suggesting doubt, and denying privilege. These mechanisms work in combination to produce a domineering strategy of denial. After his initial question, Tom presented a hypothetical situation designed to neutralize the stinging assertion that Nic experienced racism. Tom's hypothetical involves himself and other young people, even "teenagers," in a car late at night. Tom did not name race, while he called our attention to age and time of day/night. When Nic requested Tom's ideas about what was involved, Tom relied on hypothetical guesses again: "Maybe in Pennsylvania… Or 2:00 in the morning…Maybe it's just the way the cop does things…" These were attempts to excuse racist behavior as normal and routine procedures and treatment of any (raced) citizen by

the police. This strategy was also used in an effort to silence Nic and to reassert the idea of colorblind norms in societal practices. Tom seemed willing to entertain many other reasons for the negative interactions that Nic had with law enforcement *except* racism.

The resounding "No, no" of the other focus group members (2 Latinos and 1 Asian American student) helped Tom to verbally consider the possibility of racism in the stories that Nic shared. The response may have been different if Nic was the only student of color in the group, possibly having to defend the authority of his experience completely alone. "Was the cop White," Tom asked. Receiving an affirmative response from Nic, Tom continues to press his point that Nic does not know "for sure." Tom attempted to disrupt any certainty that Nic had about his own experience, continuing to deny Nic's charge of racism. Throughout the exchange, Tom asserted that he was well-positioned to judge Nic and his experiences. Nic challenged this. In Nic's final challenge for Tom to explain why he thinks their experiences have been significantly different, Tom realized that he needed to confront this fundamental question. However, his response was powerfully reflective of his social location as white middle class male and the consequences of his privilege. When *he* was challenged, Tom struggled to find his words. His response was disjointed, disrupted, and disordered. The fundamental question was about acknowledging the difference between Tom and Nic, the racial difference. However, Tom was unable to say "race" or "skin color." He attempted to keep race hidden in his talk.

Retreating Mechanisms

Tom retreated to an erasure of difference by invoking "certain core values that are all the same." Tom used two particular mechanisms to help him retreat to colorblind notions of experience-- "distancing strategy" and minimization of racial/ethnic offenses—to suggest that he is once again taking a "neutral" position. Case and Hemmings (2005) refer to distancing

strategies as avoidances of being implicated as racist or complicit in racism. Tom tried to reposition himself as being able to speak to Nic's experience with as much authority as Nic had; as well as to evaluate that experience for meaning and worth. He continued his denial of racism and exhibited his ignorance of white privilege when he stated: "But a lotta' people just have respect [for others]. You know, I just grew up respecting other people." Respect is a privilege that Whites receive without having to prove they have earned it. In fact, white skin is proof of this earning. For people of color in a racist society, their skin is seen as proof that either they cannot earn respect or that they deserve disrespect. Tom did not demonstrate an awareness of this reality, another privilege that he has.

Tom utilized a strategy that is designed to minimize the observations that Nic made; and to maintain his privilege. Tom translated racism into personal paranoia. He did this in two steps. First, Tom excused his own experience of discrimination, noting that he has experienced hearing anti-Semitic remarks directed at him. However, Tom reduced this attack to humor ("joking") based on his assessment of the perpetrator's intention. Further, Tom takes away Nic's power to name his own experience and positions himself as the only one capable of defining an experience with racism. His statement: "But you can tell like when someone genuinely means something," evidenced Tom's intention-denial (van Dijk, 1992). For him, racist or discriminatory remarks are acceptable if he deems those remarks are not *intended* to harm. His willingness to dismiss discriminatory remarks delivered a message to other members of the focus group (subtly) that Tom was not overly "sensitive"– another common discourse about subjugated people's responses to racism. He went on to say "I never thought that someone was ever really out to get me." His statement suggested that the listeners' own perception of the dialogue is central to the discussion. Further, that such perception of someone being "out to get *me*" is paranoia on the

part of the listener. Again, all others present in the focus group were people of color. The discourse of people of color being paranoid about racism was a dominant theme that Tom revisited in his talk. Tom's use of this discourse was an indirect response to Nic's question. His retort signified that the fundamental difference between them was his clarity in perception and Nic's paranoia. However, Tom exhibited his privileged position as a visibly White male and elucidated the perpetration of circumvention that White people often use against people of color in conversations about racism.

Finally, when Nic asked Tom to explain why he has not experienced what Nic has, Tom is directed by the inquiry to confront his positionality. The difference in experience and identity is placed squarely in front of him to name and admit. Nic removes the insulation, and colors around the edges of Tom's white talk, rendering it visible. Cornered by his own argument of logic and insistent white reasoning, Tom must now present his own common sense answer to Nic's critical question. Exhausted by his own denial at work, Tom gives *up*. "Maybe, I dunno…" he says. Tom did not give *in*, instead he suspended the conversation by expressing the possibility ("maybe") that he does not know.

Talk of Knowing and Doubting

> And it's like you know when you're being targeted. Like it's something that you learn, something from experience. Like you *know*. And then you also know when people are being genuine. But it's a feeling, you can't describe it. It's an instinct. It's almost human nature for us to know like alright we're being targeted.
> - Nic

Nic, a subjugated person in U.S. American society, confidently recounted his experiences with racism. He said that he would "always analyze a situation… for everything that it is." He was clear that his understanding of the situations he presented was accurate. He was cognizant of his own positionality and the keen awareness he has about the probity and prejudice of people. His "knowing" has authority, epistemic authority. Note the shift he makes in the above statement as he discussed the knowledge of experience he later calls "instinct." He says "it's almost *human nature* for us to know, like alright, we're being targeted" (Author's emphasis). Nic explains the awareness people of color learn to exercise from the varied experiences they have with racism in his response to Tom's doubting. Nic calls on the "authority of his experience" (Collins, 2000) to validate his recounting to the group. Yet Tom, who spoke from his own positionality, would not validate Nic's experience. Nic's epistemic privilege meant nothing to Tom. Tom assumed a position of superiority based on his unearned and unnamed privilege in society to deny the authority of Nic's own experience. In the conversation, Tom attempted to have Nic doubt his interpretations and suggested not only that Nic did not "know for sure" but that he may even be "paranoid" in his thinking about the situations he outlined to the focus group. Although Tom had "never been in that position" of interfacing with law enforcement in the ways that Nic described, and therefore had no cultural or structural knowledge of racism, he insisted that race was a not a factor. Tom was committed to his "inverted epistemology" (Mills, 2007) of Nic's own reality. However, Nic would not concede. Finally, Nic asked Tom the critical question that propelled him to make several reflective and disjunctive responses.

White race talk occurred in the second focus group (FG2) as well, where the diversity of the group included a White female student. Jessica, a White young woman, was a member of a

focus group with one Asian American female, one African American female, and two African American males including this researcher. During the conversation, Jessica exhibited microaggressive behavior and white denial in her talk. Sue et al. (2007) describe microinsults as "communications that convey rudeness and insensitivity and demean a person's racial heritage or identity" (p. 274). Often, the perpetrator of these slights is not aware. However, the message to or about people of color is clearly conveyed. The following response from Jessica shows her microinsult about employment opportunities, policies, and "minorities"- people of color.

> Um, I consider myself, I don't care, white, Caucasian, what ever you want to call me. (laughs) I don't care, um, but with the check boxing, I usually opt not to even check one like what's it matter, who cares. But, I don't care what I am so why should you but with the, um, with the employment sometimes because I'm. I have an internship but while I was looking I'm like, can I please just be a minority. (laughs) Then they'll hire me please, um, so. I'm white, Caucasian whatever, um. but, um,

First, we hear Jessica's ambivalence about acknowledging her whiteness in different contexts. She considers herself White or Caucasian but she is not always willing to "check the box" and identify herself as such on official documents. Jessica used a double strategy of "positive self-presentation" and "negative other-presentation" (van Dijk, 1992, p. 89). In her positive self-presentation, Jessica claimed her White identity and suggested she's not stuck on race ("I don't care"). At the same time, she used a negative "other-presentation" that is subtle enough to almost miss. She goes on to convey messages about people of color with her comment about searching for employment—"While I was looking, I'm like, can I please just be a minority.

(Laughs) Then they'll hire me…" This comment conveys a message that minorities are automatically hired (a false notion of affirmative action policies); and that qualifications of skill, experience and education are secondary to minorities' racial identities. She also dismisses the reality of discrimination in employment that minorities face. Bonilla-Silva (2006) refers to these views of this type as story lines of color blindness designed to help keep people of color "in their place." Jessica's make-me-a-minority fantasy, even if suggested in humor, reflects a notion that people of color are in a position of advantage and hides the truth about racist, white supremacist hiring practices that constrain their lives. Jessica's fantasy about minorities in her race talk is also a denial of white privilege which offers her systemic benefits every day.

Hip Hop Race Talk Generation

Students theorize about race. In everyday race talk, students interpret their observations of race around them. They especially consider popular culture icons and other mediated figures to decipher new articulations of race and/or racism and convene informal summits to discuss their postulations. These conversations reflect the process of race formations (Omi & Winant, 1994) that students are engaged in; and the influence of social location in their various articulations of race ideology. Students do not adhere to "old" and fixed ideas about race, but reinterpret race identity and meaning from macro-level behaviors as well as political projects of older people and industries.

Hip Hop culture has become increasingly important as a medium and catalyst for race meaning making among students. In the following quote, Terrence discussed how race is explored in the weight room with his football mates and others in the athletic complex. He reported this talk as a witness and participant while responding to the discourse of his peers in

the present conversation. This reported talk in Focus Group 3 (FG3) provided insight about racial identity in the twenty-first century and the impact that Hip Hop has had on racial identity and meaning.

T: A lot of us (athletes), we talk about race because of like, what we do in the weight room like hip hop and oh, "why it's always that all the black kids want to listen to hip hop all the time" but it don't be that way 'cause some white people want to listen to hip hop, you know, 'cause they part of the hip hop culture or, um, like the Obama thing and how he's relating to the Hip Hop culture and how he was on BET. We had a big discussion like, it was like 30 of us in our, our lounge area at [the athletic complex] about how he was on BET, on 106 and Park or something like that and how a couple of days later they had Snoop Dog on, you know one of the BET shows talking about it and how hip hop is becoming, you know, Obama's focus point and how like a lot of my white friends are saying because he wants to get those black voters that don't usually vote to vote, like, it'll start like that and those sort of things. Or, like hip hop and the whole Eight Mile movie came out, I remember like a lot of my friends are like "Eminem, he's black," but, you know, he's really white. And like how, a lot of people would make jokes like oh, I know everybody pretty much heard it, like black people and white people traded. They got Michael Jackson and we got Bill Clinton, like a lot of those stereotypes, like I've heard that like tons of times. (they laugh)

Terrence reflected on an exercise that his coach began in the weight room, where each athlete was allowed to choose the station or music that would be played during training sessions.

At each session, teammates had to decide whose music would be played. This important exercise of choice and decision making yielded an unintended byproduct- race talk and becomes related to authority and power; therefore race relations. In his talk, Terrence noted the role that Hip Hop plays in evoking talk about race in the weight room. This talk was so important that it moved from the weight room to the main lounge in the athletic complex where about 30 students continued the discussion. It was the presence of Hip Hop that facilitated these conversations about race. Although there is a racist perception that "All the Black kids want to listen to Hip Hop all the time," Terrence points out that many people who identify differently (racially) share in Hip Hop culture, which has disturbed racialized music listening with its broad appeal. Terrence talks back to the notion of a race-specific Hip Hop appeal and the root idea of race essentialism and music by invoking Obama.

Terrence brought up Obama to emphasize his point about the importance of Hip Hop as a genre of music and culture that must be taken seriously. Obama, then a presidential candidate, was not only "relating" to Hip Hop but recognized the power and influence of the culture. Hence, Obama moved into Hip Hop space, as represented by Black Entertainment Television (BET) and one of its prime Hip Hop video shows "106 and Park." Hip Hop artists like Snoop Dog discussed this visit, reinforcing Obama's presence in Hip Hop spaces. Terrence spoke about the strategic cultural sharing capital that Obama, now president of the United States, recognized. "Hip Hop is becoming, you know, Obama's focus point." It wasn't just about getting "those black voters" as some White people were saying; it is about recognizing the significant art and cultural form of Hip Hop, a genre created by Black people and embraced by the world. Terrence continued to resist ideas that marginalized or diminished this significance, and he did so by juxtaposing what "white people" or "white friends" say and do with real life examples that

demonstrate otherwise. This is important for Terrence because although Hip Hop is for everybody, it is deeply connected with Black people and he identifies as one.

Race performance has changed. It is no longer the Black young person from the inner city who raps and creates Hip Hop music, but it is also the White guy from Warren, Michigan of Scottish and Russian ethnic heritage. Born Marshall Bruce Mathers III in St. Joseph, Missouri, Eminem won a Grammy Award for his first cd "The Slim Shady," released in 1999. His second project, "The Marshall Mathers" lp became the fastest selling Hip Hop album in history. The "8 Mile" is a Hip Hop dramatic film about a young White rapper's struggle for respect among his Black peers, starring Eminem. This film also received major recognition when Eminem won an Academy Award for Best Original Song- entitled "Lose Yourself." This was Eminem's first song to hit the #1 position on charts in the United States (maintaining the position for 12 weeks). Hence, Terrence's reflection on Eminem and the impact of Hip Hop on racial identity formation and race talk is particularly significant to the overall discussion of meaning making about race. "I remember like a lot of my friends are like 'Eminem, he's black,' but you know he's really white." Terrence was asking what does it mean to be Black? What do skin color and performance say about race?

Terrence and his friends used popular culture figures to talk about racism as an enclosure, a category with imprisoned ideas of how one should be or *must* be as a racialized being. President Obama, Eminem, Michael Jackson, and former president Clinton represent this struggle for Terrence. He views this as a struggle for all raced people. Through serious discussion or humor, these figures mirror to Terrence the bearing and befuddlement of race.

Barack Obama's participation on Black Entertainment Television (BET) and his outreach to the "Hip Hop generation" as a presidential candidate makes an incredible statement about the power of this music and culture. Mr. Obama himself has been a catalyst for robust discussion on race and politics in the news media. Further, he has challenged perceptions of the U.S. presidency and the roles that African Americans can play in politics. Like Barack Obama, Michael Jackson and Bill Clinton represent people who have transcended particular perceived race roles, while not transcending race itself. Unlike Mr. Obama, Jackson and Clinton are often used in "race trading" comedy routines: Michael has endured lighter phenotypical changes and Bill has been considered a "cool" saxophone playing politician and smooth talker, attributed to Black cool.

It is this kind of reflective humorous talk that allows students to discuss sensitive topics like *tokenism*. Note the following exchange between Brian, Terrence, Jossette, Mei and me, as Brian discussed race talk while working at the health center on campus.

B: The reason we do talk about race often is because I'm pretty much the only African--black person there, um, and just recently they started to hire, ah, more black people and people of color to actually be part of the ambulance service. Um, about a semester ago I was pretty much the only one there. Every one used to make jokes about it, like oh, you know, "Where are the rest of the black people" and stuff like that because

T: Token black guy

(Terrence comments with dry humor using a different voice and Mei chuckles in the background)

B: Yeah, I was pretty much like, yeah, I was pretty much the token black guy of the ambulance. So, it became an issue to the point where I tried to get other people involved. But, um, I remember the, the interview process. One of the students from University Ambulance actually does the interview process. And, um, last semester, with the interview process a lot of white individuals got in but, none of the black individuals got in and that surprised me. So, I didn't know if it was something dealing with the people who did the interviews or if it's just that, you know, these people of color just didn't want to be part of the organization. Y'know, but, now I see that maybe that interview process might have changed or something, or maybe more people actually want to be part of it, but they are starting to bring a little bit more color there and, I mean. I guess it's not being that big of an issue now because there's more color being brought to University Ambulance. But, I'm just happy that there is more color and I'm not the only, colored individual there. It wasn't really a big issue. You know but, it's actually good to see that there's more than just Caucasians there.

P: Why did you? (laughs) Jossisa, what did you look at Mei and say, ah, I think I heard you kind of mimic "more color"?

J: Ah, no, I said I like his haircut. (laugh) Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, no 'cause he said more color. Like Oh yeah, color it in. (They laugh). That's funny. Hmm…Like …coloring book…Like color it in.

There are three significant points of analysis that I want to make about this exchange. First, Brian described a fairly serious issue at his job where he had been the only Black person

there for some time and where he endured marginalizing humor from his White co-workers. There was race talk at Brian's job precisely because of the scant racial diversity among employees. Brian's presence was the catalyst for race talk. This talk that Brian described was in the form of humor. Yet Brian was making serious connections between race and employment practices and conditions. He talked about trying to "get other people involved" (recruitment) and observing that "a lot of white individuals got in but none of the black individuals got in" (hiring practice) to his surprise.

Second, Terrence introduced humor within the focus group even as he drew an important conclusion from what Brian shared: that he was the "token black guy" at his job. Terrence could have presented his thought in a serious tone, but he didn't. He chose to accent his observation with slight humor by changing the tone of his voice, which might have allowed him to escape contention if it was received negatively. Being called "token" is generally insulting to people of color. However, Terrence's comment allowed Brian to expound further, interpreting and sharing more about his experience.

Third, Brian's talk of "more color" and use of "colored," a misnomer I heard many students exploit when attempting to talk about students of color as a collective group, was gently corrected with humor by Jossette. The focus group membership provides the context for this humor. In this particular focus group, all the members were people of color, including this researcher, who was also affected by the humor. As we talked race, we raced our talk. We talked as a group of Black, Latino, and Asian individuals who understood each other's experience and gave each other license to critique the racial situations that were described.

Listening

Students of color take note of how race talk begins as they make acquaintances with White peers. With their "ethnographic gaze" (hooks, 1995), Black, Latino, and Asian American students in my study, who reside in both the center and margins of the campus, were able to delineate the talk strategy used by their White peers. Students of color describe both the ignorance and the communicative method used by Whites to defend that ignorance and avoid responsibility for it. In the following excerpt, we see how Amy, an Asian American female, has learned to *listen* to white race talk.

> I have learned to listen to other people before I say something because sometimes the first thing that they say and they might be ignorant, they might not know about the history of so and so which in most cases they don't because we do not offer Asian American or African, or some people don't take African-American or Latino studies before they act or speak, they don't. They just don't know the background content. Um, so, I've learned to let people speak and listen to them, um. And then engage them. I actually ask them, where did you learn that from? Makes them think about what they learned, um, sort of in a calm way so it's not the [curse] that comes out and you're like, what the la, la, la, like, you know, me lashing back out and then all of a sudden a conversation disappears.

Amy discussed how she has learned to tolerate ignorant race talk, specifically white race talk that is not based on sound information, as she listens. As a person of color, Amy has learned that she is compelled to give air time to white noise, "ignorant" white talk, in order to develop and maintain a conversation with her White peers. Hence, students of

color who wish to engage their White counterparts develop a strategy for talking that involves listening. First, they listen. Second, they must "calmly" engage White speakers with questions, suppressing their rage ("lashing back") at the white noise they would have heard, in order to allow their White counterparts to reflect on what they have just said. For fear of losing the conversation, people of color are almost taken hostage by the scheme of white ignorance and then forced into a labor of silence and emotion suppression. If people of color were to lash out at the ignorance that incited their rage, the opportunity for learning- the conversation- "disappears." Even though her White peers have refused other opportunities to learn by taking courses in various Ethnic Studies, not all of which are available at the university, Amy hoped that she could enlighten them when interpersonal opportunities for learning were manifested.

Amy reflected on her own growth in the ability to engage in dialogue with people who expressed ideas based on ignorance.

> It has changed, um, back then it was immediate response. Now it's just like, "Huh, really? Where did you learn that? Um, I would like to know where you learned that? Um, did you know this?" Um, so it's been…. It's been drastically different. I've approached it in different ways since my freshman year all the, you know, people saying something that I thought--even if it wasn't targeted at me, to someone else either African-American, Latino or even Native American-- I'd be like "You don't know enough to say that," like right off the bat and then they would be defensive, then they would try to, you know, recover themselves, um, going [out] the back way...

Questioning ideas, rather than immediately stating a response to the content, seemed to be a more productive effort for Amy in confronting her peers. Additionally, Amy called out her White counterparts' defensiveness when confronted by people of color and how they attempt to recover from revealing their ignorance. Amy's awareness of the "semantic move," (Bonilla-Silva, 2002) of "going out the back way," that White students make to avoid confronting their ignorance and racism highlights her ethnographic gaze as a person of color. It is the epistemic knowledge of White behavior that people of color see in everyday life that has assisted and compelled them to develop strategies of talk for race dialogue to occur.

Similarly, Clayton, an African American male informant, reported race talk shared with his White roommate and discussed the dilemma of white race talk that offends yet is honest. A member of the second focus group with Amy, Clayton also discussed that he refrained from lashing out at his roommate so that he could hear what his roommate believes.

> Diversity, he says, he knows [about it from] living in an urban area. I said "How do you know, how do you know about this?" He said "I played baseball in an urban area" and (laughs) I said to him, "So you know diversity, you know this and you're telling me about Latinos and you're telling me about minorities that they should get back to where they came from, do the process right and all of these things." And I'm saying "You have no experience. Your father makes, your father pays for you to come here, signs a check and pays for you to come here. You have no idea." But, I was a little upset but I didn't lash out on him because I understand and I've come to realize that he's, he's telling me what he believes. Whereas a lot of people believe but they never say it and I respect that he has the courage to say it and I think he's working towards a better goal because picking me as

> a roommate is kind of, you know, obviously I'm not an easy person to live with. And he's uh, but picking me as a roommate I think signifies a change in him trying to understand others and understand people who are of minority descent. But that was one of those ignorant comments. So, that's how we started talking about diversity.

Clayton highlighted the differences in experiences with diversity that he and his White roommate shared. Clayton has lived in an urban environment with some resource challenges, while his roommate has been accustomed to financial privilege and lived in a suburban environment for most of his life. Clayton underscored these differences to the focus group in his reported talk between him and his roommate. The roommate felt that his limited interactions with Others in an urban environment, specifically through sport, provided him with knowledge of diversity. However, after laughing in response to his roommate's naivite, Clayton argued that his roommate's claim of understanding or "knowing" diversity was incongruent with other statements he had made about Latinos and other minorities. Clayton reported how he responded to his roommate: "So you know diversity, you know this and you're telling me about Latinos…about other minorities that they should get back to where they came from…" These comments were in the exchanges he shared with his roommate.

Then Clayton continued by talking back to his roommate indirectly while in the focus group. He reflected on his roommate's talk and responded in the present. Clayton called out his roommate's lack of experience and class privilege. "You have no idea," Clayton said, refuting the notion that his roommate really understood diversity. Clayton's retort was at once about his roommate's lack of diversity awareness in general and specifically his ignorance of the person he was living with—Clayton. Then Clayton shared interesting commentary on the reported talk

with the rest of the focus group about constraining his rage and not lashing out on his roommate because "he's telling me what he believes." Clayton's comments had poignancy in that he acknowledged the role of openness in his roommate's talk, which Clayton sees as an attempt to work on understanding. Apparently, his roommate chose him to reside together for this particular reason. The advantage to this openness is that Clayton knows what his roommate thinks. Clayton acknowledged that there are others who would think as his roommate does and would never say what they think. Such unspoken ignorance is not respectable to Clayton. He appreciated knowing where his peers stand on issues of diversity.

Race Talk Chalk: We don't do what they do

Another theme in the race talk of students of color was "boundary maintenance" (Myers & Williamson, 2001). Boundary maintenance is a legacy of segregation and race separation that have encouraged subjugated people to protect their enclaves as places of refuge from Whites. Maintaining the boundary in race talk can sometimes be expressed with the us/them binary. Talk of what "they" do in contrast to what "we" do can help sustain enclaves that have been threatened. Natasha reports talk of this nature.

> The differences that I've seen, of course, you know, certain things that I see maybe Caucasians do I know most people in African-American community or minority community wouldn't do. Like, you know, they talk, some people brought up about, you know, when winter comes, you know, a lot of Caucasian people like to still wear shorts so they wear flip flops in the rain or they wear, you know, they just do stuff that you know other people are not used to. They like, you know, "only white people" type, they'll make a comment like that. So, it's like there is a difference between them, and then also

> being roommates with, people of Caucasian, race, you know, you see different things that they'll do. Like certain things don't bother them like especially like the tidiness of the rooms and stuff like that and it's not to, you know, you can't put that on everybody on one race….

Natasha reports and makes her own race talk that maintains borders between Whites and people of color. She reports that people (of color) have talked about Caucasian's attire in the colder seasons and different ways of maintaining a college room. The "only white people" talk of certain behaviors maintains a border of what can or should be authentically Asian American, Black, or Latino. However, Natasha interrogates this us/them race talk and resists absolute vocabulary such as "all," "only," and "everybody." She warns that it would not be wise to generalize any one race for certain behaviors as though all people who are identified in that race category behave that way. Natasha later called this behavior "reverse racism" and "indirect prejudice." These worrisome terms suggest that Natasha has adopted some of the language of this color-blind era. She continued on to share her view of racial vocabulary that is very controversial race talk among this generation of young people and others.

> I try not to engage in that type of stuff. Especially by, you know, what using certain words like, you know, like people like to use the word niggah and like, you know, call all the races certain things like I don't like and I don't allow anybody else to say it around me. 'Cause we will have a problem and with certain people, you know, they like to argue back to me and that's fine, you know, 'cause certain people feel like why can't I say that, you know? Some people have certain words like the word bitch for girls, you know, they like to use that with each other, you know, they look at these things as words of

> endearment now like no. (laughs and snickers) I'm not going with that so, and no one, to me, has really given me a reason why, you know, they want you to use that as a word of endearment now. But, I mean that's their personal choice but just don't do it around me so, you know, you get a lot of that being on your own. Being able to be out with people, um, on college campuses, different types of people and stuff like that, you start to notice like, you know, like we have to, there are some changes we need to make within ourselves also so that we can, you know, help in this fight to try stop a lot of these things that we're all complaining about from all aspects, you know, whether you're White, His, you know, Hispanic, African-America and stuff like that, so. That's some of the differences that I have recognized being here at Findings.

Natasha's critique of negative racial epithets that are sometimes used in an inverted way as "terms of endearment" is relevant to any discussion of race talk and the Hip Hop generation. It is this generation that is largely connected to a music and African American subculture that has expanded to mainstream global phenomenon who are committed to the "oneness" and transcendence of Hip Hop. Terrence's comments earlier in this chapter demonstrate this idea shared by many people in his college student generation that Hip Hop is a universal art form that is valued for its material manifestations and its facilitation of political power. However, this generation has been criticized for not interrogating Hip Hop's connection to Blackness more meaningfully to understand its inherent politics as a Black cultural artifact (Morgan, 2005).

Cobbs and Grier (1968) describe the process of inversion used by the enslaved Africans in the United States as a method for them to turn the language used by their "owners" into a tool for their own purposes that would counter their oppressors. Hence the use of term "niggah" as endearment remains controversial as it is not clear how its use counters or resists an historical

oppression that this generation of young Black people seems to be disconnected from. Natasha also criticizes the use of the term "bitch" for women, which has been used gratuitously in the Hip Hop industry largely dominated by male artists. Similarly, "niggah" has been commodified by the Hip Hop industry, with gatekeepers and beneficiaries (record executives and others) who are predominantly White males. While this dissertation is not primarily concerned with the debate of words, this issue is relevant to the analyses of race talk because it illuminates the interpretations students make of words and race discourses within the context of a racialized, racist, and color-blind dominated society.

Natasha snickers at the argument of inversion or the term of endearment reason to excuse the use of heavily racialized and gendered words that have been historically used to oppress people. However, Natasha does not make strong connections to institutional oppression in this talk; she focuses on the personal level of interaction. She suggested that her friends had the right to make their choice whether or not to use these terms, but she also had the right not to have to hear it. Natasha thought about this issue more politically and asserted that there should be a difference in talk when considering the larger context of the struggle to end injustice. Not only was it important for interactions with a racially diverse and multi-gendered campus, but for the greater cause of ending oppression. She said "There are some changes we need to make within ourselves also so that we can, you know, help in this fight to try stop a lot of these things that we're all complaining about from all aspects…"

The next comment that was made in the focus group was from Jessica, who picked up on the boundary maintenance talk that Natasha described as "reverse discrimination." Jessica advances this storyline of white victimization and a "cycle" of racism that she has experienced.

> Um, I experienced a lot of, um racism towards me, in my freshman year because of my friends were such diverse people and came from diverse backgrounds that whether they were joking about it or like seriously like, I've heard that a lot from all of 'em. Why do you all wear flip flops? It's snowing and I'm like, I have boots on. Not all (laughing) of us are. (they laugh) Um, so I had to defend my race a lot even though some sorority girls are like "whatever." (They laugh.) Um, so, I I completely agree with you and that it's a cycle that continuously goes around like the kick the cat example where you have a bad day and you slap your wife, she hit the kid and they kick the cat. Um, and I think, whose gonna, you know, it needs to be stopped but what are you going to do and who's gonna do it or the group's gonna do it? Um, so, that's my experience and, (sighs) it wasn't, wasn't, it wasn't pleasant (laughs) so I understand where minorities come from. Um, and I forgot the question but I wanted to comment about that.

Jessica utilized a "Me too" strategy in her talk that repositioned her as victim. In her race talk, Jessica noted that she had experienced racism during her freshman year "because" of diversity. She conveyed that it was because of the diversity of her friendships that she experienced racism through the race talk of "what they do." Jessica talks about defending her race from these unpleasant experiences—experiences that have helped her to understand what minorities go through. She wants it to stop. While this talk reflects an equalizing process of language and vocabulary made by the students, it does not call out the power differentials of race hierarchy in U.S. social relations. This is another suggestion and reflection of color-blind talk that avoids a more critical view of power and privilege.

Talk about the race walk/ Walk the race talk

This section explores talk from two students about the ways race is performed, as well as performance of race talk. By performance of race talk I mean the performance of speech that is understood by some hearers as racialized or representing a particular vernacular. Sometimes such speech is assimilated and other times it is performed with intention, as code switching. While Jossette's talk occurs within a focus group like all of the informants in this chapter so far, I have included Geoff's talk from his individual interview because his talk is significant to my argument about the performance of race talk. In the following quotation, Jossette described how race performance in social settings is talked about among her peers.

> The whole, acting black or hip hop, all the stereotypes, um, I see that in a lot of cultures too 'cause I know, um, for example, when my roommate and my friend who was Puerto Rican and my roommate who's Dominican, um, they pledged for white sororities and I still have friends that are Latina pledging for sororities that I, oh, she's a sell out. Or, because of the way that she dresses "she's dressing white, she's a sell out." Um, if she speaks a certain way, um, "she's a sell out." "You sound white" and stuff like that. Uhm, and I know back where we're from in the city, the more educated you sound, the whiter you're getting….Like, I know, I came to Findings, I was here for a year, I went back obviously the way that I spoke changed because I was no longer speaking like I was in high school and I was learning, um how to use appropriate words I guess? And like my best friends and even my sister who now goes here, they're like, "Oh my God, you sound so white…"

There were others in the group who agreed with Jossette's description of race performance and the challenges some students of color faced as a result. Jossette outlined some of the factors that would place the authenticity of someone's racial identity in jeopardy, including: 1. social fraternity/sorority affiliation; 2. representation of fashion or clothing; and 3. pattern or sound of speech (talk). These factors were deemed important characterizations of racial identity to potentially label someone a "sell-out." The association of educated speech with whiteness from some of Jossette's younger friends (of color) in her home city is a problematic phenomenon that has been critiqued by many scholars. This social reality for young people of color is a condition they must negotiate as they pursue higher education. Not only could a student's pattern of speech or accent be considered a sign of selling out, but certain actions could be considered a statement of preferring whiteness. These concerns reflect some concern within the communities of color on campus for the maintenance of authentic identity and fear of losing culture.

While some students' speech demonstrated educational attainment or assimilated speech, other's speech was used as social capital among their peers. Yet, for both groups of students, speech was a signifier of identity and something to negotiate. Geoff, a White male, discussed how he used different talk with different groups of people as a way of "handling himself" in different situations. This negotiation of talk allowed him to expand his network and cross boundaries.

G: Because I don't see race as an issue those around me will bring it up. Like will see me talking to some people and they'll say, "Hey Geoff, you're white." It's like, is that really necessary? If I, if I want to talk to him I'm gonna talk one way if I talk

> to this person I'm going to talk another way. But, what I'm talking about is all the same. If, if I'm gonna do this it's gonna be the same.

Geoff's ability to negotiate his talk- his speech patterns and words- sometimes provoked his peers to remind him that he is White. However, Geoff did not see himself as someone bound by identity. Hence, he code switched easily and purposefully often to negotiate his way through multiple associations. Geoff arrived to the Pre-First program with this ability, having exercised it since he was seven years old.

> I will, will talk differently to my white friends but at the same time I told them I find it harder to talk to them than I do to talk to Tawanda, Chermaina, Nubia, Nia, all these people, all these Black people. I just find it harder sometimes when I talk, why I don't get along with my roommate but like when I talk to him I'm just very. I just speak as properly and eloquently as possible as I can just so that I don't have to talk to him but the whole point is that he's white. Almost all the people on my floor are white... I just speak to them the way I basically speak at home to my father.

In the above quotation, Geoff suggested that he not only uses speech to build coalition and friendships across cultural borders, but he uses talk to maintain boundaries as well. His dislike for his roommate prompted him to speak to him and others with "eloquent" and isolating speech. This is the talk he used at home with his father, which maintained social distance. Geoff used what he called slang as friendly talk, even when it placed him outside of the White performance that many were used to. The benefit of this choice is to affiliate with Blackness, specifically Black cool. Geoff makes the decision not to connect with most of the students who

are White on his floor of the residence hall. Instead, he shuts them out with his race talk performance. In both Geoff's and Jossette's race talk, they indicated that race talk in style and delivery can be political as a way to claim identity or disaffiliate someone from an identity.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have explored the dynamics of Race Talk as expressed by nine key informants: Nic, Tom, Jessica, Terrence, Brian, Jossettte, Amy, Clayton, and Geoff. Through their exchanges with one another and their choice of language and sequential strategy, I have described students' interpretations of race and shown how these interpretations are expressed. Students are anxious to talk about race and relish opportunities that are "safe" and seem not to be singly focused on the topic, at least initially. For example, Terrence, his teammates, and other athletes were able to talk about race while working out initially then continuing the discussion in a relaxed setting of their own choosing (the Athletic Complex Lounge). Popular culture icons played a significant role in this talk, providing sources to be interpreted and examples of the students' interpretations. Humor helped students to talk about sensitive themes in their race talk and provided entrance and escape routes for correction.

There were moments of intense exchanges when discussing the experiences with racism between people who represented different positionalities. When a Person of Color shared his experiences with racism, he attempted to share facts that offered the same theme in different settings. The White witness to this talk utilized a different set of strategies in an effort to maintain colorblind ideology. These overlapping strategies included: 1. microaggressions; 2.

dominant denials; and 3. retreating mechanisms. For example, Tom asserted his ideas as standard or normal logic, positioning his views as truth and characterizing Nic as paranoid and illogical. Tom attempted to create doubt in his dominant denials of racism by questioning the interpretation and authority of Nic's experience (microinvalidations) and asserting the possibility of another meaning through hypothetical suggestions. Additionally, Tom denied difference, denied racism, and denied his own experience to reinforce truth as a matter of interpretation and retreated to common ideas ("core values") and finally suspended the conversation to avoid acknowledging Nic's experience. Denials of power and privilege prevented him from understanding the message in Nic's sharing of experience.

Students of color shared the importance of listening as an important strategy for engaging and sustaining potential teachable moments or learning opportunities through race talk. This strategy involves constraining their rage, holding back desire to lash out, to understand white ignorant talk in the learning process. Another student of color reported race talk designed to maintain borders around racial identity enclaves and the troublesome talk of inverted historically oppressive language.

Although students held ideas of colorblind individualism, they struggled with varying expressions of a racialized self in others. They did not want to be judged racially, but seemed to be engaged to whatever degree in the collective exercise of evaluating each other's race authenticity. This was a part of their talk about how other people performed race; and how they themselves negotiated performances in different spaces and situations.

Race talk is about the mechanics, content, and style of talk that utters race into the soliloquies and dialogues of my informants. Race talk is part of a political matrix of meaning making. Throughout this chapter, we see that students engaged race talk to maintain their

position in social relations, identify themselves and others, and theorize about race in a new way. It is important to recognize Hip Hop as a major cultural frame that has helped to shape the race theory that emerged from these informants. It calls for race interpretation at the level of individual experience that generally sees everyone as equal participants in the matrix of domination, which remains unnamed by the informants.

CHAPTER 6 [DATA CHAPTER]

RACE: SHIFTS, STAYS, AND DRIFTS

This chapter, like Chapter 5, also examines much of the data from the focus groups in the second phase of my research. In these sessions, I sought to understand how the informants' views about race may have shifted over time. What would the students express to each other about their experiences with and their understanding of race? How would they talk with each other and make meaning of their shared and varying perspectives? What kinds of interactions did they have on the campus of Findings University since their summer together in the Pre-First program? How did their experiences shape the discourses they would reflect in the focus groups, and vice versa?

This chapter further explores my informants' conceptions of race, deconstructions of racial identities, and lived realities on campus since their initial summer in the Pre-First program. My examination of these broad themes highlights the engagement of students in meaning making about race and the social consequences to this process. I will show how little their views about race changed even though they speak about it in more nuanced and complex ways. I will also show that while White American students continued to minimize race and racism and delved deeper into denial (demonstrated in Chapter 5), the students of color in this study became more race conscious in college. Hence, these students' language about *racism* shifted, while they maintained similar notions of race over the years. Campus social realities challenged colorblind discourses and post-racial desires. Yet, students from various race/ethnic backgrounds negotiated these differently. From classrooms to campus programs and socialization between students, these informants experienced the impact of race in their college generation.

Most of my informants expressed similar ideas about what Race is, three years after their initial interviews. In some ways, I was surprised by this. I had anticipated more significant changes in their interpretations of race as a result of their academic training and experiences at the university. For example, informants still seemed unable to explicitly discuss the significant role of power in the formation and everyday operation of race in U.S. society- a *stayed* conception. However, focus group conversations demonstrated that many of the informants developed more sophisticated ways of expressing their ideas about the complexity of race while maintaining the core beliefs and concerns they held in the Pre-First Program three years earlier. That is, race is a social construction used to categorize people. Additionally, there were *shifts* in expressions of race as a significant factor in their social lives on and off campus. Fewer students of color used minimizing language about race and racism. This seemed to be a result of their experiences with race/racism during their college years. However, the White students in my focus groups remained committed to diminishing race and racism and *drifted* toward the use of microaggressions or white denial (see Chapter 5). These divergent views within the focus group sessions I facilitated reinforced the common theme of some student confusion and frustration with the discourses they inherited and perpetuated while desiring to be post-racial. This negotiation of desire (to be post-racial) and reflection (of past and present realities) resulted in cynicism for some, and excitement at the possibility of cross-racial exploration for others.

I. Conceptions of Race

A. Race is normal, systemic

Students discussed race as a social identifier to categorize human bodies. However, they also complicated this further by exploring the significance of race as a critical factor in the

development of histories and cultures for different groups of people in various ways. They considered the fact that historical figures and events have emerged as a result of beliefs and discourses about race. Further, essentialist discourses about race were problematized by current events, contemporary figures, and the students' own experiences.

In the comment below, the normalized function of race is discussed as an identifier that structures our society as much as numbers and the alphabet do. Society relies on race.

> I do believe that race was, is used to identify people because whether we like it or not we always categorize things. Sort of in the extremes, love, hate, um, African American, Caucasian, white, Latino, um, what not, it's an identifier sort of like numbers identify a concept. Um, and, um Reagan undoubtedly did it apparently, (laughs) um, but I still think it's a concept that people are using as an identifier as a way of pin-pointing a group. 'Cause, even without race in general we talk about sub-cultures, we talk about, you know, the skateboarders, the rockers, the, you know, we just identify people and with that comes the concept of, um, history, culture, what not. So African-American, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, um, you know. I still take it on as a concept that we "make up" just to, I guess the idea out there of who we're talking or what we're talking about. Whether it's good or not I don't know, we just use it sort of like, why do we have numbers, why do we have the alphabet. (laughs) I, I can't explain that to you, um, but I still think of that way because we are still made of the same material in terms of our body chemistry. Um, we are not that different from animals and matter of fact we are animals. But, um, I take it that way, so.
>
> - Amy, Asian American female

> [Race] has become very, very complicated to the point where you're actually trying to figure out people, um, and who they are. Um, I just wanted to add that it's just not a label anymore. We use it as a label still but it's inherently so tied to everything we do and how we think of other people, um, through sub cultures, categories, ethnicities, um, places, histories…
>
> - Natasha, African American female

In the comments above, race is inextricably linked with culture, history, and everyday interpretations. As several informants discussed in their initial interviews, Amy said that race is one of the concepts we use to identify or classify human beings, grouping them by some shared biological composition. During the process of grouping, people develop cultures and histories. Although race is a social construction, Amy argued that it is used to make sense of our world in some way, much like numbers and the alphabet is used. These are all normalized systems that society takes for granted—numbers, alphabet, races.

Rather than arguing against the foolishness of race and racism as they did in Phase I, students of color in the focus groups emphasized the fact that race has been woven into the fabric of our society and how we experience life. They found race to be complex and difficult to define. However, several ideas were shared to bring about some notion of race as a "complicated" collection of concepts, including science, culture, identity, social structure, categorization of people, binaries, geography, history, and politics. Natasha talked about the significance of race beyond a simple "label" or identifier. It was tied to everything people do and think.

B. Race is political

At the time of my third focus group (Fall 2008), the presidential campaign was in full swing, which served as a catalyst for some discussions that troubled race essentialism and highlighted the politics of race. For example, Clayton, an African American student, explored how scientific racism and the development of a superiority/inferiority complex based on race made him uneasy. Then he deliberated on the role that race played in the presidential campaign and how Mr. Barack Obama negotiated or represented his (bi-) racial identity throughout the campaign in the media.

> Okay, race is our need to be able to put a person or an individual in a box or, to categorize them or to mark them in society in our desire to attach a certain stigma to a certain, uh things to that, to that marker, their genetic marker based on the genetic phenotypes or the facial features or whatever the case may be and with that, um, came, came racism and how to discriminate and how to say you're lesser than. I'm more than you are. It's based on the idea that I need to be able to be better than you. How do I be better than you? [You say] "I'm better" [because of] your race or by the way you look and, you know, that's evident throughout our history, historical times and, you know, I've been reading several books about that. But, what is interesting the, the key issue of race and this presidential election, how do we classify Barack Obama? Is he white or is he black and if he's black, he's not black enough or, you know, how is he able to come across and transcend racial division, racial lines, um, growing up with a white mother in Kansas and a black, African father and yet he's able to identify himself with the African-

> American community but yet not be labeled with Jessie Jackson or Al Sharpton, how is that possible?

Students grappled with the political nature of race. Clayton proposed that race is a response to people's need to "categorize" or "mark" various differences among people based on phenotypical features to which we attach stigma in order to create hierarchy. Racism and discrimination result from stigma associated with phenotype categorizations and hierarchy. Then he mentioned the presidential campaign as an example of U.S. American racial politics within the election process. President Obama as a bi-racial figure destabilizes essentialist notions of race and their "pure" categorical attributes. Simultaneously, the president as a racialized figure demonstrates the persistence of the "one drop rule" in U.S. American society. This principle of hypodescent maintains that one drop of "Black" blood in the genetic pool makes a person "Black." Further, Clayton observed that Obama disturbed the sociopolitical dynamics of racial identity, which operate in similar essentialist ways as scientific racism. Obama's biracial genetic composition connected him with a White American mother, rather than with descendants of enslaved African American ancestors, yet he identified with the African American community. Additionally, Obama did not develop strong entanglements with the "old guard" Civil Rights leaders such as Jackson and Sharpton, thereby redefining Black politics. Clayton's observations of these racial politics reflected powerful essentialist discourses of race that pervade society, as well as his own strivings with race matters. Clayton later gave an example of a situation he encountered that expressed his "need" to identify people in certain categories. This need extended beyond racial categories to gender as well. Clayton shared an experience he had meeting one of his peers whose race and gender he could not easily identify.

> I do look at the race. I do see your color. Though I try not to let it bother how I associate myself with you, I do see it. And if I can't recognize it, it bothers me because that experience bothered me and I even called the person a male. Now, 'cause the name was Billy, but she was female and she was Native-American and I said, okay, you're on the wrong floor because that day we must have messed up something. I said you're on the wrong floor, you're Indian and your name is Billy so you shouldn't be on the female floor and she said No I'm a female and I'm Native-American, I'm Indigenous and so I felt real, real bad. But, this is our need to identify that person and that's just, and have that person put in a box or a category and being I couldn't do that. I mean, it's an uneasy feeling for me if I can't identify who you are, your race, ethnicity, your gender. It's my need to be able to identify, put some kind of label to you.

Clayton confidently expressed that he *does* see race, in a sense rejecting colorblindness. However, he desired not to allow his acknowledgement of race to determine how he would interact or associate with others. For him, it was the inability to categorize people that led him to distance himself from them, to "other" them socially and politically. His perspectives demonstrate the intersectional politics of race, gender, and sexuality. As a college senior, he had various experiences that disrupted fixed notions of what it might mean to represent Blackness or Native-ness, or femaleness. Clayton examined these ideas in the focus group to display his personal work around these issues.

C. Race frustrates individuality

In another focus group (FG III), informants explored the complexities of race from varying perspectives, demonstrating in many ways their thoughtfulness about the subject. Students are often frustrated by the varied and conflicting discourses of race. As they explored various elements that complicate their understanding of race, these informants evoked individualism as the winning ideology. The following is an excerpt of the conversation between Tom (White male), Richard (Latino male), Nic (Black Latino male), Mei (Asian American female), Julia (Latina), and this researcher (Black male).

Paul: Some of you have said in your interviews that race is a human invention or simply differences in skin color or geographic background. What is race to you?

Nic: I guess basically it is that, but at the same time, in this society it's more than that. Like as far as, when it comes to school, going to school and getting a job. Like that's a factor and it shouldn't be. Like I guess, and then, but most people would say that's all race is. But it does play a role in like what you do, how you do interact

Rich: I think race simply represents culture. Uhm, I think um everybody's culture is very unique and represents compared to how they were raised and what nationality they are. Um, I think that although like Latino is a race, when you break it down to Dominican, Cuban, Puerto Rican, their cultures are very different. Uhh, I think that's something we have to be aware of, just like you said about Asians. They are very different cultures. I mean that's something that we have to be aware of, and respect, um, amongst everyone.

Julia: Um, I agree with you, but then, I mean, I was just thinking we were talking, like at first I was like yeah race would be like your culture and the kind of music you listen to and all that stuff. But then there's people who um who are of a certain race and totally do not fit the cultural norms of um you know what people. So I I don't know, I think it would just like where geographically and the things that you said, because um you know there are people who are, who are Black and live in London and their culture is totally different than Black people who live in America. And not every Black person who lives in America has the same type of culture. So, I think, I mean at first when you said that I was like yeah it's definitely your culture but now that I think about it you would have to break it down a little more.

Mei: I agree. Uhm, especially when you have lived in different country, you experience different culture, yeah, you just, it's different. Four years ago when I was in China I was still very different, (chuckles) although I listened to American song at that time. But it's different. Like, uhh I experienced the culture in America and I like it and I adopt some of it... So I think it's about uhh people will be changed by the environment. Uh, what is it, the biological, DNA, your personality is not really based on DNA. Partially, but your personality will be changed by the things that you have gone through and your environment and everything. So we cannot just judge a person based on their race or based on the place that they come from.

In the exchanges shown above, we see that Nic promptly responded that race was not only a part of the structure of U.S. American society- education and employment- but it also plays an important role in one's social expressions and interactions. Richard and Julia tried to sort out the overlap of race and culture. While Richard thought race was used in place of culture, Julia proposed that there was more complexity to explore given that people who shared the same "race" could express themselves differently in terms of culture. Notably, Black people in the diaspora could be very different culturally. Blackness is not monolithic. Racial identity is not monolithic. Hence, it is important not to essentialize or stereotype because racial identity expression is complicated by nationality, geography, and other cultural and ideological contexts.

Race and place interface to construct different meanings. Julia emphasized the impact of environment on people's expression of themselves. Mei suggested that race and place should not be used to judge people. "So then, what is race?" I probed.

> I dunno. I don't live here by the way. (chuckles) I mean like, you are you and I am me. I don't really care like where you're from. As long as we have common ground, like let's go. (chuckles) Honestly, race, like I do. I talked about it in the beginning when I first got to America because I feel that I was discriminated or something. But now as I'm more adapted to the culture, I don't think it's that big of issue.

Mei expressed some frustration with the discussion at this point in the conversation, as a result of race confounding her. She did not know what to say race was. Hence, she returned to a discourse of individualism. ("You are you and I am me.") Finding "common ground" should be

the focus, she contended. Although she experienced racial discrimination when she first arrived to the United States, she explained that she is less concerned with racial discrimination now that she is more integrated in U.S. culture. She was now desirous of a post-racial experience and interpretation. Again, she demonstrated that individualism trumps socially constructed racialism for many students today.

Tom's response supported this idea, suggesting that perhaps no one knows what race is because everyone can determine what it is for himself or herself.

> I think race and identity kinda go like, if they're not synonymous then they definitely go like hand in hand. Uhm, I mean it's just really like, what you identify with. Uhh, not necessarily how you're perceived by others, it's just how like you perceive yourself, what race you think you are. Like you said, like, Paul when you said to me like "Is that what you think?" Like "Jewish," when I said arguing about like I'm a white Jew. You were like "Is that what you think?" Yeah I guess that's what I think. Like other people might perceive it differently.

When Tom added his comments, he reinforced the suspension of judgment by recalling that race is connected to identity; hence, race is determined by each individual. Race is determined by each person, according to Tom. This notion, shared by the rest of the focus group, reflects the individualistic nature of the informants and their desire to escape the judgment and ideas of others. However, for Tom, this comment was also about his right to determine his own (White) identity or to deny it. On the other hand, students of color continued to comment about the potential for race and racism to hurt them —emotionally, educationally, socially, or

professionally. They acknowledged a racialized self and recognized that race could potentially deny *them* opportunities and a certain quality of life.

Three years after the initial interviews, informants expressed more complex conceptions of race. These conceptions engaged current events, personal experiences, and the sentiments of their peers. They discussed the normalization of race in society and how it is relied on for categorizing people, the stigmas attached to race and values of superiority and inferiority, that race is political and used in politics. They also observed that periodically there are anomalies in society's system of racial understanding that confuse common (non)sense about racial identity; and that no race group has just one culture. These students were also concerned with being able to determine their own identities and their individuality not being limited by race. Students of color (Nic in particular) acknowledged that, even though it shouldn't be, race is sometimes a factor in education and employment. This meant that race could deny them significant opportunities to advance their quality of life. Yet both White students in the focus groups still denied this important point—that racism was still pervasive in society.

II. Complexity and Fluidity of Identity: Deconstructing Race Identity

During the focus groups, I asked informants how they identified themselves by race so that I could determine whether or not there were any shifts in responses as they talked about identity in the presence of their peers. The resulting data was much richer and more complex than I anticipated. I found that students in my study were wrestling with racial identity labels at a political level, not in terms of embracing race consciousness only but in a process of

understanding and identifying with the most "accurate" term that described their experiences as individuals and connected them to a collective identity. For example, students wanted to understand what the category "African American" meant and how it framed group membership ideologically and socially. This required an examination of terms, history, and social experience. Further, some informants wrestled with and negotiated an understanding of race and ethnicity in their discussion. In this section, I examine these observations through the comments of three informants: Natasha (Black), Amy (Asian-American), and Jossette (Latina). Then I briefly discuss the lack of data on this issue for the White students in my study. We will see how these students negotiate identity in the politics of race.

A. "Black" Identities Under Construction

The term "Black" encapsulates multiple identities and meanings. Students became more aware of this in a diverse university setting where diverse Black people represented, celebrated and explored what it meant for them to identity as Black. Disjointed at first, Natasha expressed four key points about the African or Black American experience and identity. First, she expressed that it is a racial category with multiple ethnicities that embrace and/or resist the "American" or the "African" identity.

> … I'm trying to figure out exactly how to say it but for me personally, it's like I don't mind being called African-American and then somebody brought up, you know, in class they brought up something about, you know, why would we be African-American because, you know, they feel like somebody being Asian-American they probably was

> from Asia or they, you know, people come from other countries and you say XYZ-American so why am I African-American when I was actually born and raised here and, you know, I mean, I guess black people should be considered one of the main races I guess here…
>
> I guess, 'cause the situation with other Americans like Jamaican-Americans and other Africans, like actually people from Africa who come to America. You know they have this argument that don't associate themselves with the actual Black-Americans who actually live and are raised here in America. You know, they, they, they feel like there's a difference…

While the term "African American" has been used as a catch all for racial identity, some have questioned the appropriateness of the term for those Black Americans who were not born on (or may have never been to) the African continent. Such discourse also reflects the de-Americanization of Asian Americans. However, the distinctions promoted here are between Black Americans and other Black people who are immigrant members of the African diaspora in the United States as well as some multi-racial people. For example, Terrence prefers to call himself "Black" as a Black Latino because he identifies with more than just African American culture. Another informant, Brian, identifies as Black but not African American because of his Caribbean heritage. Some Black immigrants attempt to distinguish themselves from U.S. American born Blacks, which energized the discussion on racial identity for Black/African Americans nationally. (For example, see Louis Chude-Sokei's article in the LA Times, February 18, 2007; or the June, 24, 2004 NY Times article by Rimer and Arenson.) These articles discuss

the cultural distinctiveness of Black immigrants and the fact that they are often forced to pass for "African American," a term used interchangeably with Black. The experiences and cultures of both African Americans and that of Black immigrants from a variety of nations are lost in this "category crisis," as Chude-Sokei calls it.

Second, ethnicity has little significance to other races or within the hierarchy of race reality in the United States when one's skin is brown/black (the persistence of phenotypical perceptions).

> When you try to look at the opinions of people who actually come from Africa or from Jamaica, Virgin Islands and stuff like that they, they see the difference and it's like I mean who am I to argue with them if they want [to be] different. I mean, you know, pretty much we all know in America if your skin is brown or dark brown, you're looked at as black period. You know, to somebody who's not from a black community, especially when it comes to employment and stuff like that, then it's like so far that has not changed and it probably won't change for a very long time and it's like, you know, as much as they try to argue with people who look like them, try to argue their point like "I'm not black, I'm Jamaican." Still we're in America; you're black either which way you want to put it 'cause, you know, when you check that box, you're not going to check Caucasian or Hispanic, whatever the application might say, nine times out of ten you're going to check black or slash African-American or which ever way you go so it's like or sometimes I guess they check other but some people, you know, some of them still struggle with that…

Natasha exposed one of the ways that race functions in the United States. Ethnicity is trumped by race, especially in its phenotypical manifestations. Skin tone will determine many people's experiences. Further, Natasha noted that the structure of racial categories proposed on legal documents force the hands of those Blacks in this country who may identify with other ethnic or national heritages.

Third, Natasha suggested that the history and contributions of African descendants in America or of Black Americans is an important consideration in choosing the most appropriate race label.

> Especially since we helped build this country, I guess, some people would argue, you know, um but. I, I mean I look at myself as Black-American, you know, as just a black woman.

African American contributions to the United States provided legitimate claim to an "American" identity specifically. Hence, it was important to attach "American" to either "African" or "Black" prefixes. Natasha asserts her blackness and her American-ness because her race and nationality are intertwined in the recognition of who she is.

Natasha concluded that she was comfortable with either "African-American" or "Black American" label because she viewed the heritage as the same, though she acknowledged that some immigrants or children of immigrants within that racial group viewed their identities as distinctly different from the U.S. American born Black American or African American. Overall, Natasha demonstrated that she understands the nuances of Black/African American identity to include immigration or nativity and the politics of race in the United States that does not always acknowledge these nuances. She did not minimize race as she did in her individual interview,

but raised the complexities of a racial identity. She drew on her academic and social experiences with diverse people in the African or Black diaspora to present multiple perspectives of a Black identity. Yet her core ideas about her racial identity did not change. Looking back on her individual interview, she expressed similar ideas about her racial identity and the importance of nativity.

> I identify myself as…I would call myself a Black American only because…the African American, I see it as just like anybody would call themselves Chinese American, they were born in China, but came to America so that makes them a Chinese American. And as me being born in American I would just see myself as Black American cause Africa American would probably be someone who comes from Africa and becomes African American. But I respect the title that was given to us as an African American. So if I was titled as an African American I accept it. I don't take it any other way.
>
> – Natasha (Pre-First summer interview)

Three years later, Natasha expressed her views in more sophisticated language with more depth of thought. However, the same concerns for Black racial identity are priorities for her.

B. Asian Identities of Relation

Using what she learned about Asian American history, Amy discussed the politics of race in the U.S. She was aware that the census positions people from China and Japan in the same racial group, in spite of their history. Amy spoke confidently about the complicated nature of race and ethnicity; and she made a distinction between them. Three years before, Amy conflated

the two as she attempted to explain that she was an American-born Chinese woman. She described herself as a "Chinese American Asian," noting that she was not a "traditional" Asian; she was "Americanized." In the focus group, she explored similar elements in her expression of racial identity.

> Asian-Pacific American is what is given in most applications, most check boxes, um, the problem with that is, Pacific-Islander is not in this area and we don't have a check box. I, I'd like to consider myself Asian-American, difference being if you're Asian in general you tend to really have, um, a bias or some type of. It's hard to explain, where mainland and like, you know, the offshoots of colonies in mainland how they don't sort of like each other. It's still the same way so there's a lot of political problems going on especially in Asian [nations], where we group Asia as one, yet we know the Chinese people hate Japanese people just by history, sometimes not all the time. Um, but, I consider myself Asian-American because my family is first generation here so I still have a lot of the traditions of Asia, while being more American in the sense I've learned the history that Asian-Americans on this side of the continent I guess. (laughs) Um, I would like to further specify my ethnicity is Chinese because again we have. I always had this kind of "where-are-you-from, anyways, where-are-you-from?" Here. "No, where-are-you-from?" I was born here, "No, where are you really from?" You mean where my parents are from? They're from mainland China, yes, but I am from here, I was born and raised here, um, so I guess I'll just end it like that. I'm Asian-American and my ethnicity is Chinese.

Amy amplified the distinction between Asian and Asian-American, clarifying her American-ness as a U.S. born person with Chinese ethnicity. In her response, Amy made an important point about the term "Asian" as a collective label that encompasses groups of people (from various nations and lands) with histories of domination and conflict. In so doing, she perhaps unconsciously alluded to the particular structure of race in the United States that interprets "Asia" or "Asian" people in a way that is dynamically different from interpretations in that region of the world. In the U.S., these relationships of domination and conflict are simply ignored and set aside for the construction of an Asian American racial identity that meets U.S. political interests. American disregard for Asian dynamics of power and domination also hides its own truth of subjugation here in the United States.

Amy's awareness of race politics in the United States has deepened and she has applied this knowledge to her lived experience. She discussed race and ethnicity with more depth, based on multiple perspectives and experiences of Asians/Asian Americans. Amy's concerns for Asian American identity and where she fit in to this U.S. racial order were shared in her initial interview. Her deeper understanding of the issues suggests she did some work in or outside of class to strengthen her knowledge.

C. Emergent Latino Constructions

The challenge for Latinos, whom Jossette described as a "mixed race" people, is that they are not always considered a distinct race. Though Latinos or Hispanics may be considered a race by people generally, Jossette acknowledged the role of the census in defining the races and making meaning of race. The racial politics of the census conflicts with the assertions of Latino distinctiveness.

> ‘Cause you, I don’t know, ah, um, I think ethnicity makes more sense than race…. Because ethnicity is what you identify with culturally…Latinos, we’re a mixed race, we come from very little Taino, Indian background then African roots and European roots, um, the Spaniards. So it’s like we create this new race, but sometimes we’re not even considered a race at all. I’ve seen some census things…. Like, you know, how, you have to pick, they won’t have Latino, they’ll just have African, and I’ve written emails like why isn’t there Latino? They’re like, they don’t consider it a race…But, um, it is weird and like it’s hard as well to explain this to other people too because I’ll be like yeah, I’m Latina and they’ll be like, “Yeah, so then you’re black.” No, I’m not black, I’m Latina. “No, no, you’re black.” I’m like, no, and then I came up with this creative concept which was that Latinos are like the color orange and listen, listen to me. Please don’t judge me. So Latino’s are like the color orange because orange is a color right, but it’s made out of red and yellow. You can’t say orange is red and you can’t say orange is yellow because it’s its own color, it’s orange and that’s how, um Latino’s are. We’re not a primary color, we’re not a primary race that people talk about and that we can kind sort of know from history.

While Jossette offered a metaphor about the distinct racial category that she identifies as Latino— red and yellow make orange—the metaphor reflected a pure-race discourse for any of the other recognized categories in the census. At the same time, the challenge she faced as a Latina illustrates the messiness of race as well as its process and political construction. Hence, ethnicity made more sense to Jossette because it allowed her to celebrate culture primarily, and disentangle her phenotype and “race” composition historically.

During Jossette's individual interview three years before, she discussed the cultural pride she had in being "distinctly" Latina. She was raised in a home where race was not discussed but her Dominican heritage was celebrated as a special difference that the family shared. Jossette was taught to understand that culture "makes you different, in a good way." As she explored racial distinctions using cultural examples, she was careful to express that "we're all the same." In her junior year of college, Jossette was still concerned with racial distinctions that would essentially allow her to solidify her race identity amidst those of her peers.

D. White Stasis

While some informants (students of color) were concerned about asserting a distinct racial identity, others (White students) expressed having no such care. Aside from the data that expressed the two White students' denial in their race talk, there was little data that expressed any interrogation of their racial identity as White people. Beyond the privilege of not thinking about or caring very much about White racial identity and its consequences (McIntosh, 1988; Frankenburg, 1993), is the intention to detach oneself from race and the inherent power relationships that accompany such identification (Matsuda, 1996). Like minimizing the reality of racism or the significance of race, detachment from a White racial identity may drift toward reconceptualizations of reality and suggestions that (race) labels can be used by anyone to do anything to another. For example, Jessica, a White female student, attempted to detach herself from whiteness and then reinterpret her relationship to systemic oppression. Her approach to identifying herself racially was to state "I don't care" and "whatever you want to call me" as she

described herself as White or Caucasian. However, she discussed experiencing "a lot of racism toward me" when some of her "minority" friends talked about their White peers stereotypically.

> Um, I experienced a lot of, um, racism towards me, in my freshman year because of my friends were such diverse people and came from diverse backgrounds that whther they were joking about it of like seriously like, I've heard that a lot from all of 'em. "Why do you all wear flip flops? It's snowing." And I'm like, I have boots on. Not all (laughing) of us are…

So Jessica became witness to racialized jokes from some of her friends who were students of color. This allowed her to state how she is different from other Whites and to critique generalizations. However, she also interpreted this experience as one that connected her to others who are victimized by racism. Both Jessica and Tom demonstrated openness to diversity by their social behaviors—diversity in friendships and associations. However, these relationships seemed to help nurture their detachment from a meaningful racialized self and foster confusion about racism because of their determination to deny their own place in the dominant racial structure of society. Such denials prevented them from deconstructing all that "White" has meant and could mean, even for them individually.

While other informants unpacked the various cultures and ethnicities that have been collapsed into their racial categorizations, White students did not engage in these levels of racial interrogation. Tom acknowledged his Jewishness briefly, but did not present any data as to what that meant for his existence or the way he experienced the world. Jessica made no acknowledgements of ethnicity. Both students presented a single focus of whiteness in their discussion of race and racism, with little examination of its meaning only the fact that it is and they are. Essentially, being white speaks all for itself.

III. LIVED REALITIES ON CAMPUS

University campuses create a microcosm for learning and development. Tinto (1975) described the university as a system with academic and social subsystems. Hence, researchers in higher education often examine the academic and social climates on campus in order to understand the factors that impact students' adjustment, retention, integration, cross-cultural interactions, etc. (e.g. Gilliard, Hurtado et. al., 1999; Smith, 1980; Suen, 1983). The data in this section is used to present an analysis of race in the academic and social life at Findings. The students' experiences reflected much of the current scholarship about students in a diverse campus environment and the balkanization of race/ethnic groups which can lead to hurtful experiences (such as Tintocalis, 2010). However, this data is of interest to me as it helps to demonstrate the shifts students of color made in their thinking about race and their acceptance or rejection of various discourses as a result of their lived campus experiences. Specifically, students of color had experiences on campus that shifted their discussions of race from minimization to greater acknowledgement and interrogation of race/racism in everyday life.

Findings University, with its diverse student body, was still a predominantly white institution. For my informants who all attended the Pre-First summer program, this was a particularly striking reality when the Fall semester officially began. Many of the informants discussed the change that took place, from a summer where the "minority" (African American/Black, Asian American, and Hispanic/Latino) students together constituted the majority population of the program participants, to the fall semester where the university's full population was exposed. This demographic shift in their college activities may have placed certain experiences in sharp contrast to the Pre-First Program. I wanted to understand what their

experiences with a broader racial diversity since their first college summer meant for them. How did they continue to explore race or diversity? What were these exchanges or interactions like? The following data highlight the students' interpretations of classroom and co-curricular or social experiences at Findings.

Classrooms, Race-rooms

> "They told me. Khalil and Kenny both told me. Khalil being a black, my black RA, and Kenny being my white RA, told me that in the Fall "it won't be like this, you probably will be the only minority in class" and I have been the only minority in class. (laughs) I'm the only black person in my class now, in my HNR 260 class and it's interesting 'cause as I'm in that course, whenever we talk about a black issue the teacher looks at me and so did everybody else and I have to be able to answer that question. It's no pressure because it's something I enjoy challenging, the challenge, but the fact that it still exists, you know, and the fact that the diversity that we're talking about it is still not quite here yet. The vision is still not fulfilled." - Clayton, African American male

Student experiences in the classroom demonstrated that it was a site where racial dynamics were displayed, whether or not they were intentionally engaged by professors. There were disparate levels of engagement of race as a topic in classrooms or in the curriculum. However, students of color were aware that it shaped their experiences. These students experienced race insensitive classroom management or pedagogy, dissimilar levels of awareness

and standpoints among their peers, the pressure of minority race representation, or the strepitous silence of the topic and related matters in some courses of study.

Clayton described the extreme minority position he held as the "only" Black person in one of his classes. As the "only" one, Clayton felt that the instructor and his classmates tokenized him, expecting him to deliver "the Black perspective" in several discussions and further highlighting his marginalization. This added a certain kind of "pressure" to his learning experience. While Clayton expressed that he accepted this pressure as a positive "challenge," he recognized that his experience did not reflect an ideal representation and treatment of diversity in his class. Actually, that experience reflected a discourse of the burden placed on People of Color to be experts and spokespersons on all things related to their race, to discuss their individual perspective as the viewpoint of their collective group, and to discuss race as something only "they" possess.

In the following excerpt Natasha reflected on the classroom discussions that provided insight about her peers' thoughts on race and how they were socialized to think (or not think) about race. She shared that race was frequently discussed in the social science courses she took during her first year at the university.

> …And it was very interesting because that was the year that that movie Crash came out and all those classes wanted you to watch Crash. So, I watched it maybe six times in one year. (they laugh) And it, I think that was where my, my thought process about the whole campus came about because, you know, we had a few, you know, Caucasian people in the class, and it was just interesting their mindset about what they saw in the movie and also, you know what's going on in the world that they live in and that we all live in. You

> know, one boy, you know, mentioned that, um, those things don't happen, you know about what's going on in the movie. I think it was, um, you know, how people are treated, how the LAPD, LAPD treats African-Americans over there and like how, you know, the white lady jumped when she saw the two black guys walking towards her and her husband, you know, he was saying, that's over exaggerated and stuff like that don't happen. But then you have a lot of people in the class who could attest to that and was bringing up their own, um, situations where it did happen and, you know, everyone's like, "what rock do you live under" type thing? And, you know, the things he was saying. It was like people really do still continue to say that. And then another one was my sophomore year where this girl, you know, she admitted that she was afraid of black people. And I was just sitting there like, huh? (they laugh) Like why? But I mean she, you know, where she grew up there, you didn't see, any dark faces or brown faces rather or Latinos or anything like that so, but she just specifically said she was afraid 'cause I guess maybe what she saw on TV and stuff like that and then you know a lot of people that come to Northeast City really don't have any encounters or relationships with people of African-American race or Latinos and stuff like that so they really are afraid and still and now that I'm a junior, it's like, you know, I don't feel no type of way about anybody but now I have a broader perspective of what certain people think.

In many ways, it seemed as though Natasha's experiences were like reality checks—"people really do continue to say that." In the classroom experiences she described, Natasha found that her realities with race would be challenged, denied and discounted by some of her peers. Reflecting on a discussion about the movie *Crash* (2005), she recounted that even in a

classroom where a student of color is not the lone representative, his/her experiences with racism (characterized by police brutality and white fear of people of color based on stereotype in the movie) can be flatly denied by White students. In another class, Natasha recalled with disappointment that one of her White classmates expressed being afraid of Black people, positioning Natasha and her peers of color as threats. These students' responses reflected competing discourses of colorblindness and the reproduction of a stereotype that People of Color are threatening or dangerous. The neglect or ignorance of racist realities expressed by her classmates were particularly troubling to Natasha but offered her a "broader perspective" about the mindsets of her peers. While *Crash* (2005) seemed to be a popular tool at the time for promoting discussions about racism or various experiences people have with race, it has been criticized for confusing the dynamics of power in race relations, and suggesting that racism is something of a private equal opportunity for people from all racial backgrounds (Dirks & Mueller, 2007; Giroux & Giroux, 2007). Natasha's comments give us insight to the often *unsafe*, troubling, and exhausting spaces that classrooms can sometimes become for students of color:

> …It's like you get tired though, of feeling like you have to defend your race every time a situation comes up or you try and explain a situation why African-American women act this way or why black men feel this way like. It's like, it's a continuous I-have-to-explain, I-have-to-explain. Like okay, when is everyone going to get it type thing? (they laugh) 'Cause it's like in school you learn about, you learn all about the Caucasian race and like it's in the curriculum and it's like Black history month come around and sometimes you know certain people still don't. They still, it's like why does it just have

> to be just that month or and then like I say, even some schools still don't talk about the African-Americans, you hear about the same people, you know, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, and then even with them you still don't get the hard core stuff that you need to know about them. You get the basic like, you know, Martin Luther King, civil rights, okay, we know all that like and then I got to college and actually read Malcolm X's biography and stuff like that, you learn so much more and like it's sad to me. You know, I found it to be sad like, you know, 'cause when I was in school like I didn't think about it.

Having to explain the perspectives and realities of People of Color in the classroom can be very frustrating for students. Natasha cited how taxing of an experience it is, and the repetitive nature of this actuality. "It's a continuous I-have-to-explain, I-have-to-explain." When will people get it? She pointed out that People of Color have to explain because the K-12 curriculum is Eurocentric and narrow. The only diversity in the curriculum was exhibited during Black History Month when just a few more predictable Black historical icons and facts were mentioned. Teachers offered limited knowledge and perspective in a limited amount of time. Hence, if her peers' high school experience was like hers, they had little information to build on. The college curriculum was better in that it offered more opportunities to engage academic work on race from historical and sociological perspectives.

Yet the college curriculum was limited also. Amy (Asian American female) described her experience in the classroom and the need to learn more about her heritage.

> This could be a trend right here. Um, I do not take any classes, not too many classes in social sciences but diversity has always been a constant. You know almost everyday

> activities ‘cause since I’m in engineering major, that does not really apply, we do not talk about it too much. Policy studies, not too much either, one or two core classes for the liberal arts degree. But it’s been constant because I came to Findings hoping to find out about my heritage, my past, and our school doesn’t offer. Um, we, I have constantly through the last three years educated myself about the Asian-American movement that is going on right now. Um, our, the people that, have, been in the public, in the media that are Asian-American like Helen Zia, ah, these political figures that are in the “arena” right now but we do not know about them ‘cause we’re such a small group. So, in a sense that you guys learn about Caucasian race, because everyone goes through that in the curriculum from high school on, and African-American where, um, where you have the people that are constantly repeated over and everyone knows what their names are. What they are associated with, you know, and Latinos. And Asian-American, um, history and traditions of, you know, being in the U.S. we barely hear anything. The most thing, the most anyone ever hears about is we helped you build the railroads and, you know, okay we did other things too…

Engineering courses at Findings University did not engage with race or diversity. So, Amy exercised initiative to educate herself about the “Asian American movement” outside of her classroom study. She described the organization of knowledge at the university, to the neglect of Asian American Studies, and how little is known of Asian American contributions in general. She argued that while schools take up teaching about some racial/ethnic cultures and historical figures, they ignore others like important Asian American contemporary figures. Asian

American historical contributions are limited to their participation in building railroads. Further, current struggles for the Asian American community are silenced.

Students were raced as they learned. In other words, racial identities were ascribed to them. Expectations and stereotypes were attendant. In their classrooms, students of color were expected to perform as experts on the topic of race or as sages on the collective and varied concerns/thoughts of their race, or to simply ingest the dominant ideologies reflected in the curriculum. These classroom experiences opened their eyes to realities of present day racism and racial dynamics that they may not have understood during their first college summer three years before. Experiences with marginalization, tokenism, and white denial elicited deeper reflection and analysis of these students' academic journeys and they discovered that race had been with them all along. Amy, Clayton and Natasha discussed their social location as students of color who had been matriculating through a white-washed educational system. Amy's and Natasha's (and their White peers') experiences with the curriculum reflected the Eurocentric and white-centered control of educational text in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions. Such domination created classroom pockets of ignorance and frustration, yet opportunities to challenge dominant racial discourses that reproduce inequalities in future generations of (mis)educated citizenry.

The *Colored* Section

> "I think that diversity is still a very big issue, specifically for this campus. I can't speak for any other campus. Um, I don't think that the um different groups intermingle as well as I would like to see them intermingle. I think we're a very separated campus and that's a problem that's very persistent. And uhh, I would like to see things done to try to solve that issue. I don't think enough is done. I think that there needs

to be a lot more work, um, more efforts made to, um to solve the diversity problems that exist on this campus." – Richard Gonzalez (Latino male)

The diversity in representation of people from different ethnic and racial backgrounds seemed to be appreciated by the students in this study. They believed that most students on campus held the same estimation for representational diversity. However, these informants argued that the campus climate in actuality was not as harmonious or tolerant as it would seem on the surface. For example, Amy observed that "we say it's diverse because you see the 'color' of the campus…But the atmosphere is not that color at all." Amy noted that there was indeed a diverse student population matriculating at Findings University. The university's enrollment efforts were laudable. The greater challenge was the *atmosphere* or racial/diversity climate of the campus. Pre-First students found themselves on a campus that resisted the diversity it purported to celebrate.

Students of color described the social separation or diversity dissociation on campus. This was the significant context in which they studied, worked, played and lived. It was the normative Findings experience. It was present in classrooms, residence halls, and modes of operation. In this section of the chapter, I present a few exchanges that demonstrate different ways students witnessed and sustained their separated way of life.

Findings University students developed tolerance for separateness in their thoughts and social habits. Jossette and Terrence recalled vividly the group designations in the cafeterias on campus. Not only did the football athletic team have a "spot" for sitting and eating together but so did Blacks, Whites, Latinos. Students did not discuss these seating designations, they were understood as social practices and respected. This extended beyond their eating comforts and was expressed in most other areas of their lives on campus. This zoning of their existence in

racialized ways severely limited their knowledge of campus entities and each other. The following excerpts demonstrate just how pervasive this issue was:

> Terrence: I just thought it was weird that, you know, everybody kept telling me, no, you're going to a predominantly white school, I'm like… For real, and they're like, 'cause I didn't. I'm from Northeast City and I didn't even know about like college life, like I live five minutes [away] but I never used to come up here so, when I decide, when I really heard that and it shocked me, it messed my head up like, white school, what you mean white? That is, this school is definitely not white and then most of the people I see out in the quad, or walking to class, are a lot of colors until you actually get in class and you be like, damn, like this is an all white school, so, it depends on where you go and like. I know, say at our parties like, Campus Center parties, you see most of the black population at the parties but you're thinking like, this is a white school why aren't, you know. So, I just think it's, it's tainted the way people pic or say how the school is 'cause number wise they might be more whites but, it's like to me activity-wise, there's more blacks…

Terrence, a Northeast City native, discussed his first impressions of campus as a diverse institution that was not easily recognizable as a predominantly white institution based on the contexts in which he operated. This impression was likely influenced by Terrence's participation in the Pre-First Program and his student-athlete status as a member of the football team, which

was diverse but predominantly black. He also observed the diversity he saw as he walked across the quad. However his critical point may have been that the campus was predominantly white by representation and more diverse in terms of the activities that he participated in. Other members of his focus group agreed, noting the active planning and implementation of parties, events, and workshops sponsored by students of color or cultural organizations.

Jossette: I know, for example, I'm Greek and, I heard a lot of complaints from, you know, the, the non-IFC non panhel council how the "lesser councils," we do way more. We try to always throw events etc, etc, and we have less resources. But these people, from like mainstream that have all resources that they can get. They have these houses, they don't ever come and show support, they don't ever try to cater to anybody but themselves, and that sounds.. bad but I don't know if you get what I'm saying. And like most of the big events that you see here, that, don't get much support. You will always see somebody of color going to a dance or a show or to something, I don't even know what the white people throw, what events…Like ProBoard stuff, you will always see somebody of color. Will you see somebody [not of] color in Fiesta Latina? In, um, something thrown by CSA, something thrown by like, um, NASA, the Native American Student Association, by ASIA? Rarely.

Jossette discussed an important aspect of the social scene at Findings University: the fraternity and sorority system. In her description of the Greek system that she is a part of,

Jossette noted the sense of inferiority that some members of the historically African-American Greek letter fraternities and sororities as well as the Latino and Asian "Greeks" feel about how they exist on campus. This sense was nurtured by their observation of the privileged mainstream or predominantly White fraternities in the Inter-Fraternity Council (IFC) and Panhellenic sororities with their real estate on Fraternity/Sorority Row on campus. The university's administrative structure and management of these organizations privileges the mainstream organizations as well and delivers services from a white fraternity/sorority centered perspective. Jossette lamented their lack of support for the active burden of work that other fraternities and sororities largely represented by students of color performed on campus, as well as other large events for the student community. She also noted that people of color demonstrated support for this level of student activity on campus. Students of color would attend events sponsored by every organization, whether they are cultural or not. The Programming Board ("ProBoard") was largely perceived as a club dominated by White students with White programmatic leaning. Jossette emphasized that students of color crossed perceived cultural borders to support ProBoard events and such outreach was not reciprocated. These comments demonstrated the cultural zoning that takes place at Findings and segregates students in the co-curriculum, demarcating lines around organizations and programming content. This self-imposed zoning distorted or even impeded some White students' hearing and seeing.

The following exchange captured the informants reflecting on the absurdity of *privileged ignorance* of some White students—choosing not to see, not to hear, not to know.

Jossette: I know people that don't even know what OMA is.

Brian: Yeah

Jossette: Like, "Office of Multicultural Affairs, where is that?"

Brian: "What is that?" (laughs)

Jossette: And they've been like to the Copy Center before, (they laugh) which is right next to it. "Where is it?" Right next to the Copy Center. "To the left or to the right?" There's nothing else to the left. (they laugh) Gonna be to the right, boo-boo.

Jossette observed that students who even visited the Copy Center, located right beside OMA, would not take note of the Office of Multicultural Affairs' presence. For most people, the office was difficult to miss based on its location. Brian and Jossette dryly made light of White students' ignorance of the office and provided no excuse for this lack of knowledge. They continued:

Terrence: I think it's ignorant for like people to say like oh, like, straight be clueless about something like. If you go to this school, you know something, a little about something like. You see like, people or you, I'm sorry but a lot of people assume so even if you assume certain stuff like you get that drift. But, for those who don't know like *anything*, flat out like oh well.

Jossette: And don't care to know anything.

Terrence: "I didn't know like such and such", or "I didn't know that white people can go to a Campus Center party, like, when a black like fraternity throws a party."

Jossette: I've heard that before.

Terrence: "In the Campus Center, like I didn't know we could go." Like, I've heard that from

Jossette: I've heard that.

Terrence: People in my classes 'cause I like a few friends that I do have, like I can talk to in class that I necessarily don't hang out with, they be like, "You was at the Campus Center party? Campus Center party, I didn't know nothing about a Campus Center party." Like, it's being talked about all over school but you don't know stuff like that. I just think it's ignorant for somebody to just be so narrow minded on situations. I'm just giving you that situation but there's a lot of people like that.

As these informants (students of color) described some of the interactions they have had with White peers, they provided evidence of the thick culture of privileged ignorance and social separation that exists on the campus. It's not only that many White students didn't know, when the information was widely available, but that they did not "care" to know. They seemed to stop listening to information that reflected the social interests of people of color or anything related to diversity. Then they convinced themselves of the irrelevance of such information for them. All events held in the Campus Center were open to all students. These informants of color affirmed each other as they discussed this phenomenon which they all experienced. Telling these stories

acknowledged the active operation of race in their social experiences which shifted their approach from minimizing to interrogating their realities.

The privileged ignorance of White students laid a foundation and philosophy for how they would set social boundaries and rules of etiquette, how they would enact these rules that barred others from entering their social circles. Or perhaps it was White students' own discriminatory ways that framed their view or lack of vision for the opportunities that existed to interact and learn in other social spaces not controlled by them. Whichever way this closed mentality developed, it became clear that a profound and persistent *culture of segregation* ruled the social lives of Findings students.

Students of color discussed at length the barriers and "restrictions" that White students, especially those in fraternities, utilized to prevent non-member students of color from entering their parties. Informants (students) of color expressed feelings of rejection and offense at the ways they were barred from socializing with their White peers. They expressed that while their White counterparts were welcomed at the parties held in the Campus Center and other social events held in the housing units of students of color who lived on East Campus, minority students were often stopped at the door, interrogated, or turned away. They would find themselves in this predicament after hearing about one of those parties from a friend of the fraternity or from a fraternity member. However, often students of color were "not invited at all." Such social behaviors avoided integrated contact and perpetuated the social segregation that all the Findings students discussed.

Choon-yei remarked about the privilege to avoid confronting difference that White students have at a predominantly white institution like Findings. Her comment underscores the importance of white initiative to break away from white-centered norms of existence.

> …For like white people, I think they could avoid certain situations they never experienced, certain discriminations because you know like Findings is predominantly white and like a lot of professor, you see a lot of like white professors compared to like black, Latino or Asian professors. So like, I think like. They, they always have somebody that they can go and talk to or like they could find some kind of resource or connections or like being or considered as minority that sometimes it's really hard. 'Cause like I have to face those problems all the time because my appearance not because like the qualities that I have. So I mean like if white people like, I mean they could go to those Campus Center parties or sometimes people call "colored party." I mean they could go to those parties, but at the same time like if they don't want to they could just go and choose to go to fraternity parties. So, I feel like they have the chance to avoid those situations.

Choon-yei acknowledged the privilege of the majority not to be concerned with the minority, to avoid situations of difference that promote diverse perspectives and offer opportunities to build relationships with diverse people. White students could avoid other students, other professors, other social functions. Choon-yei also acknowledged her own feelings of isolation or disconnectedness sometimes by not having as many opportunities to be mentored by a professor or finding other resources with an appreciation for her experience as a "minority."

The "colored section," as discussed by these informants (all students of color) is a Findings campus construction that confines the social spaces- physical and programmatic- of minority students. The colored section is a result of decisive zoning in the social consciousness of the student community. Rather than ethnic enclaves, these informants suggest there were

strict social borders that excluded them from accessing a richer college experience. Further, White students ignored and recreated the "colored section" with their social votes to prevent social entry to students of color; or to not participate in, not see, and not know relevant information about the students of color and their social experiences. Findings University students were keenly aware of their entitlements and where they stood with each other. Such awareness reproduced a culture of segregation and perpetuated racial borders of ignorance.

These lived racialized experiences on campus helped to nurture race consciousness among students of color. This shifted their language from a post-racial aspirational focus to an examination of present racial realities. Students of color remained hopeful about the future of race relations while they developed greater confidence in articulating the everyday experiences they had with race. Many of these experiences frustrated them and encouraged more questions for them. Yet these realities showed them that race and racism were not simply social constructions in the minds of individuals, but political constructions with real consequences in their material lives. Although these students did not expressly confront power and white supremacy, their ability to interrogate campus racialized experiences suggested they were better poised to do so now than during their Pre-First summer.

CONCLUSION

This chapter explored some of the data that emerged from the focus groups, where a total of thirteen informants discussed their perceptions of race and their experiences at Findings University since the PreFirst Program three years before. The focus groups were dynamic in

nature with very rich dialogue. Informants shared a lot with each other and this researcher that provided insight about race, identity, and the social world of Findings University students.

By their junior year, students could dialogue about race more comfortably with stronger articulations about the complexities of race especially racial identity. Informants interpreted race in much of the same ways they did at the start of their college careers. They viewed it as an organizing principle that separated people and structured the experiences of different groups of people. Race, although difficult to define, was based on several factors including phenotype, nativity, nationality, culture, and how one chooses to define one's identity. Race identity terms like "Black," "African-American," "Asian," and "Asian American" were problematized and interrogated by students who had a more sophisticated understanding of the politics of naming race in the U.S. Whatever the complexities of race, students were concerned that race would be used to judge individual persons in terms of their identity expression or experiences of inequality. White students did far less interrogation of whiteness or their own racial identity. They demonstrated whiteness in action but were unable to discuss it, reifying whiteness as invisible superiority above talk. Racism was acknowledged as a concern among students of color. However, White students were also concerned about their whiteness having any meaning at all in the face of opportunity. That is, White students were concerned about losing their privilege.

Although Findings University is a diverse institution of higher learning, it remains a predominantly and historically White educational institution. This reality was not easily perceived during the summer of the PreFirst Program. Hence, many informants made significant psychic and social adjustments to the demographic of the university when their first Fall semester began. These adjustments were challenged by the privileged ignorance demonstrated in

classrooms and other spaces, as well as the deeply normative culture that (1) held on to a dysfunctional diversity that emphasized sameness and seclusion, and (2) practiced diversity dissociation where the rhetorical celebration of diversity was disconnected from the reality of a culture of segregation among groups. As a result, many students' romanticizing of a post-racial society was disturbed by the tensions of ignorance and social rules of segregation. The tyranny of these social rules that maintained the campus social order included cultural zoning of programs or events at the organizational or sponsorship level, as well as the participation level. The students' desire to be post-racial was expressed differently among them. White students desired to maintain their privilege not to see race, denying the racist order this maintains. Students of color desired a campus without racism, hoping with their eyes wide open.

CHAPTER 7:

CONCLUSION

This final chapter of the dissertation presents a summary of my arguments, discusses suggestions for further research, and highlights implications for educators.

Summary and Discussion

Students enter higher education with established ideas and conceptions about race that have been developed within their families and from their primary and secondary educational experiences. The students in my study expressed dominant race discourses in their initial interviews at the start of their college careers that included colorblind discourses that currently pervade and shape our nation's in/ability to talk about race honestly and openly. These discourses, which minimize the reality of racism, were apparent in the language of the informants during their initial college summer. Some attempted to deny contemporary racism through this frame, while others sought to neutralize the real consequences of race by projecting what *should* be rather than acknowledging society as it is. Although White, Asian, Latino, and Black American students minimized race, their intentions were different. White students minimized race to deny racism and avoid confronting their whiteness. Students of color, on the other hand, sought to neutralize racist ideas and stereotypes. There were a few Black students in particular who demonstrated some resistance to colorblind discourses. They used race minimization in their language initially as a sort of defensive or neutralizing speech. However,

they were also actively engaged in a project of racial identity development and affirmation through self-directed study on race and African American /Black culture.

While minimizing the reality of race and racism, students revealed their parents' racialized and racist ideas, as well as their own dysconscious racism (King, 1991) through family portraits. These portraits included familial views on friendship and dating that reinscribed the U.S. racial hierarchy and discourses of preference. For example, the mothers of both Don (a White male) and Jennifer (a Latina) urged them to prefer dating White girl/boyfriends. Both mothers' views highlighted the preferences of a "pigmentocracy" (Lipshutz, 1944), which presents a hierarchy based on skin color, hair texture, and other bodily features that are considered racial signifiers. Further, some family portraits demonstrated how some students of color attempted to negotiate colorblind discourse with the lived experiences of older generations (parents and grandparents) who articulated historical and persistent racial discrimination in contemporary society. Students of color seemed to disconnect from those narratives shared by their parents or grandparents. This is likely the combined effect of colorblind discourses in schools and less life experience as youth, without the tools to be conscious of or to analyze the ways their lives have already been shaped by race and racism; as well as their resistance to internalized racism.

In contemporary educational contexts, young people (students) desire to create their own narratives about race and their own identities. By this I mean that students are concerned with staunch individualism and resent the scripts that race (or any other social element) enacts as unfair limitations. Further, as social consumers, students are simultaneously very active in a race economy, "trading" cards of racialized script summaries that they use as currency in self-presentation and social interactions. This postmodernist approach to identity was demonstrated

particularly among White, Asian, and Black American students in this research project. One White (male) subject demonstrated his white standpoint as an "American" by using his national identity as a "safe house" for his unnamed racial identity. He resisted acknowledging his whiteness even as we discussed his racial identity. For him, racial identity was self-determined. Another White (female) subject discussed her white body as a host for her "Black" self. She associated whiteness with materialism and classism, and rejected both. However, her identification with blackness was the result of stereotypical and delinquent, pathological discourses of "Black" behavior. Yet, within their postmodernist generational context and their approach to identity, their white skin privilege worked to perpetuate white denial and "blackface" race performance. It is denial of their whiteness that complicates these students' ability to "be" White without performing pathological "blackness." Angela, in particular, does not know what to do with the fact of her whiteness and what it could mean, so she masks an "internal Black" identity that in fact reifies her whiteness. She actually embodies a suppression and oppression of blackness with her disturbing words. Asian/Asian American subjects were ambivalent about their racial identities as presented in the U.S. American context. This ambivalence was tied to the authenticity or artificiality of the "Asian American" category in the U.S., where the nativity of those who identify as such is always questioned. The trans-national experience and the racist disruption of Asian/Asian American claims to a "home," coupled with the inability to fit into a White-Black binary, complicated how these students represented racial identity. These challenges expose the messy nature of racial politics in the United States. As noted by Nikhil Singh (2005), "the effect of 'race' as an aggregate works largely by suppressing salient internal differences within and across 'racial' categories" (p. 127). However, for two Black students, developing a Black post-Civil Rights racial identity was a process they were

actively engaged in. This meant resisting the pervasive colorblind discourses of contemporary society enough to discover a blackness that was authentic, historically reflective and contemporary; but not too sharply defined by the pre-Civil Rights experiences of Black Americans. This also meant understanding history while not being constrained by it, as a way to rearticulate a non-essentialist blackness (even politically). Of course, these students must continue to work out their Black identities in a way that does not lose the resistance struggle "rooted in a process of decolonization" or dismiss the struggle altogether (hooks, 1990, p.4).

Students across racial categories desired a new way of seeing or not seeing race. They seemed to want to see race as a simple aesthetic without the weight of history and present realities, without the burden of prejudice or power. They did not want to see race with all its ugly consequences. Yet, when presented with the opportunity to discuss how race mattered to their college experience, students demonstrated their awareness of various race discourses regarding college admissions, campus social life, social mobility, and multicultural competence. Perhaps these students at the initial stage of their college careers were able to see some ways that race was a part of their lives; however, they were challenged to see the racialization of their lives as anything particularly significant. In other words, they observed race operating in their lives but hesitated to acknowledge the degree to which it would impact them. Further, students (especially students of color) entering college may not have been able to articulate the significance of race in their talk precisely because colorblind discourse does not tutor such direct talk of race, nor does it permit it. Hence, it was important for me to investigate the "race talk" that students were in fact engaged in.

In Chapter 5, I illuminated various types of race talk exhibited by students and discussed what kinds of strategies they were. I outlined the "White talk, back talk" used in white denial of

racism to uphold colorblind ideology and maintain white supremacy or centrality. This denial was not an asymmetry of perception (Blauner, 1989; Essed, 1991) but a reflection of privilege and a strategy to maintain it. In this kind of talk that occurs in conversation with people of color, Tom demonstrated three main strategies that Whites use to maintain their position. First, he used microinvalidations (Sue et. al., 2007) to discredit the Other speaker. Subtle invalidating phrases like "that's not *necessarily* true," suggestions of over-analysis or paranoia, or questioning the logic of statements were used to nullify the thoughts and feelings of people of color as a microaggressive strategy. Also, *dominant denials* are made by White subjects through their authoritative stance about and display of white dominance over the experiences of people of color, while denying the persistence of racism in that experience. Third, retreating mechanisms such as erasing difference or repositioning the focus of the discussion are used to attempt to win the argument. However, if winning is not possible, the talk will be suspended. As Tom demonstrated, giving up, rather than giving in, was the final strategy. Suspension of the dialogue was preferred to surrender. These overlapping strategies collaborate (or conspire) to maintain the status quo. Other white race talk utilizes positive self-presentation that sometimes affirms colorblindness, while presenting a negative other-presentation (van Dijk, 1992). As was the case with Jessica, these strategies are often coupled with microaggressive speech or storylines designed to keep people of color in their place (Bonilla-Silva, 2006).

Students also reported constructing race talk of their own that was facilitated by Hip Hop culture as a lens and catalyst for meaning making. This Hip Hop talk generation demonstrated how students theorize about race using the lives and bodies of iconic figures and artists in Hip Hop culture as well as through the ways that other public figures interact or interface with the culture. Terrence's example of this student-initiated talk exhibited the power of Hip Hop culture

to help this generation of young people to rearticulate race and reinterpret racism, and to generate youth-exclusive as well as inter-generational, inter-racial race talk. Yet this talk was hosted by and within a culture (Hip Hop) that is rooted in Black culture, and distinctly accommodating of all raced people who are willing to allow Hip Hop to supersede their racial identity, at least while performing or enjoying its music and other ways of being. This observation presents tensions and occasions for Hip Hop, which is not immune to the colorblind ideological habitus (Bourdieu, 1984) in which it is appreciated and the White monopolized industry in which it is reproduced, to empower subjugated Black youth and work at interrogating racism. However, its appropriation through corporate control reifies the racist order and diminishes its potential for shifting power at the gatekeeper level.

Race talk also involves listening. Students of color demonstrated the importance of listening as a strategy of sustaining conversations with their White counterparts. This active listening was an act of humility, as it required people of color to give significant air time to the *white noise* of ignorance that may be expressed by their White peers. Further, listening on the part of people of color meant suppressing the justifiable rage they may have felt from the racist or ignorant discourse they encountered. If people of color are not humble and courageous enough to listen, they fear that Whites will flee the conversation and precious teachable moments may be missed. Listening helps to facilitate openness and "safety" for dialogue to occur; though initially at the expense of people of color.

Finally, I found that race talk is used to maintain boundaries and to evaluate authenticity. Talk of appropriate behaviors for different groups of people was used to maintain borders between race/ethnic groups (Myers and Williamson, 2001). These behaviors included ways of talking (speech patterns), vocabulary that is permitted (such as inverted terms like "niggah" or

"bitch"), or social affiliations. Talk of social behaviors also included fashion. Students evaluated race authenticity and membership based on these criteria and used their talk to establish those assessments and draw lines of distinction between themselves. Among students of color, this discourse was very meaningful and could be especially damaging if an individual was deemed a "sell-out" of his/her race or minority standing. However, for White students, the ability to speak with Black vernacular did not seem to produce stigma but contributed to their sense of being cool. I use the term *compounded privilege* to describe the use of this talk by Whites to cross boundaries and raise social currency among Black people while denying their white privilege. When Whites, with their institutional benefits, complicity in and access to oppressive power and white capital, also develop ways of infiltrating the cultural spaces of the subjugated (through language, music, and other ways of surviving and negotiating the system) without interrogating their own whiteness, they compound their privilege. Geoff demonstrated this concept in the way he used different "talk" while retreating from confronting racism among his family members.

Chapter 6 argued that many of these college students in their junior and senior years maintained their core beliefs about race as a social construction and, except for some Black students, were still unable to talk about power explicitly. For these students, race and racism could only be talked about at the interpersonal micro level. Even when employment and law enforcement were presented in their discussions, students were only able to talk about interpersonal (rather than systematic and structural) relationships. For example, Nic acknowledged that race played a role "when it comes to school…and getting a job;" but he was much more concerned about interpersonal interactions cross-racially. There was little interrogation of the systemic nature of racism, even as these students of color shared experiences

that provided significant evidence of this fact. However, he and his peers still articulated a more complex understanding of race and its manifestations in their lives than they did three years prior. Experiences in higher education contributed to a deepening "color consciousness" among students of color. While students of color demonstrated a greater awareness of race and racism as salient elements in society, White students remained committed to diminishing the existence of racism. All the students seemed to desire a post-racial society, though they imagined this differently. White students want race to disappear, without having to confront their whiteness and its privileges. Black students and other students of color want *racism* to end and desire their humanity within race identity to be visible to everyone. These desires from all the students would be profoundly shaped by a dense *culture of segregation* that existed on the Findings University campus.

On a diverse yet predominantly white campus such as Findings, most students faced stubborn challenges to engage with that diversity in meaningful ways. Students of color in particular were keenly aware of the culture of segregation which reminded them in dining areas, classrooms, campus-wide activities, parties, fraternity/sorority system operations that they belonged in the "colored section." This was not the same as "ethnic enclaves" described by scholars as supportive and affirming though isolated space or initiatives of students of color to "scale down" the university and nurture or retain ethnic identity (Loo & Rolison, 1986; Murguia, Padilla, & Pavel, 1991; Padilla, Trevino, Gonzalez, and Trevino, 1997). The colored section represents where, what, and whom White students determine as less valuable to know, to learn about, to interact with, to go to, or to see; the locations, knowledge, activities, and such that White students decided were for non-White students. Students of color expressed being ignored, neglected, excluded, and isolated by their White peers. Examples of these acts included ignoring

programs, activities, or departments that had any suggestion of race or culture as a theme; policing events by turning students of color away or not extending an invitation, projecting these exclusions on to students of color to justify dismissing opportunities for cross-racial interaction, and more. However, all students from every race/ethnic group seemed to be complicit in maintaining the culture of the campus. They did so with their race talk and discourses of difference. The culture of the campus dictated that students remain separate and created a fear of expanding one's cultural/racial network meaningfully. Students who "branched out" did so with a certain amount of maturity and courage that not all students had. They risked stigma and isolation. If they were not successful at branching out to organizations and social groups, it was possible for other members of a student's racial group to respond suspiciously. A student who branched-out risked being left with nothing. Yet some students took advantage of opportunities to branch out nonetheless. Other students seemed to simply traverse the dynamics of a diverse yet predominantly white campus. They did not intentionally seek diverse experiences, but may have taken advantage of some cross-cultural and cross-racial interactions that were presented to them. Perhaps the inability to have meaningful cross-racial relationships that did not simply ignore race also contributed to the discouragement.

All students in this study demonstrated that race discourses and experiences within their educational journeys had a powerful impact on them. Additionally, their families and pre-secondary experiences provided core ideas about race that they developed and brought with them to the college campus. The university presented these students with cross-racial opportunities for dialogue and interaction within a learning environment where diversity was promoted as a core value of the institution. This seemed especially clear during the Pre-First Program. However, diversity or multicultural competencies as a learning priority seemed to diminish in successive

semesters while the students' regressive experiences with race intensified. These experiences in classrooms and within the expansive co-curricular offerings and social context of the university suggested a tacit acceptance of the Findings University campus culture by faculty, staff, and students. After all, the primary mission of the university is to educate. Perhaps the students in this study viewed issues of race and racism as secondary concerns that warranted attention only when they impeded the "real" education that the university promised them.

Implications

The university campus is a site of race and racism, education and conflict. Whether or not universities undertake "Race" as a subject in the curriculum, students will learn something about it. What they learn may not be an education. Students may be misinformed about race or misunderstood because of it. However, they will consciously or dysconsciously construct various meanings of race. All the students in my study had ideas about race, whether or not those ideas were formally taught during their educational processes. Race had been a part of their lives and the discourses they re/produced in the interviews and focus groups demonstrated how powerfully various conceptions of race had been established.

Race in the post-Civil Rights era manifests itself very differently from the days of Jim Crow. Consequently, youth and college students are not likely to identify with race, or resist its dehumanizing effects in the same ways that educators have been trained to understand it or educate against its injustice. That is, when educators talk about race, even as a social construct, the students who listen have already interpreted something different than what the educator has

said. These interpretations are deeply shaped by the colorblind habitus in which students and the people who facilitate their learning all operate. It is important for educators to interrogate this tyranny of discourse (colorblindness) directly as a powerful worldview that has impacted everyone from all social locations, and to decipher the disparate imprints it has had on each group. While colorblind discourse serves to maintain a white centered and supremacist order, it is an important layer in race dialogue that should be unpacked distinctly, along with privilege and power.

This study showed that students are wrestling with social/racial identity formation in this postmodern era and they seek to construct identities that are not fixed or stable rather than have their identities determined only by external forces. However, White students in the study demonstrated that their racial identities are actually fixed in whiteness because they resist confronting it. Denial, energized by and developed within colorblind discourse, actually works against their ability to construct a new whiteness in identity that is postmodern and post-racial, as many students desire. Discourses around border maintenance and separation demonstrate students' desire for a secure (though not essentialist) ethnic identity. The culture of segregation is likely sustained in part by students' need to work out and maintain some sense of a social identity without other constructive alternatives to do so. Educators could be more proactive in this work of supporting all students in their own projects to re/construct social identities that honor an authentic sense of justice.

Students desire to talk about race and to talk inter-racially. However, many of them do not believe they have the social tools (including confidence) to engage in such dialogue in a sustained and meaningful way. This dissertation research suggests that universities should vigorously empower students with those social tools. Hip Hop culture seems to provide a

platform from which to launch many conversations on the topic and should be used by college educators- in Student Affairs and Academic Affairs- to do so. Use of music, artist biographies, movies and other media connected to Hip Hop culture provide this platform that should provoke constructive dialogue. Hip Hop is a site and can be a catalyst for dialogue about race, class, gender, and youth. The importance of Hip Hop's use for this work is clear as Hip Hop is unambiguously a dominant element in American popular culture. Whether or not an individual considers him/herself a part of the culture or an avid listener of the music, s/he interacts with Hip Hop in one way or another as it dominates youth culture. Also, Hip Hop emerges from African American experience and its music engenders a range of Black youth experiences from beats to lyrics (Forman, 2000). Hence, it can naturally stir dialogue about race, through analysis of what the music and culture presents, how individuals and society respond to it, and the news it creates within popular contexts. However, it must be understood as a "broad cultural movement" and not simply a collection of art forms, industry or influence (Kitwana, 2002). Hip Hop has emancipating possibilities for every racial/ethnic group within U.S. classrooms, just as it has proven global influences from Africa to Europe and Asia (Mitchell, 2002; Rose, 1994). Local, national and international Hip Hop manifestations, from the messages to the men and women who deliver them, within the context of history, evolution of the art form, as well as the industry and social creativities that sustain them can be explored critically and utilized productively. Imagine how students could be engaged in research projects and meaningful co-curricular experiences that explore the economics of Hip Hop, textual analyses, Hip Hop feminism, the social and political thrusts of Hip Hop in various youth movements, all grounded in analyses of race. For educators to utilize Hip Hop in anti-racist learning does not require them to be Hip

Hop, but to engage various aspects of it or the scholarship that continues to emerge about this important expression of youth culture.

Structured conversations should be facilitated among fraternities, sororities, other student organizations, and among student leaders like resident assistants, student employees, and members of formalized learning communities and programs to help emancipate students from campus cultures of segregation. As fraternities and sororities have histories dating back to the 1700s and some of that history has demonstrated race based exclusions, exploration of these histories for the lessons they teach should be a part of the responsible social practice of "Greek" leaders. Further, fraternities and sororities tend to be especially powerful social agents on campus. Their leadership in anti-racist social behaviors would likely claim great impact for the student body. Additionally, Student Affairs professionals who engage with all students should be committed to the interrogation of race and whiteness in particular. This work must not be left in the laps of diversity and multicultural affairs professionals alone. Rather it must be the work for all professionals and especially for White professionals to join professionals of color to vigilantly interrogate whiteness with White students. Race should be critically and substantially examined in required foundational courses for all students. Projects like the multi-university Intergroup Dialogue demonstrate the need and effectiveness of intentional efforts to dialogue between groups. Research should explore whether Intergroup Dialogue could be a first year or second year experience for all university students. Further, students should be challenged to explore implications in their various disciplines in subsequent years at the university. Of course, critical to this process is the faculty and/or staff engagement in anti-racist learning and teaching programs so that they are empowered to facilitate this kind of justice education. These learning and teaching programs must interrogate colorblindness which has often been the paradigm or

assumed goal of some academic and co-curricular initiatives. An example of this in Student Affairs is the approach to create an "inclusive" Greek community by erasing the particular concerns and unique cultural manifestation of historically Black fraternities and sororities (NPHC). We see this particularly when NPHC organizations are required to participate in mainstream Greek traditions or large scale philanthropies (created by and/or benefiting White students), without "White Greeks" being even encouraged to understand and participate in the long standing service projects of NPHC groups that tend to respond to symptoms of racial inequality. Colorblind approaches in the name of "inclusivity" on behalf of some Greek Advisors has meant the forced assimilation of some groups and programs, thereby chilling the critical dialogue and effectiveness brought by differences among student groups.

As opportunities are created for critical dialogue about racism and other forms of oppression, it may be useful to engage in some sustained dialogue about race and racism specifically. Additionally, within that discussion, it may be useful to have some race homogenous groupings so that deeper issues of say whiteness or Asian-ness can be explored. There may be some benefits in students of color talking together, or Black students talking together to unpack their experiences and the nuances of racism within their communities, without the too soon complication of "external" ears. I am not advocating that cross-racial dialogue is not useful. I am suggesting that some of the untangling that needs to be done in anti-racist education may be done more productively with some isolation of topics and groups. For example, internalized racism within Latino communities may be best discussed with Latino students initially rather than creating or reinforcing a hostile space in a racially mixed setting.

The negotiation of race from the perspective of Asian and Asian American students may be most productively discussed in a homogenous setting before a more racially inclusive dialogue is initiated.

Research Implications

This dissertation research indicates that students come to college with ideas about race. Further research could be done that focuses on K-12 education and how race is examined or not within classrooms. While some educators at the primary and secondary level may use multicultural education approaches, there is likely not a consistent engagement of this approach throughout the schooling of America's youth (Banks, 1993; Nieto, 1994). Further, this multicultural education may not be distinctly anti-racist in its purpose or implementation (Kehoe and Mansfield, 1993; Lawrence and Tatum, 1997). In fact, it may be decidedly "colorblind" and damaging. Research suggests teachers and educational leaders of schools could further examine their own racism or racial ideas and be better trained to engage issues of diversity, race, equity and justice (Bjork & Ginsberg, 1995; Rusch, 2004). Further research could examine anti-racist professional development and training models or help to create such models for efficacy. Educators need to understand how to disrupt racist ideas that students and leaders bring to school.

Additionally, research at the post-secondary level could examine various institutions' dis/engagement of race as an educational subject in the academic and co-curricular arenas. Appropriate models for effective dialogue that dismantles racism, supports and holds students accountable within community could be developed. During the second phase of my research, I

was often curious about the race discourses that interviews and focus groups with university professors and administrators would reveal. It would be interesting to uncover how university leaders construct and negotiate their meaning(s) of race as well.

Hip Hop culture's remarkable influence on U.S. American youth and its ability to foster common references for groups across the racial spectrum represented in our nation should be studied. Work by scholars in this area (such as Tricia Rose, Jason Rodriguez, and Murray Forman) that explores Hip Hop and racial identity, colorblind discourse, popular culture, power, cultural re/production and appropriation should be engaged in student learning opportunities inside and outside the classroom. The following questions might help educators to understand how to use this culture as a catalyst for anti-racist change: What principles or values in Hip Hop culture help to foster inter-racial dialogue? How can the consequences of Hip Hop cultural appropriation be used in anti-racist education? How can the exposition of Hip Hop listeners' engagement with and denial of critical thought about race be used to illuminate power, privilege and race talk? What race discourses in Hip Hop disarm racism or what discourses reflect racism's power over the culture? How can Hip Hop, in this colorblind era, be utilized in education to dismantle the perpetuation of racism?

Further research could also examine in greater detail how and why it is that Black students, rather than Asian American and Latino students, seem more actively to resist dominant race discourses, and explicate how students from other race groups demonstrate their resistance. How do colorblind discourses impact Native American students? Further examination of the reasons for students' maintenance of their ideas and disengagement with anti-racism or deeper critical multiculturalism during their college years should be done. Is Pre-First's engagement of diversity and race themes useful or counterproductive in terms of creating sustained dialogue?

What sustains students' interrogation of race and racism toward social justice ends? How can colleges and universities work with primary and secondary schools to disrupt racist discourses? Universities interested in more intentional ways of engaging students in anti-racist education could benefit from further study on the kinds of co-curricular experiences and situations that nurture cross-racial interrogation of the racial order. Additionally, how can Academic Affairs and Student Affairs collaborate to ensure competent faculty and staff are prepared to challenge all our students to grow in the area of multicultural competence? Further study of these questions will contribute to the significance of this research and position our colleges and universities to develop meaningful anti-racism projects that students can learn from and find encouragement to continue in their post-baccalaureate lives.

As I continue my work in this area, I would like to conduct research that explored race discourses of specific groups from matriculation to graduation. I am interested in following the social behavior and patterns of particular groups more closely to help me understand more about how these students progress or regress in their race talk. Additionally, I am curious about other learning contexts, such as historically Black college and university campuses or tribal colleges. How would those students talk about race? What would their constructions be? How do they negotiate colorblindness?

I am left with one important concern. This dissertation exposes the persistence of white supremacist thinking among students that is masked behind colorblind discourse. However, it was not clear that White students or students of color were fully aware of the consequences of such discourse. Further, as colorblind vocabulary is often shared across racial lines, the intentions of such discourse that White students display may disillusion students of color into thinking that there are shared goals for racial justice, unless the conversation deepens. There are

grave concerns for people of color who may drink the post-racial kool-aid because of seemingly amicable associations that suggest a new day for equity has arrived or could be ushered in by these associations, or what seems to be shared understanding, only to be undermined in the end. It may be that colorblindness, like white supremacy, undermines everyone in the end. It creates violence against justice, identity, even the ability to share honest common understanding.

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