

5-1-2015

# RACE, SOCIALIZATION, AND CIVILITY: INTERROGATING THE COMMUNICATIVE CONSTRUCTION OF THE WHITE HABITUS

Charles Kyle Rudick

*Southern Illinois University Carbondale*, [ckylerrudick@gmail.com](mailto:ckylerrudick@gmail.com)

Follow this and additional works at: <http://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/dissertations>

---

## Recommended Citation

Rudick, Charles Kyle, "RACE, SOCIALIZATION, AND CIVILITY: INTERROGATING THE COMMUNICATIVE CONSTRUCTION OF THE WHITE HABITUS" (2015). *Dissertations*. Paper 1046.

This Open Access Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at OpenSIUC. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of OpenSIUC. For more information, please contact [opensiuc@lib.siu.edu](mailto:opensiuc@lib.siu.edu).

RACE, SOCIALIZATION, AND CIVILITY: INTERROGATING THE COMMUNICATIVE  
CONSTRUCTION OF THE WHITE HABITUS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

by

C. Kyle Rudick

B.A. Ed., Northeastern State University, 2009  
M.A. West Virginia University, 2010

A Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Doctoral of Philosophy in Speech Communication

Department of Speech Communication  
in the College of Liberal Arts  
Southern Illinois University Carbondale  
May 2015

DISSERTATION APPROVAL  
RACE, SOCIALIZATION, AND CIVILITY: INTERROGATING THE COMMUNICATIVE  
CONSTRUCTION OF THE WHITE HABITUS

By

C. Kyle Rudick

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
in the field of Speech Communication

Approved by:

Satoshi Toyosaki, Ph.D., Chair

Nathan Stucky, Ph.D.

Elyse Pineau, Ph.D.

Sandra Pensoneau-Conway, Ph.D.

Sosanya Jones, Ph.D.

Graduate School

Southern Illinois University Carbondale

March 30, 2015

## AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF

C. KYLE RUDICK, for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in COMMUNICATION STUDIES, presented on MARCH 30, 2015, at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

TITLE: RACE, SOCIALIZATION, AND CIVILITY: INTERROGATING THE COMMUNICATIVE CONSTRUCTION OF THE WHITE HABITUS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

MAJOR PROFESSOR: Dr. Satoshi Toyosaki, Ph.D

The purpose of this dissertation project was to understand how institutions of higher education, through both punishments and rewards, ensure that dominant cultural codes are “taught” to students of color in ways that normalize whiteness ideologies. I wanted to understand racism in higher education through the lens of socialization to show the ways in which institutional members (un)intentionally conflate dominant cultural codes with the “correct” or “normal” way to think, act, or speak. Furthermore, I was interested in the ways that students of color take up, defer, resist, adapt, mix, subvert, and/or accommodate the institutional practices that (re)produce racial power within contemporary U.S. higher education.

To pursue these goals, I focused on topics of racism, socialization through the white habitus, and civility utilizing critical-qualitative methodologies. I interviewed fourteen participants of various racial backgrounds a total of twenty-eight times to understand how they identified and negotiated the institutional norms of higher education. Specially, I utilized in-depth interviewing methods with narrative analysis and counterstory techniques to generate themes and present stories concerning my topics.

My analysis of participants’ responses generated insights related to my areas of study. First, I showed how racism manifests in a myriad of ways, including stereotypes and stereotype threats, microaggressions of invisibility, and overt forms of physical/mental violence. These themes indicate that racism still presents a significant threat to the health, well-being, and

success of students of color within higher education. Second, I utilized Co-Cultural Theory to analyze participants' descriptions of higher education as a space that is dominated by the white habitus. That is, participants described specific communicative codes that constituted the practices of an idealized White identity within higher education and the ways they assimilated, accommodated, and separated from that identity. Third, I drew upon the notion of civility to understand the ways that its practice can function to perpetuate or subvert racism within higher education. Participants described appeals to covering ground and common courtesy as ways that conversations about race and racism are elided by dominant members in higher education thereby perpetuating whiteness. Additionally, I found that participants utilized purposive silence, niceness, and absurdity as ways to subvert the hegemonic dimensions of civility. Overall, my analysis points to the relationships among cultural, institutional, and individual rules and performances of race and racism.

I concluded my dissertation by describing the major findings of the project and offering ways to combat racism in higher education. I offered that this dissertation can further whiteness studies by focusing attention on the cultural norms and practices that constitute the socializing mechanisms of higher education (or other institutions). This type of analysis is important because it does not rely upon essentialized racial identities (e.g., linking whiteness to White bodies); instead, it focuses attention on the institutional rules and norms that constitute yet transcend racial categories. I also drew upon Black Feminist Thought and Critical Communication Pedagogy to map out a dialogic ethic that serves as a foundation for communicating through inclusive civility to provide a guide for coalitional politics for social-justice work. I ended with the hope that such an ethic may provide a necessary step in the work to elicit institutional change and cultural renewal.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to first thank my amazing partner, Kathryn B. Golsan, for her love and support. We met as undergraduates and have stayed together through years of isolation, deadlines, and moves. I can't think of anyone else who would have been able to love me through my general moodiness, depression, and mania over the past five years. Thank you for sticking with me!

I also want to thank my family for their support as I went through graduate school. I don't think any of them expected me to stay in school for nearly ten years when I left home for college, but they've helped me move across the country and back, listened to me ramble in academic-ese, and still wanted to see me at Christmas every year. I'm so fortunate to have such a loving group of people believe in me.

I also want to extend my gratitude to Amy Aldridge Sanford, who introduced me to the field of communication education and is still my greatest mentor. Amy helped me find my voice personally and professionally. She took me to my first Central States Communication Association conference when I was a sophomore and encouraged me to take part in the conversations and panels. From then on, I knew that I wanted to be a part of higher education and (more importantly) that I could be a part of it because Amy believed in me.

I wish to conclude by showing my appreciation for my excellent committee members. Dr. Nathan Stucky's was the first class in performance I ever enrolled in as a doctoral student. He showed me that research didn't have to just mean written work—it could be embodied, it could be fun, and it could be art. Dr. Elyse Pineau helped me make connections between performance and teaching. Her presence in the classroom, the intentionality of her movements and words, is something that I will always strive for and envy. Dr. Sandra Pensoneau-Conway exemplifies how a professor should balance rigor and support. I am constantly inspired by the depth of the

relationships she has cultivated with undergraduate and graduate students. Dr. Sosanya Jones took her personal time to give me information regarding publication outlets and job opportunities. Her dedication as an outside committee member challenges me to work harder for students. And finally, my adviser, Dr. Satoshi Toyosaki. I have had the privilege of watching Satoshi progress from a doctoral student, to a professor at University of Wisconsin- La Crosse, to a tenured faculty member at SIU. I have yet to meet someone as hardworking and dedicated to his scholarship. Before he died, John Warren said he was going to start kicking my butt when it came to polishing my writing skills. You stepped up when John passed away—consider my butt truly and completely kicked.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>CHAPTER</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
ABSTRACT.....	i
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	ii
CHAPTERS	
CHAPTER 1 – A SELF-REFLECTIVE BEGINNING .....	1
General Research Rationale and Purpose .....	14
Dissertation Chapter-by-Chapter Outline .....	17
CHAPTER 2 – REVIEW OF LITERATURE .....	20
Literature Review.....	22
Racism.....	22
Socialization .....	33
Civility.....	42
Identification of Research Gaps and Problems.....	47
Research Questions.....	49
Methodology.....	50
Critical-Qualitative Methodologies .....	51
In-depth Interviewing.....	52
Participations .....	53
Procedures .....	55
Data Analysis .....	56
CHAPTER 3 – RACISM IN HIGHER EDUCATION .....	59
Stereotypes and Stereotype Threat.....	63



Conceptual Framework .....	66
How Stereotype Threat Manifests in Higher Education .....	68
Effects of Stereotyping .....	70
Summary .....	74
Invisibility as a Racial Microaggression.....	75
Conceptual Framework .....	79
How Invisibility Manifests in Higher Education .....	80
Effects of Invisibility as a Microaggression .....	83
Summary .....	85
Overt Racism and the Creation of a Hostile Environment .....	85
Conceptual Framework.....	89
How Overt Racism Manifests in Higher Education .....	90
Effects of Overt Racism in Higher Education .....	93
Summary.....	94
Chapter Conclusion.....	95
<b>CHAPTER 4 – SOCIALIZATION AND THE WHITE HABITUS IN HIGHER</b>	
<b>EDUCATION.....</b>	<b>99</b>
Co-Cultural Theory.....	103
Identifying the White Habitus.....	105
Assimilation and the White Habitus .....	116
Accommodation and the White Habitus .....	126
Separation and the White Habitus .....	137
Chapter Conclusion.....	148

CHAPTER 5 – CIVILITY AND HIGHER EDUCATION .....	151
The Communicative Appeals to Hegemonic Civility .....	155
“Covering Ground” as an Appeal to Hegemonic Civility .....	158
“Common Courtesy” as an Appeal to Hegemonic Civility .....	163
Subversion and Hegemonic Civility .....	168
Purposive Silence, Niceness, and Absurdity as Subversive Acts .....	172
Chapter Conclusion.....	182
CHAPTER 6 – SUMMARY, INTERPRETATION, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE	
DIRECTIONS .....	183
Summary of Major Findings .....	184
Racism in Higher Education .....	185
Mapping Socialization: Identifying the White Habitus in Higher	
Education .....	188
Navigating the Socializing Influence of the White Habitus in Higher	
Education .....	191
Communicating (In)Civility in Higher Education .....	194
Interpretation of Major Findings.....	198
Analysis of Communicating through Whiteness .....	198
Socialization and Success(?) within Higher Education .....	203
The Conceptual Dimensions of Civility .....	205
Imagining a Critical Alternatives through BFT and CCP.....	207
Black Feminist Thought (BFT) .....	207
Critical Communication Pedagogy (CCP) .....	210

Imagining Communicating through Inclusive Civility .....	211
Limitations of Study .....	213
REFERENCES .....	218
APPENDICES	
Appendix A – Solicitation Script.....	241
Appendix B – Recruitment Script.....	242
Appendix C – Information Card .....	243
Appendix D – Cover Letter.....	244
Appendix E – Informed Consent Form.....	246
Appendix F – Semi-Structured Interview Questions .....	248
Appendix G – Ethnographic Questions .....	250
VITA .....	251

## CHAPTER I

### A SELF-REFLECTIVE BEGINNING

*I'm sitting in a parked van under a gray sky with my best friend Jeremy. It's his eighth birthday, and we're on our way to Tulsa to play laser tag. We push our white faces up against the glass, marveling at the rain drops running down the windows. As we gaze through the sparkling beads, we see his dad go inside the gas station to pay for gas. "Park your butts on those seats, put your seatbelts on, or we won't be going anywhere!" Jeremy's mom commands, forcing us to control our excitement. We make our way with minimal shoving and put on our car seat buckles. While I connect one end of the buckle to the other, I hear the \*click\* of the car locks. I look up, confused, because Jeremy's dad is not in the car yet. Through the rain-spattered window, I see an African-American male<sup>1</sup> walking by our car to go into the gas station. He walks steadily by the van, eyes forward, as the rain collects on his dark brown skin, thick beard, and brown coat. He goes into the store as my friend's dad comes out. As his dad nears the car, I hear the \*click\* of the car locks—this time to unlock the doors. We continue on to Tulsa to play laser tag, eat birthday cake, and unwrap presents.*

\*\*\*\*\*

This story chronicles one of my earliest memories of witnessing the normalization of racism. Although I did not understand the racial politics that was playing out in front of me at the time, I have come to understand that the significance of that moment lay in its simplicity and ordinariness. Without fanfare, white hoods, or racial epithets, Jeremy's mother had taught my friend and me to identify and (de)value racial difference with the touch of a button. We went on

---

<sup>1</sup> I recognize that many of my ascriptions of other's racial or gendered identity are based on my own perceptions and not on their own self-identification. I asked for other's self-identification when able, but for some of these stories I have no way of contacting the person about whom I write.

to celebrate his birthday without a second thought—as if locking doors in the presence of people of color should be a perfectly normal, routine part of our lives.

Maybe the reason why this story is so powerful for me is because I grew up in Oologah, Oklahoma, a small town that was comprised predominantly of White,<sup>2</sup> rural, middle-class people. The times that I did interact with people of color as a child or teenager were extremely rare and brief. There were no teachers that identified themselves as Asian, Black, or Latina/o in my public school, and only a few as Native American. Furthermore, there were no students in my graduating class of nearly 150 students that identified themselves as Black or Latina/o and fewer than a dozen as Asian or Native American. Similarly, my church, recreation soccer league, and debate team were comprised almost exclusively of White people. In short, I grew up in the company of people that looked, thought, acted, and talked similarly to me for nearly twenty years. I lived in a community that was characterized by racial homogeneity until I left home for college when I was 18-years old.

\*\*\*\*

*I'm on the campus of Northeastern State University, where I hope to obtain my undergraduate degree. The campus is in a town called Tahlequah, OK, which is an hour and a half drive away from where I grew up. The town is in a low valley in a heavily wooded area near the Illinois River. It's a beautiful area, especially in the fall when the leaves from the oak and maple trees turn gold and red. I'm excited because whereas the population of Oologah is about 800 people, Tahlequah has over 10,000 residents and students during the fall and spring*

---

<sup>2</sup> Although one of the contributions of this dissertation is to trouble the conflation among White bodies, whiteness, and white identity, it is important to mark that people that identify themselves as White (either through avowal or ascription) enjoy—consciously or not—a disproportionate amount of power and privilege as opposed to people who identify themselves as non-White. Although there are times within this paper that I use the terms such as “White people” or “Whites” to mark those who exercise power from the cultural center, it is important to keep in mind that race is not biological nor are the benefits of whiteness distributed evenly within white culture (e.g., poor vs. wealthy white people). In other words, I acknowledge diversity among white people.

*semesters. As cliché as it might sound, the stoplights, bars, and Wal-Mart make me feel like I'm in the "big city."*

*I live on the first floor of the 1<sup>st</sup>-year student residence hall. I open the door to my room and meet my roommate. He's a White male from the suburbs of Tulsa, a soft-spoken Christian and only child. We talk for about an hour, trading "likes" and "dislikes" and forming a rough set of rules concerning space, property, and noise. Afterward, we decide to go next door and to meet our dormitory neighbors. The door opens after we knock a few times, revealing one White male standing in the doorway and another sitting on the bottom bunk. Their room is like ours, sparsely populated by second-hand furniture and blue-grey carpet that looks to be about 30 years old. They have set up a television with an Xbox gaming system and are playing Halo. They ask if my roommate and I want to play, and we both agree. We sit on the edge of the bottom bunk and wait for our turn. I realize that the noise from the game's music, explosions, and gunfire is extremely loud so I get up to shut the door. As I put my hand on the edge of the door, I see a Latino male walking toward his dormitory room at the end of the hall. Our eyes lock for a brief moment as, once again, the soft \*click\* of a door lock creates a barrier between me and a person of color.*

\*\*\*\*

I did not really understand the politics associated with the lack of racial diversity in my hometown until I went through college. Tahlequah being the capitol of the Cherokee Nation, I was unsurprised at the high number of Native American students. I was completely unprepared for what I perceived to be a high number of African-American students that came primarily from the Tulsa area, Hmong students from the Oklahoma-Arkansas border, and Japanese international students. In reality, a little over 50% of the college student body identified as White (College

Portraits, 2014), but due to my white-washed life, I felt as though there was a cacophony of racial diversity around me.

Although my undergraduate university was a predominantly White institution, I still felt a keen sense of fear and anxiety in the presence of students of color. For so much of my life, I had been taught, both implicitly and explicitly, that people of color were loud, dangerous, and violent. I made friends with White people at first. After a few months, my White friends introduced me to their friends of color, and I began my personal journey toward learning how to be friends with people that did not share my racial identity.

\*\*\*\*

*It seems that time has frozen. I look down at my notebook and back up to the clock again and again, but it seems like the hands haven't moved at all since the first time I looked. I glance to my right. Outside the sun is shining, and the sky seems so blue. "Why am I stuck in this class!?" I think to myself. The professor drones on about prepositions. "Remember the squirrel," he says. "The squirrel goes up, down, over, on, and through the tree. If you end a sentence with words like these, you're ending it with a preposition. Don't do that! Now, can any of you think of other prepositions?" None of the class raise their hands. "Anyone?" he queries. He continues, "No? Okay, so I guess we all understand prepositions. So let's move on to cover verb tenses." Although I have always loved writing and reading, I will be happy to never diagram a sentence again.*

*I look to the left and see Josh. He is an African-American male from Tulsa. He has short dread-locks and a cynical wit that I enjoy. He wants to be an English major, with an emphasis in creative writing. When he told me that he would perform his own poetry at the local coffee bar, I figured he was either good or confident. After having watched him perform, I realized he was*

*both. He and I have been walking back to the dormitories after class for the past few months. We usually talk about parties or complain about how much homework we have.*

*The clock finally signals the end of class. Students pick up their bags and file out the door. Josh and I walk down the hallway side-by-side, him on the right and me on the left. There are two White males ahead of us, also side-by-side, talking quietly as they head toward the building's doors. The one on the right wears a red shirt, and the one on the left wears a Yankees hat. Both of them open the doors and look back to us, gauging the distance. Yankees Hat decides to hold the door. Red Shirt pauses for a moment and, looking at Josh, lets the door shut.*

*"Thanks," I say as I walk through the door.*

*"No problem," Yankees Hat replies and quickens his step to catch up with red shirt.*

*Josh is walking more slowly than normal, and as the two other students get out of earshot, says, "Did you see that? What an asshole!"*

*"See what?" I reply.*

*"That he just shut that door in my face. Like, he was looking at me in the eye as he did it, too."*

*We walk for a few minutes in silence. Then Josh blurts, "Man, I can't stand the racism on this campus."*

*"What makes you say that?"*

*He looks at me sideways and says, "You just saw it! No one shuts a door on the White guy, but man, it's just like I'm invisible around here. Like people look at me in the eye, but still manage to see right through me."*

*"And you think that's because you're b-b-b-," I start to stutter, not wanting to offend him by identifying his race.*



*“Black, yes Kyle, I’m Black,” he says.*

*“Sorry!” I blurt, “I just, you know, I never see you that way. Like I always just think of you as a person.”*

*“Riiiiight,” he says, rolling his eyes. “You don’t see race? What am I then? White like you?”*

*“No, no, no,” I say rapidly, on the defensive now. I continue, “I just see you as a person. You know, a human, like anyone else.”*

*“Okay,” he says sarcastically. We continue to walk in silence toward the dormitories. As we near the doors to the residence hall, he asks, “Look, you ever read poetry?”*

*“Not really,” I admit.*

*“There’s a poem that you should read. It’s called For the white person who wants to know how to be my friend.”*

*“Hey!” I say, starting to get angry.*

*“Man, just read it,” he says as we get to our dormitory.*

*We part ways to go to our rooms. I open my door, walk inside, and sit in front of my computer. “Fine,” I think, “I’ll look up the stupid poem.” I enter the title into the search bar and bring it up on the screen. It’s by Pat Parker (1990), an African-American woman, and it hits me like a bolt of lightning:*

*For the white person who wants to know how to be my friend*

*the first thing you do is to forget that i’m Black.*

*Second, you must never forget that i’m Black.*

*You should be able to dig Aretha,*

*but don’t play her every time i come over.*

*And if you decide to play Beethoven -- don't tell me  
his life story. They make us take music appreciation too.*

*Eat soul food if you like it, but don't expect me  
to locate your restaurants  
or cook it for you.*

*And if some Black person insults you,  
mugs you, rapes your sister, rapes you,  
rips your house or is just being an ass --*

*please do not apologize to me  
for wanting to do them bodily harm.*

*It makes me wonder if you're foolish.*

*And even if you really believe Blacks are better lovers than  
whites--don't tell me. I start thinking of charging stud fees.*

*In other words -- if you really want to be my friend --don't  
make a labor of it. I'm lazy. Remember.*

\*\*\*\*

As I moved through my undergraduate education, I had many occasions to self-reflect and dialogue with my friends of color. Many of them told me about their struggles with racism in higher education, such as students yelling racial epithets at them on the sidewalks, administrators “losing” their applications for scholarships, and teachers’ seeming indifference to their success or failure. Each story connected to one another, revealing how I had been completely oblivious to the culture of racial discrimination that permeated my campus. As their stories piled up, I became frustrated with what I felt was a lack of care for students of color within my university.

Although I was unsatisfied with the university's (lack of) response to my friends' problems, I still did not connect their struggles as a part of systemic racism or understand my role within that system until my senior year. I enrolled in a Critical Pedagogy class taught by Dr. Amy Aldridge Sanford, a White working-class woman from a fly-speck town like mine, who was the first person I had ever heard talk about racism, feminism, or systemic inequalities. It was in her class where I was first introduced to the works of critical theorists, such as Freire (2000) and hooks (1994). Through their scholarship and my continued dialogues with my friends (both White and of color), I slowly but surely began to see that racism was not the exclusive province of a small group of ill-thinking bigots; rather, it was a system that discriminated against people of color by normalizing White people's experiences, expectations, and values. I realized that my white-washed life was not a fluke and that my initial unwillingness to communicate with people of color was not just because "I don't know what to say." Rather, I was both a product and producer of a system of racial discrimination that had characterized U.S. higher education, and society, for hundreds of years.

\*\*\*\*

*Sitting on the edge of my seat, I nervously look at my speaker notes. The presenter next to me has just finished speaking, and I'm listed as the next speaker on the National Communication Association's conference program. I clear my throat and begin to describe my research project about White peoples' use of civility as a way to normalize their cultural values. I quote Katie, one of the research participants, who stated, "Black people are just loud, and I can't stand that they talk so loud when you're just right beside them or something....They are just loud and obnoxious sometimes." I show through the interview data and by discussing my own lived experiences how White youth's pre-college socialization into racist ideologies creates their*

*expectation that people of color should defer to white racial norms. I argue that, rather than using our white-washed ignorance as a way to absolve ourselves of the responsibility for racism, White people must be willing to challenge and change those expectations if we wish to engage in interracial dialogue about racism in higher education. As I conclude, I put my pen down, only now aware that I have been nervously twisting it in my hands like so many of the students in my public speaking course; I teach my students not to hold items in their hands when they give public presentations.*

*After all the speakers have presented, there is a question-and-answer session. One audience member asks me to quote more data from my project. I oblige, giving a few quotes from other participants. As I cite the data, some of the audience members laugh at some of the participants' responses that are peppered with ethnic slurs and gross stereotypes. I laugh too, feigning amazement that "people say such racist things in the 21<sup>st</sup> century" while inside a part of me is screaming to myself, "This was you, this was you, this was you," and then more pointedly, "This is you."*

*I try to ignore the voice, but it's still nagging me after the panel, and I'm back in the safety of my hotel room. Has my scholarship just been a way to set up White people like Katie as a measuring rod to test "how far I've come" since leaving Oologah? Am I using the participants' responses as steps toward reflective change for myself and others that share my racial identity? Or, am I just engaged in a more sophisticated act of twisting a pen?*

\*\*\*\*\*

As a White male who engages in anti-racist research, I often find myself in a mass of political and ethical double-binds. On one hand, I believe that there are ways of knowing about and being in the world that can reduce—maybe even one day eliminate—racism. On the other, I

recognize that such a view runs the risk of creating an outlook that allows me to view myself as a “good White person” and feel morally secure in admonishing my peers about their embodiments of racism without admitting to how I am culpable in those same systems of oppression.

Similarly, I believe it is important to speak with people that are oppressed by racist systems because their problems and solutions are often ignored by people in dominant positions in society. At the same time, I worry that such scholarship is a way of burdening people of color with the task of providing answers for White people’s racism. I (re)engage with these conundrums in my research and struggle with the need to know if I am making the right choices as I engage in anti-racist research.

Perhaps the culprit of my anxiety lies in my need for certainty, the security that lies in believing that readers understand and reward my “good” intentions. Such a desire is a manifestation of racism because it is predicated upon the belief that I should not feel implicated while interrogating a system of oppression that privileges my racial identity. However, as Johnson (2006) notes, there is no “getting off the hook” (p. 108) for my culpability in racism. Engaging in anti-racist research does not give me a “pass,” nor is it a static identity (i.e., I am an ally). Instead, it is both an ongoing commitment and an everyday practice toward realizing a world without racism.

\*\*\*\*\*

*I’m sitting in a Barnes & Noble under the fluorescent lights with my writing buddy Loretta. We are both doctoral students, and even though ze<sup>3</sup> is a year behind me in the program, I often feel like I’m a novice when I read hir work. We have been meeting every week to talk about our writings and to provide feedback on each other’s essays. Today, I’m working on my*

---

<sup>3</sup> Ze/hir refers to gender neutral pronouns, corresponding to gender-specific pronouns he/his and she/hers.

*dissertation prospectus while ze is working on hir comprehensive exams. So, for the longest time, the only sound emanating from our table is the soft clacking of keystrokes on laptops.*

*We each eventually finish a section and exchange our laptops to read each other's work. My dissertation prospectus is an argument for an ethnographic investigation of White students' civility in higher education, an extension of my conference paper. Ze's working on a paper about mixed-race people's communicative performances of race as a way to understand (un)productive types of race-talk. After we finish reading, we exchange our feedback, noting grammatical errors and places to strengthen our arguments.*

*"As I was reading through your essay, I felt like there were places where you could use some literature on White people's talk about race, you know like whiteness studies stuff," I comment.*

*"I don't use that much whiteness studies scholarship in my work," Loretta replies.*

*"Really?" I say. I'm a bit taken aback because so much of my work has been about whiteness. In fact, the paper Loretta just read was about whiteness. So what gives?*

*"Yeah, I mean, I use a little of it," Ze replies. "But, I think that a lot of that type of literature is just White researchers writing about White people to be read by other White researchers. There doesn't seem to be that much room for people of color. It just doesn't seem productive for the type of work that I want to do about race."*

*I want to ask if that's what ze thinks about my scholarship, but I'm too afraid to voice my concern. Really, I'm too afraid that I already know the answer to the question. I fear that my scholarship, for all my commitment to social justice, is like Oologah: small, safe, and white.*

\*\*\*\*

After my conversation with Loretta, I changed my dissertation project to focus on the

relationship among racism, socialization, and civility within higher education through in-depth interviews with students of color. I am still interested in how institutions of higher education function to normalize White racial codes, but I think it is important to understand how students of color negotiate their own cultures and dominant White codes. I lay out three assumptions that guide my commitments to anti-racist research in general and this dissertation project in particular.

First, I am committed to the notion of social justice. Drawing upon Bell (2007), I understand social justice as both a process and a goal. As a process, social justice activism and research utilize participatory and democratic methods to promote collaborative change. As a goal, social justice “includes a vision of society in which the distribution of resources is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically secure” (p. 1). My hope is that, through dialogue, community involvement, and honest self-reflection, students and teachers in higher education can foster social justice through their institutional practices. Additionally, I want students and teachers to work together to realize that they can challenge racism on their campuses and in the world if they commit to working toward and through social justice. Although social justice activism is not easy, it remains the best hope for people in the world to cultivate meaningful, authentic, and equitable relationships with one another.

Second, I believe that we live in a society where students of color remain seriously underserved by institutions of higher education. Racism within higher education manifests in a myriad of ways including structural discrimination (e.g., admissions, loans, and grades) (Brunsma, Brown, & Placier, 2012), microaggressions (Milkman, Akinola, & Chugh, 2012), and overt acts of racial violence (e.g., “bleach-bombing” people of color) (Cavaliere, 2012; Millhiser, 2013). As a social-justice advocate, I believe that these are serious problems that must be

addressed and remedied as we wish to live in a society based on equity, equality, and harmony.

Finally, I offer that the identities of students of color are shaped by racial discrimination. One way that we can understand this relationship is through the work of W. E. B. du Bois (1903/1997). He writes:

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his [sic] two-ness,—an American, a Negro, two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (p. 38)

Drawing upon his assertion, we might ask how the problem of double-consciousness can affect all students of color within institutions of higher education. And, just as important, in what ways do they engage in communicative acts that take up, resist, defer, or subvert dominant White codes in their effort to negotiate its effects? Overall, I believe their communicative experiences can offer important insights into the institutional constraints that they uniquely face as people who are always already positioned outside of the mythical norm (Lorde, 1984).

Drawing upon these three assumptions, within this dissertation project, I strive to “uncover how race gets made and how the social, cultural meaningfulness of whiteness [and racism] maintains its power” (Warren, 2003, p. 34). I focus on how the institutional culture that is communicatively (re)produced through everyday interactions within higher education functions to bar students of color from access and success, and serves as a constitutive element in their racial identity formation. There are two reasons why such research is important. First, the communicative behaviors of students of color in higher education is a struggle for enunciation—begging questions, such as “What can be said? Who can say it? And, which meanings become



dominant?” (Baxter, 2011). Therefore, there needs to be more scholarship that interrogates the relationship between higher education’s institutional cultural expectations and the practices that serve to exclude and oppress students of color. Second, the ways that students of color navigate the institutional culture of higher education can be viewed as an inherently communicative process. This view suggests that studying the relationship between the institutional norms of higher education and the communicative performances of students of color offers unique insights into the ways that race is constituted within matrices of power, privilege, and oppression.

Through the research process, I work to situate myself as a White researcher that speaks with and about students of color concerning the racism they face in higher education. I attempt to write through and about the experiences of the participants as a way to highlight how my analysis is shaped and constrained by my own lived experiences as a White, middle-class male. Although I do not claim that these acts “get me off the hook” or make the dissertation free of problematic representations, I hope that these sites of negotiation can serve as openings for continuing dialogues about the politics of race within research.

### **General Research Rationale and Purpose**

The primary purpose of my dissertation is to continue scholarly conversations that foster a university atmosphere of cultural affirmation and interracial community building. To fulfill this goal, I believe that institutions of higher education must move beyond the politics of diversity to remedy the culture of racism that permeates university campuses. Currently, diversity politics are predicated upon the notion that racial and cultural differences should be tolerated rather than explored as meaningful sites of discovery and growth (Kanpol, 1999). As such, they have the unfortunate tendency to relativize power (e.g., we’re all different, so we’re all the same), tokenize (e.g., acting as if one student of color can speak for all people of her/his race), or

promote a sense of cultural tourism (e.g., eating sushi to appear “cultured”) (Kanpol, 1999). My dissertation assumes that the mere presence of racial diversity in higher education does not guarantee racial equality; instead, diversity introduces a new set of complex relationships among power, privilege, and oppression that demand sensitive and thorough interrogation.

The secondary purpose of my dissertation project is to extend critical scholarship concerning racism in higher education at the intersections of the communication and education disciplines. Currently, scholarship concerning racism in higher education in these fields falls into two primary categories. The first type of scholarship investigates the barriers, obstacles, or barricades that people of color face as they pursue an education in institutions of higher education. For example, Griffin and Cummins (2012) utilize Critical Race Theory to understand how stereotypes pose a communicative obstacle that Black male students negotiate in higher education. Similarly, Vasquez (1982) identifies the economic, cultural, and structural barriers that Chicanas face while pursuing a higher education. A final example includes the research of Ng, Lee, and Pak (2007) that interrogates the “model minority” myth (i.e., all Asian students are studious, hardworking, and deferential) that Asian students confront in U.S. education. Overall, studies such as these have productively shown how institutions of higher education remain hostile to the idea of creating a campus atmosphere that respects and includes students of color.

The second type of scholarship seeks to understand how White people’s communicative behaviors within higher education serve to (re)produce their cultural power. An exemplar of such work is Warren’s (2003) ethnographic investigation documenting how White students communicatively construct their identities in ways that elide their cultural power. For example, one White student performed a stereotypical southern, White, KKK member in a classroom presentation to show what a racist looked like. Warren argues that such performances serve to

obfuscate how all White people are responsible for racism by disassociating White identity with White privilege, mystifying how racial power is mobilized by those in dominant cultural groups through everyday communication. Similarly, Hytten and Warren (2003) describe how White students in a pre-service education class appeal to various cultural norms and tropes to “erase their own complicity” (p. 67) in racism. Research within this type serves to show how White people within institutional spaces are able to exercise and (re)produce their cultural power through their everyday communicative acts.

My dissertation charts a third, and relatively overlooked, avenue of scholarship. This type of research seeks to understand how higher education, through both punishment and rewards, functions to normalize White cultural expectations, ensuring that dominant cultural codes are implicitly “taught” to students of color. Said differently, this dissertation views racism in higher education through the lens of socialization and attempts to show how universities (un)intentionally conflate dominant cultural codes with the “correct” or “normal” way to communicatively perform. This type of research is important because it offers unique insights into how college campuses “maintain order by making sure bodies function according to the systemic norms” (Warren, 2003, p. 42). As such, it attempts to show how the dominant White codes of campuses, those hoops which students must jump through to be considered a “good” student, function to shape and constrain the racial identities of students. The primary benefit of this perspective is twofold: (1) to locate the site of critique and change in the culture that is communicatively (re)produced by individuals in institutions of higher education and (2) to encourage social-justice minded individuals to imagine alternatives to institutional racism in higher education by being sensitive to the cultural knowledges of students of color.

The final purpose of my dissertation is to contribute to making scholarship concerning

race and racism in institutions of higher education a mainstream program of research within the field of communication and instruction.<sup>4</sup> Allen (2007) points out that “mainstream communication theory is culturally biased because it neglects to delve into race in critical, substantive ways” (p. 259; see also Orbe & Allen, 2008). Her observation resonates with mine in regard to the National Communication Association journal, *Communication Education*. In their review of the journal, Hendrix, Jackson, and Warren (2003) found that only 35 articles addressed issues of “classroom pedagogy and [U.S.] native born students of color” (p. 177) in the journal’s 51-year history. Despite calls for more racially-inclusive research (see also Hendrix & Wilson, 2015; Rudick & Golsan, 2014), articles concerning students of color (of any nationality) continue to appear in a sporadic fashion and not as a part of a sustained engagement with the challenges that students and faculty of color uniquely face. Therefore, I hope this dissertation functions as yet another knock on the door, asking that the field of communication and instruction take seriously scholarship that is concerned with and rooted in the experiences of students of color in higher education.

### **Dissertation Chapter-by-Chapter Outline**

In this section, I outline the content of my dissertation project. In Chapter Two, I first review extant literature concerning racism, socialization, and civility. I then offer five guiding research questions, and explain and justify my use of critical qualitative methodologies. The next three chapters address my research questions. To do this, I use Wolcott’s (1994) tripartite method of organizing data: description, analysis, and interpretation.<sup>5</sup> In Chapter Three, I explore

---

<sup>4</sup> I use the term “communication and instruction” following the example of the recent *Sage Handbook of Communication and Instruction*. This field of study includes communication education, instructional communication, and critical communication pedagogy.

<sup>5</sup> Description refers to an inclusive, but not exhaustive, account of the concept that emerges from the participants’ data. Analysis is characterized by identifying dimensions and relationships among the concepts that are generated

participants' understanding of race and racism in higher education. Specifically, I seek to confirm and extend past studies concerning race and higher education by showing that racism continues to be a barrier to the success and efficacy of students of color. In Chapter Four, I analyze how participants identify and negotiate the socialization process of higher education. What mechanisms—both positive and negative—function to “teach” them how to be a member of higher education? And how do those mechanisms reflect and produce racism in higher education (e.g., Althusser, 1971; Bourdieu & Passeron, 2000)? In Chapter Five, I examine how students of color identify and navigate institutional norms of civility. How do students of color resist, defer, take up, or subvert the codes of civility that function to (re)produce higher education as a culture of institutionalized racism through whiteness (e.g., Patton, 2004; Rowe & Malhotra, 2006; Warren, 2003)?

In the sixth chapter, I discuss the implications of my research, and outline directions for future scholars interested in critical examinations of race in higher education. In so doing, I first explicate the theoretical implications of the dissertation. These implications address the research gaps that I articulate in Chapter Two and show the contributions of this dissertation to critical communication scholarship. Next, I draw upon Black Feminist Thought (Collins, 2000) and Critical Communication Pedagogy (Fassett & Warren; Freire, 2000) to argue for “communicating through inclusive civility” as a practice that can resist racism within higher education. I hope that the findings of the dissertation help students and faculty within higher education find ways to have critically-informed conversations about race, and challenge institutionalized racism. Finally, I offer my suggestions for future scholarship. My hope is that

---

through description. Interpretation refers to the process of going beyond description and analysis (while still being related to them) to infer or explain the “big picture.”

the findings of the study help continue critical discussions about race, socialization, and civility within critical communication scholarship.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Over the past few decades, U.S. higher education has become a large part of the U.S. American popular imagination through dozens of films, such as *Animal House* (Reitman & Landis, 1978), *Van Wilder* (Abrams & Becker, 2002), and *Spring Breakers* (Antonieiz & Korine, 2012). Viewed by many as a rite of passage into adulthood, attending college is a time when many young adults are supposed to “find themselves” through coursework, networking, and social engagements. In addition to its iconic place in popular culture, political pundits and governmental officials, such as Secretary of Education Arne Duncan (2013), often argue that a higher education degree is essential for U.S. citizens. Political conservatives emphasize the necessity that individuals obtain a college degree to create a competitive, global workforce (Rampell, 2013). Political liberals, on the other hand, stress that college is important because it remains one of the few places in society where people are encouraged to cultivate an ethic of self-reflection (Nussbaum, 1997). Students certainly attend institutions of higher education for all of these reasons in addition to partying, finding a life-partner, or forging lasting friendships.

Although many would probably agree that higher education has a positive effect on society, we cannot overlook its legacy of racial exclusion and discrimination. Indeed, we need take only a cursory look at U.S. history to see how higher education has functioned as “a medium to reinforce oppression through segregation and isolation, forced language requirements, a curriculum rooted in Eurocentric ideals taught by White teachers, and the powerlessness of students of color to express their unique cultural values” (Cobham & Parker, 2007, p. 86). For example, after over 100 years of the state-sanctioned genocide of millions of Native Americans, the U.S. government decided that education was a more effective (and, not to mention, cheaper)

form of decimating the remaining native populations than continued military operations (Zinn, 2001). Under U.S. Army Captain Richard Pratt's (1892/1973) infamous mantra of "kill the Indian, save the man," thousands of Native American children were ripped from their homes, put into boarding schools, and systematically stripped of their cultures and languages (Grande, 2004; Spring, 2013). Unfortunately, the history of Native Americans is one of many tales concerning the use of education to "Americanize" those outside of the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant norm over the past two hundred years.

Arguably, institutions of higher education no longer utilize methods of overt brutality to enforce cultural conformity. As Western societies have moved into a late-capitalist economy, institutions of higher education function to teach students to acquiesce to dominant cultural codes primarily through seduction rather than by force (Giroux, 1983). A higher education degree, systematically positioned as the gateway to a middle-class job and lifestyle, remains the primary "carrot" that is dangled in return for individuals' acquiescence to dominant cultural codes. However, whether conducted overtly or covertly, the fact remains that institutions of higher education function to ensure the dominance of certain values and identities over others.

Even though higher education has been used as a tool of oppression in its history, I maintain the hope that it can realize its potential as a place that fosters democratic change (Giroux, 2007) and meaningful interracial dialogue (Orbe & Harris, 2008). However, I recognize that the road toward this goal is rocky and dangerous. One reason that achieving this aim is difficult is due to the pervasiveness of institutional racism. According to Simpson (2003) and Bonilla-Silva (2006), racism in higher education persists due to three interrelated reasons: (1) teaching and administrative positions are still held largely by White, European-Americans; (2) many White individuals involved in higher education believe that race is not a significant part of



their own or other's lived experiences; and (3) there remains a lack of meaningful connection among racial groups before enrolling into and during higher education. In short, institutions of higher education still have a great deal of work ahead of them to fulfill their democratic potential.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a review of extant literature concerning my topic of investigation, and to detail my methodological choices. I first provide a condensed review of literature concerning the topics of racism, socialization within higher education, and civility. Second, I examine current problems and gaps in literature. Third, I frame research questions to address those previously identified research problems and gaps. Finally, I outline the critical-qualitative methodologies that I utilized to describe, analyze, and interpret the experiences of students of color in regard to racism, socialization, and civility in higher education.

### **Literature Review**

In this section, I review literature that is relevant to a critical interrogation of racism in higher education. The first section explains the different ways that racism has been discussed in U.S. society and the importance of critical theories of race and whiteness. The next section explicates the process of socialization and how higher education functions as a crucial component of ideological (re)production. The final section discusses varying scholarly perspectives on civility and how hegemonic civility, in particular, is used to perpetuate racist norms within institutions of higher education.

### **Racism**

W. E. B. du Bois' (1903/1997) assertion that the "problem of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is the problem of the color line" (p. 34) remains just as true for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Despite political pundits and right-wing scholars' assertions that the United States is a "post-racial" society, there

is abundant evidence to the contrary. The hollowness of post-racial logic was amply demonstrated in the aftermath of the Supreme Court decision to strike down the Voting Rights Act (i.e., the law that protected minority voters in Southern states). Supreme Court Justice Roberts, writing for the majority opinion, stated that the law was based on “40-year-old facts having no relationship to the present day” (Liptak, 2013). Ironically, but not unexpectedly, five of the nine states affected by the act passed restrictions on voter ID laws that disproportionately affected people of color within 24 hours of the decision (Childress, 2013). I might also point to how the allocation of funds for public schooling in the United States has created a system of racial segregation and oppression that, in some ways, surpasses the scope and damage of pre-Civil Rights racism (Kozol, 2005). These examples, as well as countless others, show that racism is still prevalent in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In this section, I draw upon Leonardo (2009) and Bonilla-Silva (2001; 2006) to explicate four discourses of race and racism. Briefly, I use the word “discourse” to refer to a set of beliefs, attitudes, and speech patterns regarding a topic.<sup>6</sup> A discourse of race refers to the ways that people have historically and contemporarily talked about and acted upon the notion of “race.” The four discourses of race that I examine are the biological, socio-cultural,<sup>7</sup> colorblind, and critical discourses (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Leonardo, 2007). Each way of understanding and talking about race engenders different strategies to address racism. In addition to these four discourses, I discuss how critical whiteness studies further informs the critical discourse of race. I do so because critical whiteness studies productively extends the critical discourse of race and, thus,

---

<sup>6</sup> For example, a Christian discourse about the body might suggest that it is a shell that houses an immortal soul whereas a medical discourse would posit that the body is a collection of capillaries, blood, and sinew. Both discourses are referring to the same thing (i.e., a body), but with different terminology that draws upon and sustains a divergent set of values, norms, and actions. See Best and Kellner (1991) for an extended treatment of the concept “discourse” and how it relates to critical and postmodern philosophy.

<sup>7</sup> Leonardo (2009) uses the term “socio-biological” to map this discourse. However, I use the term “socio-cultural” because it more closely resembles the way that scholars within the field of communication define this discourse.

provides a suitable theoretical foundation for my dissertation project.

**Biological discourse.** The biological discourse is predicated upon the belief that race and racial difference are “facts” and that there is a physiological link between peoples’ attributes (e.g., phenotype) and their behaviors, values, and abilities (see Bonilla-Silva, 2001; 2006). This discourse began during the European Enlightenment, when White people created and perpetuated the belief that they were “humans” and deserving of universal rights (e.g., property) whereas non-White people were considered the inferior Other who needed Whites’ civilization, religion, and generosity (Harris, 1995; Wander, Martin, & Nakayama, 1999). The idea that there were differences based on biology was generally accepted at every level of U.S. society. For example, in the infamous Supreme Court Case *Dredd Scott v. Sanford*, the justices dismissed Scott’s lawsuit because, as a Black man, he was considered property and thus unable to even bring suit against his owner. Instances such as these show how U.S. society has been built upon hierarchical distinctions based on biological features that were used to justify racial exploitation and oppression (Feagin, 2006).

Although many might think the biological discourse is a thing of the past or the exclusive province of hate groups such as the KKK, the sad reality is that U.S. society continues to circulate stereotypes based on biology. We need only to go to Yahoo! Answers or Reddit.com forums to find people that believe that Black people are immune to sunburns or Native Americans are genetically predisposed to alcoholism. Thus, although some scholars argue that the biological discourse is the least utilized in contemporary society (see Bonilla-Silva, 2006), it should be noted that there are still stereotypes that are linked to biological markers of racial categories.

As one can imagine, the biological discourse is ill-equipped to address racism. If people

have deep-seated biological attributes, there is little-to-no reason to communicate across those differences to understand and affirm them. Historically, the response to racism from a biological perspective has resulted in both separation and genocide (Spring, 2012). For example, one of the “solutions” that was considered in response to newly freed Black slaves was to transport them all to the home countries in Africa. Of course, many Black Americans (both free and newly-freed) had spent generations in the U.S. and resisted White peoples’ attempts to deport them. The biological discourse has also perpetuated the drive for genocide. The eugenics movement, for example, was a popular social group well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. White researchers (to use the term loosely) used measures such as skull size to create racial hierarchies based on intelligence (Wander, Martin, & Nakayama, 1999). White people were always placed at the top of the hierarchies, whereas Black people usually held the lowest spot. These “scientific findings” were then used as a justification for genocidal programs throughout the United States (Spring, 2012). In short, a biological discourse cannot address, but in actuality exacerbates, the inequalities that have plagued U.S. history for the past 200 years.

**Socio-cultural discourse.** The socio-cultural discourse offers that individuals’ racial identity is linked to their thoughts, actions, or behaviors due to the individuals’ cultural attitudes or beliefs. Bonilla-Silva (2006) states that within this discourse, people of color are not presumed to be “biologically inferior” but are “assail[ed] for their presumed lack of hygiene, family disorganization, and lack of morality” (p. 87). For example, a person utilizing a biological discourse would argue that Asians are smart due to their physiology whereas those utilizing the socio-cultural discourse would offer that Asians are smart due to their cultural emphasis on hard work, perseverance, and academics (i.e., genetics vs. culture). Ultimately, racial groups are ascribed defining socio-cultural attributes (e.g., laziness) that are meant to account for their

relative privilege/oppression in society (Bonilla-Silva, 2006).

The socio-cultural discourse has been used primarily by Whites to, both historically and contemporarily, stereotype the cultures of people of color. Popular stereotypes include the idea that Asians are peaceful, hard-working, and family oriented (i.e., a model minority), Latina/os are fiery tempered and sexually promiscuous, Middle Eastern people are Islamic and hate democracy, and Native Americans are shamanistic, wise, and in-tune with nature. The socio-cultural discourse permeates all parts of U.S. society. For example, President Ronald Reagan's speeches defining women, African-American women in particular, as irresponsible (and thus blameworthy) welfare queens shows how powerful interests invoke this discourse to gain political power (Collins, 2000; Gilliam, 1999). Whether the stereotype is positive or negative, each creates a discursive box that actively limits and polices the identities of people of color.

Much like the biological discourse, the socio-cultural discourse does not have the frames necessary to remedy racism. The primary failure of this discourse is that it does not adequately attend to the ways that those in power (i.e., people at the intersections of White, male, and wealthy) create and sustain these stereotypes to justify their privilege. White people and white privilege are erased from analysis in favor of the notion that different racial groups always think or act in unique ways and some groups just happen to have "superior" cultural codes. For example, the belief that Black people are lazy conveniently obfuscates the ways that White controlled police, governments, and businesses bar Black people from meaningful and well-paid employment (Bonilla-Silva, 2001). Furthermore, such a belief perpetuates the notion that if people of color would "act whiter" then they would have better access to societal resources (e.g., higher education). Overall, the socio-cultural discourse is used to justify those perspectives that blame people of color and their "deficit" cultural codes for their economic and cultural

oppression.

**Colorblind discourse.** To better explain the colorblind discourse, it is important to delineate between two ways the individuals engage in colorblind communication. I label these communicative behaviors “normative” and “idealistic” colorblindness. Normative colorblindness refers to the idea that racism no longer exists. This notion perpetuates the belief that claims of racial discrimination or violence are unsubstantiated illusions that people of color use to gain unearned advantages (e.g., pulling the race card). Idealistic colorblindness, on the other hand, refers to the notion that people can make race-neutral evaluations. Said differently, individuals who draw upon this idea argue that they can look “past” or “beyond” race to see a person as “just” human. Both types of colorblind rhetoric are predicated upon the belief that people can look past racial categorization.

There are many political pundits and right-wing political figures who engage in the normative colorblind discourse (e.g., D’Souza, 1996, McWhorter, 2008). The idea that “racism is dead” came to a fervent pitch after the first election of President Barack Obama and was encapsulated in the Republican National Convention (RNC) tweet, “Today we remember Rosa Parks' bold stand and her role in ending racism” (Larson, 2013).<sup>8</sup> Even though a majority of U.S. Americans recognize that racism is still a serious problem in society (Berman, 2013), there remains a large portion of society that stolidly asserts that racism is a chapter in a history book long put on the shelf.

The idealistic colorblind discourse is perhaps the most used racial frame in contemporary U.S. society (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). Drawing upon the oft-quoted “I have a Dream” speech by Dr.

---

<sup>8</sup> After receiving a large amount of public backlash and criticism, the RNC changed the tweet to say “Today we remember Rosa Parks' bold stand and her role in fighting to end racism.”

Martin Luther King Jr.,<sup>9</sup> many people assert they can look past race if they try hard enough. For some people, this type of discourse may manifest in the notion that parents should not teach their children to see racial difference in the hope of creating a race-unconscious generation. For others, it might mean that commenting on racial difference in any way is racist and that people should just act as if a person is raceless. Regardless of its particular manifestations, idealistic colorblindness has at its root the liberal humanist ideal that there is a common essential quality in all humans that, if we try hard enough, can be uncovered to unite all people as “one” (Leonardo, 2009).

Although the idea that the concept of “race” could be removed from the public imagination and that society could return (or has returned) to a pre-Enlightenment time when race was not a factor might be appealing to some, there are compelling reasons suggesting that this way of thinking is problematic. First, if we believe that racism is truly over and that race plays no part in organizing peoples’ experiences or their economic circumstances, what other reasons can be offered for the vast disparities of wealth and access along racial lines in contemporary U.S. society? The answer to this, promulgated by writers such as Murray and Herrnstein (1994) and D’Souza (1996), is that there are deep-seated genetic and/or cultural traits that can account for these disparities. In other words, the normative colorblind discourse inevitably relies upon the biological or socio-cultural discourses to remain coherent in the face of overwhelming evidence that shows that race is a significant organizing force in the U.S. (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Leonardo, 2009).

Second, the idea that people should stop seeing race relies on the idea that they *can* stop

---

<sup>9</sup> Of course, many of those that quote this speech neglect not only the context in which the speech was given, but the hundreds of speeches, lectures, and writings that Dr. King gave that complicated the assertion that people should be colorblind.

seeing race. However, as Leonardo (2009) points out, “trying to recapture a time before race after centuries of racialization is like trying to remember how a conversation *in medias res* got started in the first place. Too much has been said and too much has been done” (p. 35). In other words, the historical weight of hundreds of years of racism can be neither ignored nor overlooked. The colorblind discourse assumes a blind utopianism that suggests that not only can people (as individuals) stop seeing race, but that collectively the entire population can stop seeing race all at the same time. Due to the impossibility of “not” seeing race, many scholars argue that the colorblind discourse is a way to perpetuate racism in the post-Civil Rights era (Bonilla-Silva, 2001; Johnson, 2006). As Giroux (2003) states:

Color blindness is a convenient ideology for enabling Whites to ignore the degree to which race is tangled up with asymmetrical relations of power, functioning as a potent force for patterns of exclusion and discrimination, including, but not limited to, housing, mortgage loans, health care, schools, and the criminal justice system. (p. 199)

Of course, White people are not the only ones that perpetuate colorblindness; there are some people of color that believe that racism is over or that people can and should stop seeing race (see Bonilla-Silva, 2006). However, as a system of thinking and talking about race, people who engage in the colorblind discourse obfuscate the ways that power and privilege are mobilized in U.S. society and, therefore, privilege White people as the dominant racial group.

**Critical discourse.** The critical discourse is predicated upon the notion that race is a social construction that has been created and maintained to mobilize power and privilege within society (Leonardo, 2009). This discourse offers two important insights. First, there has never been a time when categorizing a person as a particular race was neutral (e.g., I categorize you as Black but have no positive or negative attributes to that label). The racialization of people was



constructed specifically to create racial hierarchies. This leads to the second important insight: race was not developed by all peoples but was imposed on people of color by White Europeans (and taken up later by White U.S. Americans) as a way to justify their drive for imperialistic expansion and colonization (Bonilla-Silva, 2001). On this point, Leonardo (2009) states, “Race trouble arrived at the scene precisely at the moment when people began thinking they were white” (p. 62; see also Baldwin, 2010). The critical discourse is, therefore, a system of thinking that challenges individuals to identify, understand, and ultimately challenge the effects of creating and maintaining racial categories (i.e., racialization) within society.

Importantly, the critical discourse maintains a complicated view concerning the concept of race. Leonardo (2009) articulates this view succinctly:

On one hand, race scholarship that forsakes a conceptual engagement of its own premises takes for granted the naturalized status of race....On the other hand, reducing the problem of racism to the conceptual status of race comes with its own difficulties, as if racism were caused by a concept rather than racially motivated actions, such as educational segregation and labor discrimination. (pp. 61-62)

Said differently, the notion that “race” exists, in the realist-ontological sense, should always be troubled. People believe that race exists because they take up and reify hundreds of years of tradition through their everyday communicative acts about race. Saying the word “dog” does not magically produce a four-legged, furry animal just like saying “race” does not produce racism. However, language becomes material precisely because it mobilizes individuals to act in certain ways or value certain things. Thus, race is very real in the sense that it is reified and has material effects (i.e., privilege or oppression) on peoples’ lives. Freire’s (2000) distinction between objective/subjective realities is particularly relevant here. As objective, race is grounded in the

materiality of racial subordination (e.g., it is easier for Whites to find work, housing, or loans). There is no questioning this fact; people of color are oppressed within contemporary society due to past and ongoing racism. However, as subjective, people of color may not experience racism in the same way or believe that they have ever experienced racism (Collins, 2000). A critical understanding of race is, therefore, concerned with interrogating the effects of racism—the behaviors, institutional practices, and discursive norms that draw upon and maintain racial inequality without losing sight of the “unrealness” of race.

In contemporary society, the critical discourse provides the framework that is best-suited for addressing racism for two reasons. First, it provides a language of hope. Whereas the biological, socio-cultural, and normative colorblind discourses merely “account” for past and current inequalities, the critical perspective provides a rigorous critique of and remedy to racism. Second, unlike the idealistic colorblind perspective that seeks to eliminate differences to find an essential humanness, the critical discourse values and affirms difference as a potential site of growth and change. Although difference has long been used to justify oppression and exploitation in Western society, the critical discourse recognizes that difference does not have to be oppositional (Warren, 2008; Warren & Toyosaki, 2012). In regard to racism in the U.S., racial difference is often understood within the context of and juxtaposed against whiteness. Therefore, in the next section, I review literature concerning the way that critical whiteness studies builds upon and extends the critical discourse of race, and provides the theoretical foundation for this dissertation.

**Critical whiteness studies.** An important turn in the last 20 years of critical race theorization is the study of whiteness. Whiteness scholarship is a multi-disciplinary undertaking, encompassing research in communication (Nakayama & Krizek, 1994; Toyosaki, Pensoneau-

Conway, Wendt, & Leathers, 2009; Warren, 2003), education (Hyttén & Warren, 2003), feminism (Alcoff, 1998), history (Roediger, 1996), and literature (Morrison, 1992).

Communication scholars contribute to the study of racism and whiteness by focusing on meaning-making and how the social and material present (i.e., a society predicated upon racial inequalities) is (re)constituted in everyday communication (Warren, 1999; 2003).

Communication scholars conceptualize whiteness as the discursive practices that ultimately privilege White individuals' way of talking, knowing, and being in the world (Moon, 1999; Warren, 2003). Rowe and Malhotra (2006) argue that whiteness "may be understood as a process of universalizing, through which white identity is inaugurated as the standard for racializing matrices—all racialized locations are compared to white identity" (p. 168). In other words, whiteness can be understood as the communicative acts that are used to (re)produce white identity as the normative standard for racial identity. It is important to quote them at length about this relationship:

Whiteness produces white identity through conformity, which produces sameness.

Whiteness as an ideological formation, however, is not only productive of white identity; it is productive of a whole range of (de)racialized identities. If it constitutes white identity through sameness, it constitutes racialized identity through difference. Those bodies, affects, performances, social locations, and political/politicized mobilizations which defy, disrupt, and/or challenge whiteness are racially constituted through their differentiation from the ideals of whiteness. Further, there are many ambiguously racialized bodies that flow through different checkpoints of whiteness: ambiguously raced bodies that pass as "white," racialized bodies that articulate and prop up white supremacy, and white identities and bodies that disrupt whiteness. (p. 168)

In short, they argue that whiteness mobilizes privilege and oppression in contemporary society through the way that it functions to privilege white identity by perpetuating the notion that everyone should adhere to white racial communicative norms.

Rowe and Malhotra's (2006) contribution to critical race and whiteness studies forms the theoretical foundation for this research project. First, they demand that researchers move beyond conflating White people/white identity/whiteness by focusing on the ideological dimensions of racism that constitute racial boundaries. As a result, their argument highlights the importance of understanding the ideological dimensions of whiteness—those “languages, concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and systems of representation” (Hall, 1986, p. 29) that are used to make White identity the normative standard for racialization. Second, Rowe and Malhotra's (2006) focus on White identity suggests that research concerning racism should interrogate the cultural center. This move ensures that White people do not get off the hook for their complicity in white supremacy because they have benefited (historically and contemporarily) from the privileged status of white identity (Johnson, 2006). Finally, Rowe and Malhotra (2006) call attention to the mechanisms of socialization (i.e., checkpoints) that function to regulate dis/conforming bodies into the logics of whiteness. This assertion highlights the need for a particular kind of scholarship that examines the institutional mechanisms that attempt to socialize students (regardless of racial identity) into valuing White racial identity as the ideal. Therefore, this study seeks to understand how higher education perpetuates racism by functioning as a socializing force that attempts to discipline students, particularly students of color, into the logics of whiteness.

### **Socialization**

On the third day that I first taught a college class, a student raised her hand and asked, “Can I go to the bathroom?” On one hand, I was not surprised. I had also engaged in this ritual

countless times when I was an undergraduate student—asking permission to go to the restroom, get a drink, or take an important phone call. On the other hand, it did and continues to surprise me. The vast majority of college students are at least eighteen years old. They are old enough to be drafted or volunteer for military service, vote in presidential elections, and drive automobiles. And here they are asking me if they can relieve themselves. What can explain this?

Although some might see this type of deference as a form of respect, I believe it is more productive to see it as the result of socialized behavior. For thirteen years, public schools teach children and young adults to become emotionally and psychologically dependent upon authority figures (Gatto, 2002; McLaren, 2002). Many students continue to engage in these rituals in college, even though the context, people, and environment are different. These rituals are predicated upon often unspoken norms that form a hidden curriculum; that is, implicit and covert sets of rules teach students to defer to institutionalized power (Giroux & Penna, 1983). As the story above shows, one component of the hidden curriculum is the notion that students are not in control of their bodily functions—those in positions of authority are. I argue that higher education also serves as a site of socialization for race and racism in contemporary U.S. society.

In this section, I review literature that explicates the process of socialization, and links this process to higher education and racism. Admittedly, students are socialized through a myriad of familial, religious, and corporate institutions; however, higher education is an important site of interrogation because, as I have mentioned earlier, it serves to legitimize racial disparities (among others such as class, gender, and sexuality). In the following, I first draw primarily upon the work of Gramsci (1988), Althusser (1971), and Bourdieu (1986; see also Bourdieu & Passeron, 2000; Navarro, 2006) to outline the process of socialization. I then examine how the institutional practices of higher education contribute to the process of socialization, (re)creating

university culture as a white habitus; that is an institutional culture that (re)produces whiteness ideologies by socializing individuals to privilege white racial norms (Bonilla-Silva, Embrich, Ketchum, & Saenz, 2004). I conclude by introducing the concept of civility, which is the topic of the next section, as a suitable analytical lens through which to examine the (re)production of whiteness in higher education.

**The process of socialization.** Socialization is the process whereby an individual is taught that one ideological choice is better than a different ideological choice. An ideology, in the post-Marxist sense, is a set of signifiers (e.g., words or phrases) that constitutes a coherent and identifiable system of beliefs, frames, and categorizations (Hall, 1986; see also Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). The socialization process may be overt, as it was during the Cold War when U.S. schools taught students about the “evils” of communism and the U.S.S.R.; however, more frequently, it is a covert process that is conducted through the unthinking transmission of a set of values and ideals to a new generation (Freire, 2000). Socialization is, therefore, best understood as the result of our “interactions with [other] individuals, institutions, and cultural norms and values [that] constitute a cycle of business-as-usual” (Hardiman, Jackson, & Griffin, 2007, p. 41).

Although socialization draws upon and (re)produces ideologies, it is important to note that all ideologies do not hold the same weight or force at a given historical moment. When an ideology becomes so pervasive that individuals believe it is normal or commonsense, it is referred to as a hegemonic ideology (Gramsci, 1988). Hegemonic ideologies “crowd out” or “suppress” other ideologies and thus limit the range of ideological choices an individual can identify with and subsequently act upon.

Let me return to the story at the beginning of this section for a moment. For many

students, the idea that students could get up at any time and go to the restroom without a teacher's permission is not considered. The competing ideology of "adulthood" (i.e., that people who are above 18 years of age should be able to control their own body) is crowded out by years of enforced ritualistic behaviors (e.g., raising a hand for permission) that enforce a sense of infantilization (see Gatto, 2002).<sup>10</sup> As Cooks and Warren (2011) state:

Schools and schooling, whether viewed as a right, a privilege, or compulsory, are sites for training bodies to behave in socially sanctioned ways. As such, they are primary spaces for the production of discourses and performances of citizenship, sociability, and competency, as well as evaluatory agencies for (dis)conforming bodies. (p. 211)

Their characterization of schools and schooling is also true for higher education. Colleges and universities are institutional sites that identify, evaluate, and train their members (all members, but particularly students) to believe that some ideologies are normal while others are deviant, aberrant, or foolish.

The work of Althusser (1971) and Bourdieu (1986; Bourdieu & Passeron, 2000) provides an excellent point of entry into understanding the mechanisms of socialization. Althusser (1971) outlines the idea of the "reproduction of the conditions of production" (p. 127) in his explication of ideological state apparatuses (e.g., higher education). He metaphorically conceptualizes institutional state apparatuses, such as higher education, as factories that produce ideologies.

Within a factory, workers must know not only the skills necessary to create the product, but also how to properly submit to the demands of the "established order" (p. 132) or risk being disciplined (e.g., fired). Extending this idea, Althusser argues that ideological state apparatuses

---

<sup>10</sup> I recognize that classroom rules, such as asking for permission to use the restroom, serve useful functions, such as minimizing classroom distractions and/or tracking where students are in the building. This is especially true for K-12 teachers because they are legally responsible for students' well-being. However, my concern is that many students and teachers often engage in these types of behaviors without thinking critically about *why* they should do them or *how* those actions shape their identities.

“interpellate” or “hail” (p. 173) individuals into ideological positions by transmitting beliefs through demands for institutional conformity. From this point, institutions of higher education teach students dominant forms of knowledge (e.g., Eurocentric, White, and Western), and to accept those knowledges as normal or commonsense thus reproducing hegemonic ideologies (e.g., racism). If students do not perform those institutional codes correctly, then they are subject to disciplinary action or expulsion.

Bourdieu’s (1986; Bourdieu & Passeron, 2000) work takes up and extends Althusser’s notion of reproduction by introducing the concept of the social habitus. The social habitus refers to the institutionalized norms (i.e., the subjective tastes, grammars, or behaviors) that constitute a cycle of business-as-usual for a particular organization. These norms reflect the cultural and social capital that dominant classes use to accumulate economic capital. Bourdieu’s work highlights how institutions, such as higher education (and, more specifically, the social habitus that constitutes those institutions), serve as the linchpin between individuals’ everyday communication and the ideologies that they draw upon and reproduce through their communicative performances. Students can be viewed as part of an unthinking “flow,” a social patterning that is normative for one context (e.g., deference to teacher authority) that inscribes an enduring normative expectation for all aspects of their lives (e.g., deference to all forms of institutional authority) (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2000).

It is important to note that although their work provides crucial insights into the mechanisms of socialization, Althusser (1971) and Bourdieu (1986) do not adequately account for resistance. As Giroux (1983) argues, the work of both theorists relies so heavily on the notion of “reproduction” that they collapse the politics of struggle into a politics of management. Said differently, both theories conceptualize the reproduction of ideologies as a smooth transmission



of ideologies from the dominant class to the subordinate class. As such, both theorists underestimate the power of oppressed people to “embody and express a combination of reactionary and progressive ideologies, ideologies that both underlie the structure of social domination and contain the logic necessary to overcome it” (p. 103). As such, I am interested in investigating the ways that students of color embody a range of ideological positions; that is, how they take up, defer, resist, adapt, mix, subvert, and/or accommodate the institutional practices that (re)produce inequalities along racial lines within contemporary U.S. society. In the next section, I shift from talking about socialization in the theoretical sense to discussing the concrete practices of higher education that serve to socialize institutional members into believing in the normalcy of racism.

**Diversity and the white habitus in higher education.** Hickman (2006) states that “it is not the fact of socialization that concerns the educator, but its *context*, its *means*, and its *consequences*” (p. 69, emphasis in original). In other words, socialization is an inevitable result of being a part of an institution of higher education, but this inevitability should not lead critical scholars to paralysis. Instead, the notion that socialization occurs within institutions of higher education should focus our attention on how to work with students and teachers to interrogate hegemonic systems, such as racism. However, there is still a great deal of work ahead for students and teachers to realize the promise that higher education can be a bastion against systemic racism.

Higher education within the U.S. has, both historically and contemporarily, functioned as a means to delegitimize non-White racial knowledges, deculturate people of color, and force them to assimilate to White cultural standards (i.e., whiteness) (Scott, 2012). Institutions of higher education continue to underrepresent people of color in faculty and administrative

positions (AFT, 2011), adhere to curricular choices that privilege Eurocentric thinking (Spring, 2012), and resist engaging in campus-wide discussions concerning historical and contemporary racism (Chang, 2007). Esposito (2011) details how female students of color negotiate the hidden curriculum within primarily white institutions of higher education. For example, participants in her study report having to resist the “white gaze” of White professors and students (i.e., looks that conveyed feelings of inferiority, fear, or inadequacy) while trying to pursue their studies. Critical race theorists Smith et al. (2007) articulate how White racial knowledge gets in the way of multiculturalism in historically White campuses. Through counterstory<sup>11</sup> methodology, they detail an instance when a White female professor was assaulted by a group of men. The professor told the police that she believed her assailants were all Black males. The police, community members, and university employees were all on the lookout for “suspicious-looking” Black males. In the end, the university administration found that all 22 of the incoming Black male first-year students had been detained by the police in the following weeks on the suspicion that they were a part of the group. These studies, as well as others, show how students of color face unique challenges (e.g., racial profiling, discrimination, and marginalization) in institutions of higher education that further reinforce the normalcy of racism in U.S. society (Feagin, Vera, & Imani, 1996; Harper & Hurtado, 2007).

One way that colleges and universities have attempted to challenge the ways that institutions of higher education function to socialize students of color is through promoting racial diversity programs. Many racial diversity initiatives are rooted in the notion that students should learn about other cultural norms as a part of their liberal-multicultural curriculum (Kanpol,

---

<sup>11</sup> Counterstories are accounts (sometimes fact, others fiction) that highlight the lived experiences of people of color (see Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). This particular story was based on the experiences of the writers and focus group data gathered from Black male students from the university.

1999). The intent behind these projects is often predicated upon the assumption that recognizing that non-White cultures exist is sufficient to challenge the imposed normalcy of institutionalized whiteness ideologies. Unfortunately, diversity programs often do not teach non-hegemonic cultural norms as viable alternatives to dominant forms of knowledge (e.g., White, Eurocentric, or patriarchal); instead, they often exoticize or repress these types of knowledge. As Darder (1991) explains:

Multicultural materials and activities do not, in and of themselves, ensure that a culturally democratic process is at work...and many situations exist in which students are presented with games, food, stories, language, music, and other cultural forms in such a way as to strip these expressions of intent by reducing them to mere objects disembodied from their cultural meaning. (p. 113)

Furthermore, many diversity efforts are predicated upon the notion that the mere presence of racial diversity (e.g., a high percent of people of color attending a university) is enough to ensure that racism is adequately challenged. However, as Chang (2007) asserts, “Students’ improved understanding of and willingness to interact and exchange ideas with others who are racially different is not assured even when the student body is highly diverse” (p. 432). Similarly, Chang, Denson, Saenz, and Misa (2006) argue that diversity must be accompanied by sustained and meaningful interactions among individuals of different races to address systemic racism. These studies show that diversity initiatives within higher education are insufficient to displace the hegemony of racist ideologies. In short, diversity programs within higher education often do not remedy racism because they do not provide alternatives to whiteness ideologies.

When White racial codes are thought of as normal or commonsense within institutions of higher education, then they function to socialize students into the white habitus. Bonilla-Silva

(2006) defines the white habitus as “a racialized, uninterrupted socialization process that conditions and creates whites’ racial tastes, perceptions, feelings, and emotions and their views on racial matters” (p. 104). Bonilla-Silva, Goar, and Embrich (2006; see also Bonilla-Silva et al., 2004) show how White’s self-segregation—or the maintenance of predominantly White community—functions to normalize white cultural codes as neutral or natural within predominately White communities. In short, the lack of interracial contact “affords whites the luxury of non-reflexivity, enabling them to proudly espouse the virtues of colorblindness and unity” (pp. 248-249). Bonilla-Silva’s work has productively shown that White people’s expectation for the white habitus produces a white identity that is predicated upon colorblindness and covert racism. However, as Rowe and Malhotra (2006) argue, whiteness does not affect only White people; it also (re)produces a racial ideal that functions as a constitutive element in non-white racial identities. In other words, the white habitus is a socializing force in the identity development of all individuals (regardless of racial identity). As long as diversity programs do not provide alternatives to whiteness as a racial ideal, then institutions of higher education will continue to socialize students through the white habitus to (re)produce whiteness ideologies.

I argue that the experiences of students of color can offer insights into the ways that institutions of higher education function as sites of ideological socialization for whiteness ideologies. Institutions of higher education, as a white habitus, may serve to socialize students of color to idealize white racialized norms through their university experiences (i.e., whiteness). This process, in turn, may serve to normalize those norms in other aspects of their lives. Conversely, higher education may be so dominated by the white habitus that students of color may drop out rather than stay enrolled. And, of course, between these two poles of complete acceptance and complete rejection lies the ideological terrain that students of color negotiate in

their daily performances of taking up, deferring, resisting, adapting, mixing, and subverting the ways that institutions of higher education attempt to socialize them through whiteness. Demands to adhere to institutional norms require interrogation to understand and challenge the (re)production of racism. Therefore, this dissertation will interrogate the norms surrounding the concept of “civility” to understand how it functions as a part of the white habitus, socializing students of color into logics of whiteness.

### **Civility**

One time when I was five years old, my father and mother had some friends over for dinner. My parents were pretty worried about making a good impression so they made my brothers and me take showers, comb our hair, and dress in nice clothes. A few minutes before the guests arrived, my mother told us to sit on the couch. We sat in birth order, as always, with me in the middle. My mother said, “Now remember to say, ‘Please,’ if you want something at the dinner table and say, ‘Thank you,’ when you get it. And don’t put your elbows on the table!” The guests arrived, and we all sat down to eat. As the dinner went on, my father and his friend became engaged in a deep conversation. His friend bent toward my father to say something, leaning his elbows on the table to get closer. With all the solemnity that a child can muster, I said, “Excuse me, but no elbows on the table, please.” After the guests left later in the evening, my parents had another discussion with my brothers and me about why it was inappropriate for children to tell adults that they were not “minding their manners.”

I tell this story because it highlights the slippery nature of civility. Is civility looking “presentable” before company or saying please and thank-you? Why is it permissible for adults to tell children to “mind their manners” but not the other way around? As the story suggests, there are a range of meanings attached to the concept of civility. Forni (2002) finds that people

connect over 40 terms to civility, such as respect for others, niceness, politeness, manners, and etiquette. Groups, such as ancient Egyptian priests, medieval etiquette book writers, and contemporary netiquette book writers, have all tried to understand (and, in some cases, dictate) what constitutes civil communication (Terkourafi, 2011). In other words, the topic of civility has vexed scholars for nearly 4,000 years.

Extant literature concerning civility and education reveals two general perspectives: functionalist and critical. Giroux and Penna (1983) state that a functionalist perspective is predicated upon the notion that students should adhere to institutional norms to maximize stability and consensus in classroom management. Functionalist scholars are interested in how to encourage students and teachers to be more civil to maintain a maximally efficient classroom (e.g., Boice, 2000). These scholars argue that behaviors, such as talking out of turn, being tardy to class, leaving class early, or making negative comments, detract from students' ability to learn and teachers' ability to instruct (Alberts, Hazen, & Theobald, 2010; Miller, Katt, Brown, & Sivo, 2013). A critical perspective, on the other hand, assumes that social norms such as civility require interrogation to understand how they may serve to hide oppressive logics. As a critical scholar, I am interested in how institutional norms of civility may serve to (re)produce racism through the white habitus. Therefore, I review critical research concerning civility and education in U.S. society in this section.

**Critical understanding of hegemonic civility.** Critical scholars, unlike their functionalist counterparts, do not believe that civility is always a virtue. Scholars such as Simpson (2008) believe that calls for civility often do more harm than good. She states that “civil, cordial speech favors those already in positions of power because those who wish to alter the status quo must regulate and mediate their speech to satisfy the powerful” (p. 152; see also

hooks, 1994; Moon, 1999). Other scholars such as Arnett and Arneson (1999) are more hopeful about the function of civility. They offer that if it is predicated upon ethics of dialogism, civility can be used to create spaces where individuals from different backgrounds can find ways to communicate about and across “diversity, change, and difference” (p. 282). Patton (2004) navigates these two camps by delineating between two types of civility. She states:

What I will call hegemonic civility refers to normalized or naturalized behavior—appropriate behavior—even as the action can be incivil or even silencing to uphold the hegemonic order. This is different from civility that supports a common good for an inclusive collectivity. (p. 65)

In other words, hegemonic civility is constituted by social practices that maintain oppressive logics whereas inclusive civility may promote meaningful cross-racial dialogue. Currently, hegemonic civility receives the most attention from critical scholars (e.g., Alemán, 2009; Mayo, 2002).<sup>12</sup> Therefore, this section reviews literature concerning the role that hegemonic civility plays in the relationship among socialization, racism, and higher education.

Hegemonic civility within higher education supports existing power relations built around race and racism (Mayo, 2002). In her analysis of students’ journaling about race and gender, Patton (2004) argues that White students often utilize civil-speech as a way to maintain inferential racism (i.e., racism that is predicated upon logics of PC-ness, colorblindness, and race-neutral evaluations). Patton’s examination of student journals from her classes shows how hegemonic civility is often bound up in inferential racism. For example, a student wrote that she wanted to be paired with the Asian American student in class because she thought she would be

---

<sup>12</sup> Many of these scholars do not use the term “hegemonic civility” in their writing, but simply use the concept of “civility.” However, because the authors I draw upon primarily (if not wholly) write about the deleterious effects of civility, I have chosen to treat their work in a conceptually similar fashion through the term “hegemonic civility.”

smart. Patton argues that although the student who wrote the statement may have thought her characterization was a compliment (i.e., a form of civil communication), it functioned to perpetuate the racist stereotype of the model minority (i.e., that all Asians are intelligent and hardworking). She offers that this type of statement serves to create a culture of inferential racism because they perpetuate racial stereotypes under the guise of hegemonic civility.

Other scholars have found that civility is often used by those in positions of power to delegitimize the voices of people of color. For example, Alemán (2009) argues that rhetorics of “niceness, civility, and commonalities...only [serve] to maintain the status quo, [cover] up institutionalized racism, and [silence] the experiences of marginalized students and communities of color” (p. 291). In his study of Latina/o activist group members in Utah, participants often stated that they had to provide solutions without being overly assertive with the White Mormon establishment. He hints that it is difficult, if not impossible, to articulate socially just solutions to the racialized problem if oppressed groups have to adhere to hegemonic codes of civility. Patton (2004) and Alemán’s (2009) studies show how hegemonic civility acts as a discursive mechanism through which those in power “maintain relations of dominance by shifting the focus on structural inequities to matters of social interaction” (Mayo, 2004, p. 35).

The expectation for hegemonic civility within higher education also socializes students and teachers into existing power relations under the guise of niceness, politeness, or decorum. For example, in his book *Civility: Manners, Morals, and the Etiquette of Democracy*, Carter (1998) relates a story concerning an African-American male that was sent home from school for sagging (i.e., wearing pants low enough to show undergarments). The student’s parents complained to the school, insisting that he had a right to self-expression. Carter cites the fact that the fad of sagging began in prison, where Black males were forced to wear oversized body suits



with no belts to reduce the likelihood of suicide as the reason why such practices should be banned. He decries the practice as one that valorizes prison life and the destruction of Black family values. He suggests that a person concerned with civility trust the school to have students' best interests at heart and seek to conform to its rules.

Although the practice of sagging is a contested issue within the Black community (see Boykin, 2013), Carter's (1998) conclusion skirts discussions concerning the functions of oppressed peoples' attire in favor of institutional allegiance. Styles that conform to the institutions' policies (predicated upon white bourgeoisie decorum of civil appearance, see hooks [1994]) are regarded as unquestioningly "good" and thus worthy of emulation, whereas styles such as sagging (and the bodies that practice it) are viewed as deviant and in need of punishment. Stylistic choices such as clothing have long been a way to identify and punish racial minorities. For example, Latinos that wore zoot suits during the 1930s were victims of racially motivated violence at the hands of U.S. sailors in Los Angeles (Koppel, 2007). Hegemonic civility "is a practice that masks differences, not a practice that enables discourse across difference" (Mayo, 2004, p. 35). In other words, it forecloses the possibility to explore racial difference as a meaningful site of dialogue and community-building by privileging the unthinking emulation of institutional norms (which reflect dominant members' interests).

Hegemonic civility, similar to Butler's (1990) notion of gender, is "a rule-bound discourse that inserts itself in the pervasive and mundane signifying acts of linguistic life" (p. 145). In other words, students and teachers produce, through their everyday communication, an expectation for behaviors, linguistic codes, and mannerisms that students of color adhere to to become a part of the institutional culture (i.e., socialization). As a result, hegemonic civility functions to discipline students of color into the racist logics of the white habitus. The way that

hegemonic civility is negotiated by students of color within higher education provides a potentially rich site in which to view how racial power and privilege are marshalled through their communicative interactions.<sup>13</sup> Thus, it is productive to investigate and understand how hegemonic civility within the white habitus functions to socialize students of color into the logics of whiteness in higher education. I intend that my dissertation shall do this labor. In developing my project further, I identify existing gaps and problems in researching the critical relationship among racism, socialization, and civility in higher education.

### **Identification of Research Gaps and Problems**

The first research gap pertains to the way whiteness is analyzed in the majority of critical whiteness literature in communication studies. Currently, most critical whiteness research focuses on how White people perform their whiteness and how such performances function to (re)produce their own privilege (e.g., Endres & Gould, 2012; Warren, 2003). This focus is important because it firmly interrogates how the cultural center exercises power in and through everyday communication. However, what has been largely overlooked in critical whiteness studies is how students of color take up, resist, defer, or subvert whiteness in higher education (Ringrose, 2007). Leonardo (2009) offers that scholars might find it productive to frame their studies in a theory of oppression. This theoretical foundation begins with the assumption that “politics are unguaranteed by the agent’s identity” and thus focuses on “racial consequences and the upkeep of race relations” (p. 54) without relying on essentialized racial identities. Such an analysis lends itself to understanding how students (regardless of racial background) play a role in the perpetuation, subversion, and/or resistance of both the white habitus within higher

---

<sup>13</sup> Certainly, hegemonic civility can function to discipline other identity categories (and intersections thereof), such as gender or class (see Moon, 1999). However, for the purpose of this dissertation, I am interested in viewing hegemonic civility as a racially informed concept.

education and whiteness as an ideology.

The second research gap relates to the lack of scholarship identifying how communicative performances within higher education create and sustain a white habitus that functions to hail students of color into the logics of whiteness (see Althusser, 1971). The majority of scholars studying the effects of racism in higher education conceptualize racism (or whiteness) as a barrier that blocks the opportunities for students of color to be academically successful (see Gildersleeve, 2013; Ward, 2013 for review). This type of research is important because it (1) locates the struggles of students of color in higher education as the result of racism; (2) emphasizes how White students benefit from a system that does not bar them from success based on their skin-color; and (3) highlights how, even when students of color overcome those barriers, those benefits are temporary as opposed to the long-standing privilege enjoyed by White students. However, what previous scholars have often overlooked in this research is the role of socialization. If success is a matter of adhering to the normative codes of institutions of higher education and if those codes privilege whiteness ideologies, then the word “success” can only be used in a very limited sense (Huber, 2009). Success at the price of deculturalization and assimilation is no bargain at all.

The third research gap concerns the dearth of scholarship regarding the multiple functions of civility within higher education. Critical scholars have productively shown that civility is not an innocent concept, but instead often functions to exacerbate hegemonic norms, such as racism and sexism in higher education (Mayo, 2002; Patton, 2004; Simpson, 2008). However, there remains the hereunto untapped relationship between civility and resistance. Giroux (1988) argues that critical scholarship must encompass a language of critique and a language of hope. His assertion suggests that critical scholarship may not benefit either theoretically or pragmatically

by stating that civility always already functions as a hegemonic practice. Conceptualizing civility only as a hegemonic norm may foreclose the possibility of resistance, subversion, and change that lies within the contradictions inherent in ideologies (Fairclough, 1995; Giroux, 1983). Therefore, this dissertation project seeks to understand and interrogate hegemonic civility, and how students of color construct and negotiate their cultural knowledges of civility within higher education. Doing so valorizes the lived experiences of students of color and provides alternatives to the way that hegemonic civility perpetuates whiteness.

### **Research Questions**

Drawing upon the research problems and gaps, I propose five guiding research questions for my dissertation project. I first connect my dissertation to previous studies concerning race and higher education by understanding racism as a barrier to the success and self-efficacy of students of color. I then extend this analysis by asking how the communicative performances of students of color within higher education draw upon and (re)produce the white habitus. In other words, I ask how racism serves as a barrier to students of color, and as a constitutive element of their racial identities through the socialization process. Finally, I ask how civility, as a particular communicative norm within higher education, functions to draw upon and (re)produce the white habitus. Therefore, the following research questions have emerged to guide this dissertation project:

- RQ1: How do students of color experience racism in higher education?
- RQ2: How do students of color describe the cultural practices of higher education as they relate to the white habitus?
- RQ3: How do students of color take up, defer, resist, adapt, mix, subvert and/or assimilate to the white habitus of higher education during their socialization

process?

RQ4: How do students of color experience, understand, and account for civility in their process of becoming socialized into higher education as a white habitus?

RQ5: How do the ways that students of color negotiate racism within higher education provide insights into the relationships among racism, socialization, and civility?

### **Methodology**

To recap, this dissertation investigates the relationships among racism, socialization, and civility in higher education by understanding how students of color communicatively navigate the institutional norms that constitute the white habitus. Furthermore, I am interested in understanding the socialization process by examining the relationship among the communicative performances of students of color, the white habitus, and whiteness ideologies. Finally, I utilize the notion of civility to account for some of the ways that the communicative performances of students of color embody a range of behaviors (i.e., from complete acceptance to complete rejection) in regard to the white habitus and whiteness. With these goals in mind, I employ critical-qualitative methodologies to illuminate the narratives of students of color concerning racism, socialization through the white habitus, and civility.

This dissertation project utilized in-depth interviewing, accompanied by my reflexive accounts of the research process, to study my research topic. Ultimately, the findings of this research, I hope, address the research questions by providing a *thick description* of the communicative codes, norms, and values surrounding the topics of investigation (Geertz, 1973) and a space for students of color to articulate their critiques of and alternatives to the institutional practices that perpetuate whiteness. In the following sections, I (1) outline key tenets of critical-qualitative inquiry, (2) explain and justify my use of in-depth interviewing, and (3) provide

information concerning my sampling and data analysis techniques.

### **Critical-Qualitative Methodologies**

Critical-qualitative methodologies characterize a large and shifting body of literature, including critical race (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001), critical-Marxist (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2008), feminist (Lather, 1991), and queer (Hall, 2003) scholarship. These scholarly tenets begin with the assumption that individuals “are essentially unfree” and that contemporary life is “rife with contradictions and asymmetries of power and privilege” (McLaren, 2002, p. 193). Although different perspectives exist within critical-qualitative methodologies, there are some commitments that are common across these various schools of thought. These commitments include: (1) viewing the world as socially constructed, rather than given; (2) understanding that social constructions are mediated by power relations; (3) recognizing that power relations are dispersed through a range of social positions (e.g., class, gender, and race) to produce subjects who are simultaneously privileged/oppressed, (4) working toward concerted, ongoing action to produce meaningful and hopeful change; and (5) providing reflexive accounts concerning the research process to show the situated and partial nature of knowledge claims (Carspecken, 2001; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2008). Ultimately, critical-qualitative research should serve a mission of “empowering people with a language and a set of pedagogical practices that turn oppression into freedom, despair into hope, hatred into love, and doubt into trust” (Denzin, 2007, p. 467).

Critical-qualitative communication scholars seek to understand and interrogate how individuals’ symbol use functions to reflect and produce oppression, alienation, and dehumanization (see Dempsey et al., 2011). This type of scholar is committed to producing research that questions the normalcy of poverty, hunger, alienation, and other symptoms of oppressive ideologies (e.g., racism, classism, or sexism). Frey, Pearce, Pollock, Artz, and

Murphy (1996) argue:

Researchers with a sensibility of social justice, therefore, have an affinity for methods featuring participation, action research, or other ways of ensuring that the research done not only *about* but *for* and *in the interests of* the people with whom they are engaged in research. (p. 117, emphasis original)

Their work suggests that critical-qualitative communication scholarship must be accessible to and negotiated with participants. Furthermore, such research should function as a form of advocacy, creating a space for people from marginalized positions to voice their lived experiences and/or to critique the discourses that perpetuate their oppression. As Pollock, Artz, Frey, Pearce, and Murphy (1996) state, “It is not enough to do social justice communication research *about* underresourced groups; we need to engage in research *with/for* them” (p. 145). Such an emphasis suggests that communication research should be attentive to the agency and voice of marginalized people while also working with them to fashion rigorous and politically hopeful research. To date, communication scholars utilizing critical-qualitative methods have produced a large and growing body of scholarship concerning racism, sexism, classism, and other “isms,” showing its heurism and impact on the discipline (e.g., Collier, 2002; Orbe, 1998; Nakayama & Martin, 1999). This dissertation project continues this tradition by utilizing in-depth interviewing to investigate the narratives and accounts of students of color concerning racism in higher education from a critical-qualitative perspective.

### **In-depth Interviewing**

I employed in-depth interviewing as my primary mode of data collection. Lindlof (1995) describes interviewing as a “conversation with a purpose” (p. 163). Interviews are conducted to “find out how people express their views, how they construe their actions, how they

conceptualize their life world, and so forth” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p. 179). In-depth interviewing aims at deep and nuanced accounts of individuals’ lives. As Johnson and Rowland (2012) state:

The word *deep* has several meanings in this context. First, deep understandings are held by the real-life members of or participants in some everyday activity, event, or place....Second, deep understandings go beyond commonsense explanations for and other understandings of some cultural form, activity, event, place, or artifact....Third, deep understandings can reveal how our commonsense assumptions, practices, and ways of talking partly constitute our interest and how we understand them....Fourth, deep understandings allow us to grasp and articulate the multiple views of, perspectives on, and meanings of some activity, event, place, or cultural object. (pp. 101-12)

In short, in-depth interviewing is an appropriate methodological choice because it is attentive to the norms, codes, and discourses that are communicatively performed and (re)constituted in the accounts that people tell about their lived experiences.

My in-depth interviews were guided by a semi-structured interview schedule. Semi-structured questioning routes refer to the use of a structured questioning schedule while also allowing for unstructured (i.e., impromptu or probing) questions (Fontana & Frey, 1994). Semi-structured questioning routes ensure that data are relevant to the research questions while respecting the emergent ideas produced through a dialogic participant/researcher interaction (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). As such, they invite participants to be co-authors throughout the interview process by creating a space where the roles of interviewer and interviewee bleed into each other.

## **Participants**



After obtaining approval from the SIUC Human Subjects Committee (see application, Appendix A), I utilized purposive sampling to recruit participants with specific demographic characteristics (Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 2000). Participants (N = 14) met the following inclusion criteria: they were (1) a full-time student, (2) over the age of 18, and (3) self-identified as a person of color. I continued to recruit participants until saturation was met (Lindlof & Taylor, 2000). Participants were Blake<sup>14</sup> (African-American male, graduate student), Chris (African-American male, first-year student), Fernando (Latino male, third-year student), Ida B. Wells (African-American female, first-year student), Jajuan (African-American male, graduate student), Jeff (African-American male, graduate student), Lucy (Latina female, second-year student), Maya (Tamil female, graduate student), Paul Jones (African-American male, second-year student), Rigoberto (Latino male, graduate student), Seraphina (Korean female, first-year student), Shar (African-American female, first year student), SK (African-American male, fourth-year student), and Star (Indian female, graduate student).

To gather participants, I asked instructors of speech communication courses to allow me to recruit research participants from their classes. After reading the recruitment script (Appendix B), I gave out the cover letter (Appendix C) and consent form (Appendix D) to all members of the class. All class members were given materials to avoid the chance that someone who looked phenotypically White but identified as a person of color was not excluded. Additionally, it avoided the potential for psychological harm by identifying a student's racial identity in front of classmates. All students that participated filled out the consent form and turned it back to me. I then contacted them through the medium of their choice (i.e., phone or email) to set up an interview.

---

<sup>14</sup> Names were changed to protect confidentiality. Participants chose their own pseudonyms.

I chose to recruit students of color for two reasons. First, students of color (regardless of particular racial background) live in a society where White identity is viewed as the ideal (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Rowe & Malhotra, 2006). Due to this lived experience, many students of color engage in strategic communicative behaviors in an effort to navigate dominant cultural codes of whiteness (see Orbe, 1997). I do not mean to imply that students of color simply talk differently than White students. For example, there is a good deal of research documenting the phenomenon of code-switching among people of color; that is, people from oppressed racial identities utilize dominant speech patterns when addressing dominant speech groups and utilize their own vernacular in the presence of same-group cultural members (Auer & Eastman, 2010; see also Co-Cultural Theory, Orbe, 1998). However, the interactions of students of color with whiteness ideologies are predicated upon racial politics that demand that they negotiate racism in ways that White students do not have to do. Second, students of color draw upon cultural knowledges from their particular racial communities in their negotiation of whiteness and, therefore, offer insights based on their unique epistemological “standpoints” (see Smith, 1987). Although students of color may share common experiences of racialized oppression, different racial backgrounds are shaped by their unique histories of oppression (Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998). Students of color are not a monolithic group; rather, their interactions with whiteness vary due to their differing racial histories. In other words, we should view the responses from various racial group members as constellations where “each group becomes better able to consider other groups’ standpoints without relinquishing the uniqueness of its own standpoint or suppressing other groups’ partial perspectives” (Collins, 2000, p. 270).

### **Procedures**

I attempted to interview participants multiple times throughout the semester instead of

relying only on a one-shot, one-hour interview format (see Reissman, 2008). My first interview utilized the attached questioning schedule (Appendix E). I generated schedules for subsequent interviews based on the responses that I received within each session. Due to schedule conflicts, I was unable to conduct multiple interviews with Chris and Shar. All other participants engaged in 2-3 interviews.

I utilized a multiple-interview format because I believed it would be necessary to build rapport with participants. As Smith (2005) notes, many people of color are wary of White researchers due to the long history of racial oppression that has been mobilized through research. Participants and I addressed our feelings about talking about their experiences with racism with a White researcher during the interviews. All interview data were audio-recorded and transcribed. Twenty-eight total interviews were conducted. The total time of interviews was approximately 25 hours. The longest interview was approximately 95 minutes and the shortest was approximately 38 minutes ( $M = 49:36$ ). Transcription of the audio files produced 399 single-spaced pages of text.

### **Data Analysis**

I assembled all transcribed interviews into a master data list. I then grouped data into three primary categories: racism, socialization, and civility. Within each of these groups, I used open-coding techniques (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to identify emergent themes related to my research interests. As these themes arose, I developed emergent theory (i.e., theorized) through the back-and-forth process of data triangulation, data analysis, and theory building.

Wolcott (1994) states that “qualitative researchers need to be storytellers” (p. 17) to increase the likelihood that their work is accessible, interesting, and useful to both lay and academic audiences. To answer his call, I drew upon narrative analysis (Polkinghorne, 1995;

Reissman, 2008) and counterstory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001)<sup>15</sup> techniques as a way to present the findings. Fisher (1984) argues that individuals live by and through the narratives they have available to them while also creating and sustaining narratives that future generations draw upon to make sense of their own lives. Similarly, Solórzano and Smith (2001) offer that stories and storytelling are central parts of the epistemological frameworks that characterize liberatory counter-knowledges for many oppressed racial groups. Overall, these scholars' work highlights narrative inquiry's potential as a method that can be accessible and social-justice oriented.

Narrative analysis involves examining participants' responses to find themes related to the research questions and then (re)constructing a storied account that encompasses the characters, settings, and struggles that emerge from the data (Polkinghorne, 1995; Reissman, 2008). Counterstory methodology pushes narrative analysis further by arguing that the narratives of oppressed peoples have the ability to speak back to the dominant culture (Solórzano & Smith, 2001). As hooks (1990) insightfully notes, writing about the Other carries with it the chance to (re)colonize people from the margins by representing their narratives in the voice of the researcher. As such, it is important to "work the hyphen" (Fine, 1998, p. 72) between myself and participants by putting their experiences into dialogic tension with emergent theory, rather than allowing theory to drown out their voices. One way I attended to this ethic of writing was to send participants copies of each chapter, their interview transcripts, and reconstructed narratives to member check (Creswell & Miller, 2000) my data and interpretations. All of the data and data presentations (e.g., quotes and narratives) were validated by the participants.

Each chapter is accompanied by reflections about my role as a White male academic that

---

<sup>15</sup> Solórzano and Smith (2001) develop their counterstories from participants' responses, existing literature, and their own professional and personal experiences as people of color. Since I do not have experiences as an oppressed member of a racial group, I do not feel that it is appropriate to act as if I can participate fully in counterstory methodology. However, I do believe it is important, both theoretically and analytically, to include counterstory methods since they focus narrative analysis on the topic of my investigation—racial oppression.

works toward racial justice (see Simpson, 2003; Simpson, James, & Mack, 2011) to highlight the relationship between my positionality and those of the participants. I engage in these reflections as I present the analysis to attempt to capture how the “critical incidents” (see Flanagan, 1954; Hughes, 2007) productively ruptured my sense of normalcy as I read and coded the data. In other words, these moments encouraged me to reflect not only on my role as the “detached” or “objective” researcher, they also urged me to question my role in the maintenance of the white habitus and whiteness. I hope that these reflections work to situate me as a white scholar studying race, and as a cultural being that benefits from the racist systems that privilege my body.

### CHAPTER III

#### RACISM IN HIGHER EDUCATION

*“These desks are tiny,” Jeff thinks to himself while trying to get comfortable, but at 6’ 4” this is no easy feat. He has hated these desk/chair combos since he first hit his growth spurt in junior high. Finally, he positions himself in the desk sideways with his back against the corner of the room. “Well, that’s going to be about as good as it gets,” he sighs to himself. With his seating arrangement taken care of, he turns his attention to the rest of the classroom.*

*The class is called University 101, an “Introduction to College Life.” Jeff has signed up for a Black Male Initiative section of the course, so he shares the classroom with 40 other African-American men. Some of them have met each other prior to class and are talking, shaking hands, and hugging. Others look like they just arrived on campus last night, still wearing a glassy-eyed expression that comes from too little sleep and too much time in a car or train.*

*The room is large and filled with desks like his. Jeff had always dreamed about how different college would be from high school, but so far the tests, books, teachers, projectors, and classes all seem reminiscent of public high school. Although he has only been enrolled for a week, it seems like every classroom blurs together into a never-ending mural of dull gray/white paint.*

*“Hey man, what’s up?” a man asks as he walks towards the corner where Jeff sits.*

*“Not much, not much. I’m Jeff,” he replies, putting his hand out for a shake. The man grasps it tightly and asks, “Southside?”*

*“Yep,” Jeff says, immediately relieved that he has found someone that is from his area of Chicago.*

*“Cool, I’m Dion,” the man says as he sits next to him. He continues, “Hey, do you know*

*anything about... ” But whatever Dion is about to ask is cut off as a Black man, dressed in a university polo and khakis, walks to the front of the room with an authoritative stride.*

*“Alright everyone, get to a desk and sit down so we can start this,” he says, raising his arms up in a gesture for silence. It takes a couple of minutes for people to wrap up their conversations, but eventually everyone is in a desk and looking toward the teacher.*

*“Okay. Hey everyone, I’m Reggie, and this is the Black Male Initiative section of University 101. The reason you’re here is because...”*

*“I’m a Black male?” Dion interjects, and laughter ripples through the crowd.*

*“Yeah, that’s right,” Reggie says, nonplussed. He continues, “You’re here because the university has a history of recruiting people that look like us and then not doing a good job of keeping us on campus. So, this section of the course was created to respond to the high drop-out rate of African-American male students at AAU.”*

*“Just great,” Jeff inwardly groans. No one at the high school guidance counselor’s office said anything about the attrition rate of African-American males at AAU, and the university website didn’t mention it either. The only information he had received included a bunch of brochures from the university that were filled with pictures of smiling students of color and a list of all the “fun” activities offered to first-year students.*

*Reggie continues, “So, we’ll meet here once a week to talk about your first semester in college. We’ll talk about time management, how to talk with your teachers, going to office hours, and other stuff you’ll need to know.” There’s an audible groan as he rattles off the list. Jeff joins in, thinking, “Man, this is going to be boring!”*

*Reggie holds up a hand, “Listen. I know it’s not fun, but you need to know this stuff. I don’t have to tell you all this because you probably already know it, but I’ll say it anyway. A lot*

*of people at AAU are not expecting you to succeed here. There is a lot of people here that don't look like you or talk like you, and you're going to have to figure out how to deal with them."*

*Reggie pauses for a few seconds. The room is completely silent. Then, he says, "Look around you. Go on, look around you right now." Dion and Jeff lock eyes. "In 16 weeks, half of the people that you see will be gone. Whether they drop out, get homesick, or get expelled, half of your class will not be here at the end of the semester." Dion and Jeff smile nervously at each other. After a few uncomfortable seconds, Jeff breaks eye contact. "Not me," he thinks, "I'm not going anywhere."*

*At the end of the semester, only 18 students remain in the University 101 class. Luckily, Jeff is one of the remaining students, but no one has seen Dion since September. Jeff hopes that he went back home to Southside to be with his family and friends. However, he really doesn't know.*

\*\*\*\*\*

When Jeff finished his story, I sat back for a moment in stunned silence. The sheer number of students that did not complete their first semester spoke volumes about the kind of struggles that students like Jeff faced in higher education. I reflected back to the time that I was enrolled in University 101 as a first-year student. I was interested in making good grades and did not interact much with the other students in class. Time clouds my memories, and I cannot remember anyone's face. Did all of the students in that class enroll in coursework the next semester? I feel ashamed at my lack of connection to those who shared space with me during that time. Being able to understand myself as race-less due to the privilege associated with my racial identity is just one of the ways that I have benefited from and reproduced whiteness in my own life. And, unfortunately, it is that institutional culture that students such as Jeff have to negotiate



on a daily basis.

The seriousness of the story matched the weather that day, cloudy with ominous threat of rain. Despite the gloominess of the topic and weather, I found Jeff to be an energetic participant, with an easy smile and a big laugh. He described himself as a “big people person,” always willing to talk with anyone about anything. He went to a predominately Black Public School in Chicago until graduating high school and then decided to enroll in AAU because he wanted to be a sportscaster. His parents were supportive of his college ambitions, but he found that they were not able to give much guidance about the rituals of enrollment, such as paperwork or moving into the dormitories. He said, “I mean just from me reading a brochure about college, I learned more about AAU than either one of them.” Like many first-generation students of color, Jeff had to learn to identify and navigate the institutional maze on his own (Simmons et al., 2013; Wang, 2014).

Jeff is a model student by almost all measures. He recently earned a Bachelor’s degree and is now enrolled in a prestigious M.A. program. However, his narrative reveals a complex story about how racism manifests in higher education. We need only look at higher education’s retention rates to see the effect of the kind of systemic racism about which Jeff’s University 101 teacher warned him. For example, Swail, Redd, and Perna (2003) report that only one-third to one-half of African-American, Hispanic, and Native American students earn undergraduate degrees. Additionally, African-American and Hispanic student enrollment in four-year degree-granting institutions remains lower than the average college-aged (18-24) population.<sup>16</sup> Overall, a great deal of extant research shows that there are still significant obstacles to students of color enrolling and remaining in institutions of higher education (see Harper & Hurtado, 2007 for

---

<sup>16</sup> African-American and Hispanic students comprised 11 and 8.3 percent of the student population (respectively). However, the total population of college-age students are 14.3 and 13.percent (respectively).

meta-analysis).

My purpose in this chapter is to address my first research question regarding how students of color experience racism in higher education. Through my investigation, I hope to confirm and extend extant research that shows that higher education maintains a cultural climate that is indifferent at best and overtly hostile at worst to students of color (Cobham & Parker, 2007; Harper & Hurtado, 2007). To achieve this aim, I analyzed participants' responses and initially generated six themes concerning racism. They are 1) stereotyping, 2) invisibility, 3) hostile environment, 4) tokenism, 5) segregation, and 6) exoticization. These themes generally corresponded to the literature on racism (e.g., Bonilla-Silva, 2005, Griffin & Cummins, 2013, Leonardo, 2009). After my initial coding, I then compared the themes to literature concerning racism in higher education and crafted three themes regarding the ways that racism is communicated in higher education: 1) stereotyping and stereotype threat, 2) invisibility as a racial microaggression and 3) overt racism and the creation of a hostile environment. Throughout the chapter, I weave participants' responses, theoretical concepts, and my reflections/lived experiences together to show the ways that students of color identify racism as a barrier to their efforts to navigate higher education. I conclude the chapter by discussing the major findings as well as an introducing the next chapter.

### **Stereotypes and Stereotype Threat**

*Fernando walks into the student newspaper's office and looks around. Old newspaper clippings adorn the gray/white walls, trying to give some color to the otherwise drab background. Most of the articles are about AAU's various sports teams, with football taking up the most space. The office is small, including an old battered receptionist desk and a couple of chairs with a greenish upholstery that looks like it came from the 1960s. The office worker, a*

*White woman in her twenties, is sitting in an office chair behind the desk. He approaches her with a smile.*

*“Hello,” he says. “I’m Fernando. I’m looking for Dave. We have an appointment at 1:00 P.M. I am applying for a job.”*

*“You’re going to work for the newspaper? You know that it’s a lot of writing, right?” she asks with an arched eyebrow.*

*“I just said that, didn’t I?” He thinks to himself. People seem to think that he can’t speak or write English just because he speaks with an accent. Just yesterday a White cashier spoke to him in broken Spanish until he told her that he spoke English. “Yeah, I’m here to see Dave,” he says out loud.*

*“Okay, well he went to lunch. He should be back in a few minutes. Just have a seat over there.”*

*Fernando sinks into one of the chairs. The cushion making a soft -whooshing- noise as it deflates. He pulls out his cell phone to check his email. It’s a message from his professor about the end-of-the-semester assignment. The architecture program is difficult, and this professor is probably one of the toughest since enrolling. He scans through the content of the message.*

*“Good,” he thinks. “It doesn’t look like he’s changed anything about the assignment.”*

*“So, do you know how much we get paid to work here?” the receptionist asks, breaking his concentration.*

*“No,” Fernando replies sheepishly. He realized that he had not paid attention the pay because he had been so excited to show his skills as a graphic art designer.*

*“We make about 10K a year,” she said.*

*“You make ten thousand dollars to work here? That’s a lot of money!” he exclaimed.*

*“Yeah, it’s a lot in American dollars,” she agrees. His jaw shuts with an audible click. He thinks, “I’ve lived in the United States since I was 14 years old. Of course I know the value of an American dollar!” He looks back down at his cellphone in an attempt to ignore the woman behind the desk. They sit in silence for the next 15 minutes.*

*Finally, Dave arrives. “Sorry I’m late,” he says as he shakes Fernando’s hand. “I hope you haven’t been here too long.”*

*“No, just a few minutes,” he replies.*

*“Great, great. Well, come into my office.”*

*They sweep past the receptionist’s desk and enter his office. “Have a seat,” Dave says, gesturing toward a chair as he walks around his desk. Dave sits down, a thin sheen of perspiration on his white face and matting his brown hair. Fernando sits down as well, feeling the butterflies in his stomach as he anticipates the interview.*

*“So, you’re here for the graphic design position?” Dave asks.*

*“Yes, I have been doing graphic design for a few months now, and I think I have the skills you are looking for in a successful applicant,” Fernando replies.*

*“Great, I’ve been doing a lot of the design right now. I have the huge project coming up, and it requires a lot of coding,” Dave says.*

*“Really?” Fernando replies. “What language are you using?”*

*Dave looks at Fernando with a condescending stare, “English, of course.”*

*Again, Fernando’s jaw shuts with an audible click. “Of course, you’re using English. I’m using English right now!” he wants to scream. Out loud he says, “No, what computer language are you using? Like, Java or HTML?”*

*“Oh, Flash. I use a lot of Flash,” Dave says.*

*Fernando puts his head down and stifles a groan as he thinks, "Flash isn't even a computer language!"*

\*\*\*\*\*

When Fernando finished his story, we both looked at each other and started laughing. It was a wry laughter, without much merriment. I felt that his laughter had a practiced feel about it, as if this was not the first time he responded to racism with sarcastic chuckle, a shrug of the shoulders, and a "what can you do?" expression on his face. Fernando's reaction was in-line with his attitude throughout the interview process. He was relaxed and introspective, often talking about very serious problems with a practiced sense of humor.

Fernando left Mexico and came to the U.S. to live with his uncle in Chicago when he was 14 years old. His mother followed a few months later. They lived with his uncle until his mother married his current step-father. His younger brother is also in college, and his twin step-sisters are in high school. He went to a Chicago-area community college before AAU but felt that he was not making enough progress in his studies, so he decided to go to a four-year university outside of the city. He is excited to graduate and go back to Chicago to live closer to his family and friends.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Although some might think that higher education is a bastion of so-called 'political correctness,' stories like Fernando's show that stereotypes are still widely circulated and used by campus members. Intercultural communication scholars Samovar and Porter (1988) define stereotypes as "the perceptions or beliefs we hold about groups or individuals based on previously formed opinions and attitudes" (p. 280, as cited in Kanaraha, 2006). For example, since Fernando moved to AAU more than two years ago to study architecture, he has

encountered multiple individuals that have told him, “You speak English well for a Mexican” or “You’re one of the good Mexicans.” These instances act as a continual reminder that his body and actions are always already interpreted through a prism of stereotypes—that Latinos are not smart or driven enough to learn to speak English “properly.” Stereotypes, whether positive or negative,<sup>17</sup> function as a set of cultural expectations about identity markers (e.g., race, gender, or sexuality) that individuals identify and negotiate on a daily basis.

Stereotypes can produce an effect known as stereotype threat (Steele, 1997; Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002). Davies, Spencer, and Steel (2005) define stereotype threat as those instances when “negative stereotypes targeting a social identity provide a framework for interpreting behavior in a given domain” (p. 277). For example, when the AP showed pictures of both White and Black people taking goods from stores in post-Hurricane Katrina New Orleans, they labeled the White individuals as survivors and the Black people as looters (Jones, 2011). Davies et al. (2005) state that “the risk of being judged by, or treated in terms of, those negative stereotypes can evoke a disruptive state among stigmatized individuals” (p. 277). Siy and Cheryan (2013) argue that positive stereotypes are often viewed negatively by minority members and can threaten their self-construal. They offer that positive stereotypes can create unrealistic expectations that can create a pressure to live up to the stereotypical standard. Although people in positions of power (e.g., White people) can be stereotyped by marginalized people (e.g., all White people kiss their dogs on the mouth), such actions are not equivalent in terms of power that is exercised when a privileged individuals utilize or perpetuate stereotypes of marginalized

---

<sup>17</sup> Positive stereotypes refer to “positively valenced traits (e.g., intelligent, cooperative) that are ascribed to a social group” (Siy & Cheryan, 2013, p. 87), whereas negative stereotypes are negatively valenced traits (e.g., lazy, violent) that are ascribed to a social group. Although conceptually distinct, positive stereotypes and negative stereotypes both serve to uphold racism because they function to discipline people of color into pre-defined categories. In other words, the distinction between positive and negative is not based on their effect (which is racist), but the logic utilized to make the claim.

people. Thus, the “threat” in “stereotype threat” focuses attention on how stereotypes can produce psychological and emotional harm and negatively affect marginalized group members’ potential to perform to the best of their abilities.

### **How Stereotype Threat Manifests in Higher Education**

Most participants stated that the stereotypes that they dealt with the most revolved around notions of the violence and intelligence. Participants who identified as Black and male were the most vocal about negative stereotype threat associated with their racial identification. Jajuan, for example, stated, “Well, I know, some people in society present Black people as...being inferior, and a thug.” A great deal of research shows that there are many cultural tropes about how violent and angry Black males are (e.g., Cummins & Griffin, 2012; Griffin & Cummins, 2012). When I asked Jeff if he felt like there were a lot of stereotypes that he dealt with in higher education, he just blinked once and started laughing. He answered, “Yep.” A little chagrined at the naiveté of my question, I asked him if he had any stories about instances when he felt that his actions were filtered through stereotypes. His narrative illuminates how his body is always already judged as a site of potential danger:

My freshman year on campus. I was at the recreation center, and they had this registration desk on the left side the center on the smaller basketball courts, and I had a couple of friends who were playing in the tournament....I was coming in and [the White female ticket attendant] looked at me and was like, “Can I help you,” and I was like, “Can I get in?” and she was like, “Well, you have to sign in on one of the teams.” And, I’m looking and I can see everybody’s got a jersey and so I’m like, “Oh, I have to go upstairs [to sign in]” so I just stood next to her. And she keeps looking at me, and I’m looking at the games, and I can kind of see out of my peripheral vision that she’s looking

at me up and down. And so, I walked towards her, you know, to get a better look at the court, and when I got close she grabbed her purse and her phone, like clutched it real tight and tucked it under the table....It could have just been that I'm just a stranger, but you know that still, you know it still plays in my mind because you know she did it so quick and she didn't do it until I got close to her. Like she didn't do it when she had a whole bunch of other people [around her].

Other Black male participants recounted times when others (usually White people) crossed streets to avoid contact, clutched purses, or locked car doors. Many of these participants felt that these actions were performed because the other person viewed them through racist stereotypes about Black masculinity. Every Black male participant had a story about a time they felt they were the victim of stereotype threat from other students, teachers, or administrators.

Of course, negative portrayals of a cultural group are not the only way that stereotypes can threaten the sense of self-worth of students of color. Positive stereotypes can still wreak havoc on their psyche when they feel the pressure to live up to cultural misperceptions about their identity. I asked Seraphina if she ever had times when students or teachers seemed to use stereotypes about Asians when interacting with her. She stated that she often had to deal with the perception that her "smartness" was due to her being Asian. When I asked her how she felt stereotypes affected her experiences in higher education, she replied, "People view me as so smart, and it's almost intimidating to them so they keep their distance." She went on to say that stereotypes were particularly hard to deal with because of the gendered aspects of racism. When I asked her if she had ever dealt with stereotypes in the classroom, she was quickly able to describe utterances that she hears regularly:

For the most part, it's like, "Well, of course, the Asian got the 100," or "Of course, the



Asian got the A she made the curve” or like, “It isn’t really fair we base the curve off of her because she’s Asian” that type of thing. And it’s like really, it’s not that I’m Asian because I’m smart. I’m just smart.

As Seraphina’s response shows, her academic success is a self-fulfilling prophecy in the eyes of her classmates because it fulfills the cultural stereotype of the “model minority” or the notion that Asian-Americans are all smart and academically driven (Yu, 2006). Her classmates’ attempt to single her out and make her an object of ridicule harkens back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century trope of the “Yellow Peril.” According to Ng, Lee, and Pak (2007), Asian-American (and particularly Chinese-American) labor was used during the 19<sup>th</sup> century to create the trans-continental railways. At first admired for their hard work and diligence, they were then viewed with fear that they would take over U.S. culture and were subsequently targeted by racially motivated violence and legislation, such as the Chinese Exclusion Law of 1892. Similarly, Seraphina’s success is viewed as a threat to the dominance of whiteness, and thus White students. Therefore, she believes that her peers rearticulate her intelligence through stereotypes (e.g., Asian = smart) rather than recognize her hard work or perseverance.

### **Effects of Stereotyping**

Through the course the conversations, I found participants’ main concern with stereotype threat was how it undermined their confidence and self-concept. Some participants have crafted a positive self-construal of their identity in the face of stereotype threats. For example, Seraphina’s assertion that she is smart because she “work[s] hard [and] not because [she is] Asian” can be viewed as a communicative performance that functions to justify her pride in her academic success regardless of the stereotype threat that codes her intelligence as a biological or cultural anomaly. Other participants recounted how they have internalized some of the stereotypes about

their racial identity and have changed the way they interact within classrooms as a result. For example, Jajuan offered:

Yeah, I feel like the classes that I'm in sometimes [makes me want to remain silent]. Like when I'm sitting in class and I speak and it seems like other people in the class sound a little bit more articulate than I am or that they can put their ideas together a little bit better. I think in my head, "Like will [my statement] come out right?" So that's kind of the reason for my silence. Like to me, I don't want to sound stupid.

As his response indicates, Jajuan is aware of how his contributions may be viewed through the prism of stereotypes about Black male intelligence. His silence in class points highlights the ways that stereotypes can affect the way that some Black males perceive their sense of self-worth in the college classroom.

Many participants opened up about how they negotiated stereotype threats to their identity while identifying their scope and effect. Jeff explained, "I always felt like I had to fight against this notion that I'm not as intelligent because I'm African American." We talked about a class that he and I had shared—one of the first he had as a master's student—and how he reacted to the stereotype threat concerning Black male intelligence in that classroom. He said:

I don't know if you ever saw, but at the top I would write at the top of my notebook the words that I had never heard before and in the first few weeks of class I'm talking about full, probably 20 some words that I had never heard before. Forget not understanding them, forget not know how to conceptualize them, I had never heard this word. You know?...I heard all of you all saying these words and talking about them in ways that were so familiar to you all or at least you had some kind of understanding and the fact that I had never even heard it before. I'm thinking like, "How did I get so far behind?"

Jeff expressed surprise that other students in class, and particularly White students, would contribute to classroom conversations and make utterances such as, “I’m not really sure where I’m going with this.” From Jeff’s point of view, such utterances functioned as a way for other students to work through ideas by talking about them out loud. He stated:

I’m not at that point where I’m confident enough to be like, “I’m not sure if I know what I’m saying, but here’s where I’m trying to go.” I admire people who can do that because I wish I could...I don’t want to seem like that black guy who’s trying to figure it out. He worried that he would be viewed as ignorant and that his classmates would think, “Oh, there goes Jeff again [rolls his eyes]” when he raised his hand to speak in class. As a result, he stated that he would often contribute only one or two times to classroom conversations, but in a carefully choreographed way, “I will spend an entire class period, looking at something that I have highlighted, and making sense out of it before I raise my hand and I have something to say.” Jeff stated that he often scripted his contributions (i.e., wrote them out) before contributing to class discussion because he felt as if scripting his contribution was the best way to ensure it was viewed positively by other class members. Such an ethic, he hoped, would serve to dispel myths about Black male inferiority.

As I read back over my interviews with Jeff, I remembered my impressions of him in that class we shared. He was a first semester master’s student, one that had matriculated from our department’s undergraduate to graduate program. I thought he was quiet and reflective, not at all like the open and friendly individual that sat across from me during the interviews. In fact, I did not remember having any sustained conversations with him that semester. I did remember thinking that he always contributed insightful commentary in those few times he participated in classroom conversations, which is why I was stopped short while analyzing my interview data

when I encountered one of his responses during our interviews. He said:

That's why sometimes when I do only talk one time people are like, "Oh! That makes so much sense." Yeah, that's because I rehearsed it for 30 minutes, looking at it, going over, over, and over it, trying to figure out how to create my own understanding of it. That's why when I do speak, it sounds so clear, coherent, and succinct because I have gone over it, you know, a lot.

I had always believed that the level and nature of Jeff's participation in class was a function of introversion or contemplation. I never recognized that he was actively negotiating the stereotype about Black male inferiority. In the moment that I connected his classroom communicative behaviors and my lack of knowledge about his experiences as a Black male student, I realized that my lack of interactions with Jeff allowed the stereotypes to go unchallenged in the classroom.

I believe that Jeff's story and my recognition of my lack of interactions with him might provide some insights into the ways that whiteness and white privilege function to sustain stereotype threats in the classroom. As a White male, I very rarely have my right to contribute to conversations questioned by others. My voice is deep and clear, my eye contact encompasses the other members in the classroom, and I use hand gestures to mark points of emphasis. In other words, I embody the dominant codes of self-expression that are valued as "good" public speaking habits. Perhaps due to my embodied performance, other students often defer to my contributions or, at the very least, listen attentively. The privilege associated with being heard (despite the quality of my contribution) not only highlights the relative positions of power between Whites and people of color (i.e., who can speak and who is listened to), they also point to how those systems of privilege and oppression are (re)produced. For example, as Jeff stated,

he often felt that he needed to write out and rehearse before contributing to discussion. Said differently, because he was actively negotiating the stereotype threat, he was not able to enjoy the same threat-free learning atmosphere that his White classmates, like I, enjoyed. Furthermore, due to my own cultural ignorance, I had accounted for Jeff's communicative behaviors through the belief that the level and nature of his contributions were due to individual choice or disposition. I did not feel need to open a dialogue with him (or other students in class) to discuss the way our racial identities differently situated us in classroom conversation. By doing nothing to a dialogue, I was able to ignore problems that stem from stereotypes and obfuscate my White privilege by putting the onus of participation back on Jeff. As such, it is important to note that the power of stereotypes and stereotype threat can also be found in how silence (re)inscribes those cultural misperceptions and (re)produces racialized power.

### **Summary**

In this section, I have shown how stereotypes function as a communicative barrier to the success of students of color, and how they, in turn, navigate those stereotype threats. Through this analysis, I pointed to some of the ways that stereotype threats remain a tool that (re)produces racialized power. Furthermore, I hope that the analysis shows that the effects of stereotype threat are realized when they are explicitly invoked or due to their cultural pervasiveness as well as through the cultural ignorance of people in positions of power. When stereotypes are not actively and intentionally challenged within college classrooms, there remains a strong likelihood that many students of color are using their emotional and psychological resources to navigate those cultural misperceptions. In the next section, I examine another way that racism manifests in higher education: invisibility.

### **Invisibility as a Racial Microaggression**

*Blake looks out the car window and sees the trees pass by in a green blur. Oak, maple, pine, they all run together as he and his classmates drive down the country road. It'll be autumn soon, and the forest will be a cacophony of reds, greens, and yellows, but for now it's all the same. He sighs and leans back in his car seat. It's going to be a long ride.*

*Blake and four other students are cramped into a Honda Civic. They are going to one of the local Air Force bases to give a presentation on the Work Force Education program at AAU. The driver, Elton, and bucket-seat passenger, Rodney, are two White males from Missouri. They have been in ROTC for the last three years and are almost finished with their degrees. Benny and Bernie, two White males from Kentucky and Louisiana (respectively), sit to either side of Blake in the back. They, like him, finished their service and are going to college on the G.I. Bill.*

*They have been going to various military bases over the past couple of months. Each time he goes back, Blake gets a little nostalgic. He really enjoyed the training and the discipline that came with being in the military. When he's back on base and hears orders being yelled, he has an almost instinctive reaction to find someone to salute. He likes going back to Air Force bases the most because that's the branch he served in during his enlistment. There's a familiar rhythm that he feels, like a heartbeat, every time he stands on the tarmac.*

*They are going to give a presentation at a base that is pretty special to Blake because he was stationed there about 10 years ago. It's not a very large base, but it was home for almost five years. He still has friends stationed there, even though he hasn't seen some of them in a few years. He remembers his first day on base, the smell of diesel and rubber in his nose and the hot August sun beating down on his neck. The first person he met was Tony, a large Black man with a gruff voice. He shook Blake's hand and directed him to the barracks where he put his kit and*

*then...*

*Blake's fond memory is interrupted by Elton and Rodney bickering. "Man, I told you that we needed to take that last exit!" Elton says.*

*"No, you said that like an hour ago. We just need to stay on this road for a little while longer," Rodney replies.*

*Elton and Rodney continue to argue back-and-forth for the next few minutes. Finally, Benny chimes in, "Have you tried looking it up on your phone?"*

*"No, I can't get any reception out here," Rodney says.*

*The sound of rustling clothes fills the car as everyone digs out their cellphones. Everyone, that is, except Blake. He knows exactly how to get to the Air Force base, but even though the others know he was stationed there, no one's asked him for directions. In fact, he told Benny and Bernie how eager he was to visit his old base just last week. Despite being scrunched thigh-to-thigh between two 200-pound guys, Blake might as well be a part of the car seat for all the attention he receives.*

*"Anyone get any reception?" Bernie asks. "No," they answered in a resounding chorus. Everyone is wriggling around in their seats and waving their cellphones to get better reception. Blake stifles a laugh at how comical the others look dancing around in the car in an effort to learn their whereabouts. But, no one notices that he doesn't get his phone out or voice any suggestions.*

*"I think there's an old map in the glove box," Elton says.*

*Rodney opens the compartment, shuffling through the old car titles and parking tickets. A pile of crumpled papers fills his lap before he declares, "Nope, I don't see a map in here."*

*"Really? I could've sworn it would be in there," Elton replies.*

*“You can look for yourself then,” Rodney retorts as he haphazardly stuffs the papers back into the compartment and slams the door.*

*Everyone sits in uncomfortable silence. Five, ten, fifteen minutes pass. Then, just as Blake knew it would, a sign appears as they crest a hill:*

*Air Force Base: Next Exit*

*Please Have ID Ready*

*There is a collective sigh from the others. Elton makes some joke about how mad Rodney was, and Rodney makes a light-hearted quip back. Everyone seems to have calmed down, making the last part of the trip enjoyable. In a few more minutes, they have made it to the base and are passing the checkpoint.*

*As they get out of the car, Blake recognizes the military officer who approaches their car. It’s Tony, one of his old commanding officers, a few years older, but still fit. He shakes Blake’s hand, “I didn’t think you were going to make it. What took you all so long?”*

*“We got lost,” Blake replies, his eyes cutting toward the other students and then back to the officer.*

*“How did you get lost?!” He exclaims, “You were stationed here for almost five years!”*

*Blake looks back at Elton, Rodney, Benny, and Bernie. They look back at him. They stare in a mixture of confusion and frustration. He locks eyes with Tony and says, “No one thought to ask me for directions.”*

\*\*\*\*\*

After finishing his story, Blake shook his head as if he still could not believe that the other students neglected to ask him for directions. When he agreed to participate in the interviews, I was happy. I’ve known Blake since he was a master’s student in the Workforce



Education Department. Now a doctoral student in Communication Studies, his intelligence and cheerful demeanor have been a welcomed addition to our department's culture. I was grateful for the chance to know more about the person with whom I had shared so much class time over the past few years. He was born in rural Illinois, close to the Kentucky border. He grew up in a part of town that he called the "Black projects," an area of subsidized housing near the town's junkyard. He stated that his elementary and middle school was predominately Black because many of the White students attended the private Catholic K-8. He joined the Air Force after high school and completed his bachelor's and master's degree at AAU. Despite his academic success, he stated that he has faced racism in higher education. He said, "I feel like [racism in higher education] is about invisibility. About erasure."

As Blake's narrative about the car ride shows, White peers often overlook or ignore students of color even when they have the knowledge needed in a situation. After he told me this story, I asked, "Why didn't you just tell them which way to go and get it over with?" He replied:

I mean, you know, we're all in the car together...So, if we get lost, we'll be lost together. It's not like this is taking anything away from me specifically. I feel like what it does is one of those repetitive acts that just piles on to other instances that I can't think of. But, this one was so obvious to me that I was completely surprised to see them going over a map, looking at directions, checking their email from the person, and I'm in the back seat. Like, they could turn around and smack me faster. But, they opted not to....My mom told me that White people don't like for you to know more than they do. And, if it turns out that you have information that they don't, somehow at the end of that exchange it'll turn out that they knew it but just forgot it or they kind of knew it but they weren't sure. But, it can never fully be that you possess knowledge that they didn't have, but needed.

There can never be an even exchange or a “Thank you, I didn’t know that.”

Blake stated that he often felt like he “faded into the background” while his White peers overlooked his contributions or accomplishments. The fact that he characterized invisibility as a set of “repetitive acts” that does not “take anything away from [him] specifically” suggests that the power of invisibility, as a type of racism, is not in its overtness or intentionality. Rather, the danger it poses to students of color resides in the way it erases their lived experiences, denying them the ability to feel that their talents or intelligence are worthwhile or appreciated.

### **Conceptual Framework**

I draw upon literature concerning racialized microaggressions as a way to examine how students of color understand communicative interactions that convey feelings of invisibility in higher education. Scholars utilize the term microaggression to label “brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to certain individuals because of their group membership” (Sue, 2010, p. xv). Members of dominant cultural groups engage in mundane communicative performances that function to threaten the self-concept and efficacy of members of oppressed groups. Examples include acts, such as a man cat-calling a woman as he passes her on the street, a cis-gender person using gender pronouns that do not match a trans\* person’s identity, or a heterosexual individual expressing disgust at same-sex couples’ displays of affection.

Racial microaggressions refer to a “stunning small encounter with racism, usually unnoticed by members of the majority race” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 151). For example, when White students talk over students of color during classroom discussions, they reinforce the racist notion that the voices of students of color are not valuable. Pierce (1995) states that “in and of itself a microaggression may seem harmless, but the cumulative burden of a lifetime of microaggressions can theoretically contribute to diminished mortality, augmented morbidity, and

flattened confidence” (p. 281). In this section, participants recount how White students, teachers, and supervisors treat them in ways that make them feel invisible through the conceptual lens of racial microaggressions (i.e., microaggressions perpetuated by White people against people of color).

### **How Invisibility Manifests in Higher Education**

Through my conversations with participants, I found that many of them characterized their organizations, on-campus jobs, or departments as places where other institutional members explicitly or implicitly communicated with them in ways that conveyed microaggressions of invisibility. One way that White students and faculty communicated invisibility was by under-appreciating for the work of students of color at their campus-based jobs and in the classroom. Ida B. Wells, who worked for the student newspaper of AAU, felt this state of invisibility quite acutely. A sizable portion of each of our three interviews dealt with her feeling invisible while at her job. In her first interview, she stated:

I was getting upset with this job because it’s very stressful, it’s a lot to take on, and it’s just like, they really ignore you. I think in higher education that’s one of the main things that persons of color have to face. When they’re on a predominantly White institution there’s this spirit of feeling invisible. You tend to feel invisible.

Ida’s primary critique about her workplace was that she felt that she was rarely given a chance to use her abilities because her White peers did not understand or appreciate stories she wrote about racial diversity or how Black students face unique challenges during their enrollment in higher education. For example, Ida recounted in her second interview a time when she was writing articles during Black History. She was in the newspaper office at her computer when one of her White female colleagues asked Ida to describe what her article was about. Ida replied it was an

article about Black male students' experiences in higher education, and the colleague asked her why she would want to write about that for the newspaper. Ida explained, “[My coworker] couldn't figure out if February was like Black History Month or Women's History Month and, yeah, I think she said something like, ‘Why is there a Black History Month?’” Ida's story shows one way that experiences of students of color can be erased through these types of mundane interactions. Her colleagues' ignorance concerning Ida's topic of interest shows not only a lack of knowledge concerning Ida's continued work in that area, but also a lack of awareness concerning times that are important to particular racial groups. As such, this lack of knowledge functions to render Ida invisible, even in times that are (ostensibly) specifically created to draw attention to her racial group (i.e., Black History Month).

The first interview that I had with Blake provided insights into not only his feelings of invisibility but also how my actions served to maintain it. Blake said that it felt like members in his department often overlooked his intelligence or ability to contribute to scholarly work. Despite being an active member in the department's social life and a regular contributor to departmental projects and taskforces, he felt that he was often disregarded by his peers. He said:

So, well, I debated on saying this, but I think it will illustrate my point and you can edit it the way you want or leave it as you see fit. But, it's a little insulting that it's my second year here, and I've never been asked to be on a panel for a conference.

When Blake told me how he felt, I immediately began to feel guilty because I had never worked with him on any research projects. While he continued to talk about his experiences, I sat in a state of internal debate, trying to find a way to make myself feel comfortable with this fact—our research interests were different, he's not the only person I haven't worked with, I'm too busy to work with someone right now—each reason roughly translating into, “It's not because he's

Black. I'm not a racist." After a few minutes of my internal back and forth, I realized my reasoning for what it really was: rationalization. As the full force of this recognition hit me, I guess my face showed my distress because Blake said, "You seem like you feel bad." And so we talked about invisibility and my responsibility:

Me: Well, it's just that I'm a part of this department, right? So when you say no one has ever asked you to be on a panel, I think, "Well, you're absolutely right. I've put together a couple of panels, and I've never asked you to be a part of them."

Blake: Well, I wasn't saying it about you, Kyle.

Me: I know that you're not saying this specifically about me, but it's the recognition of the type of person that I am. That I contributed to this culture of invisibility.

Blake: But that's the thing; it's a culture. It's not just you that contributes to it, and it's not just for you to fix. Just take that fact and the fact that when the department made a list of the people presenting at a national conference, so everyone can know where everyone is at all times, I'm one of the two names that is omitted. Was it intentional? No. Because that would mean that I'm a target. It just means that I'm just not the person that comes to mind in this setting, that's what it fore-fronted for me.

Blake's understanding of invisibility as a "culture" reminded me of Delpit's (1988) work regarding the culture of power. She describes the culture of power as a set of practices that are privileged within institutions of education. Delpit (1988) writes that "those with power are frequently least aware of — or least willing to acknowledge — its existence. Those with less power are often most aware of its existence" (p. 282). In other words, those who benefit the most from the culture of power (i.e., White, middle-class males) are the least likely to acknowledge that it exists. Her argument highlights how students that are a part of the culture, like myself, do

not see the system as broken and continue to perform those behaviors that are privileged by the institution. Simultaneously, students of color are expected to remain “in the background” or being viewed as a “know-it-all or smart-ass” by bringing attention to the problem.

### **Effects of Invisibility as a Microaggression**

Although invisibility (as a racial microaggression) functions on the interpersonal level, its effects can be far reaching. For example, during the course of this dissertation project, AAU invited Angela Davis, a noted Black feminist activist, to speak at a public event during Black History Month. Ida B. Wells and I both attended the lecture, and we discussed some of her talking points during our first interview. Ida then told me that she had written an extensive story for the newspaper detailing not only Davis’ career but the work of Black intellectuals on campus that drew upon Davis’ research. Ida said that the article she wrote linked issues, such as institutional racism, poverty, and the industrial-prison complex, to those problems that affects Black students’ ability to thrive in higher education. She recounted:

Well, when the article came to print, [the editorial staff] cut so much and added things I didn’t even say. They basically turned it into a brief, which is no more than 100-200 words. And, it looked bad, it looked like we were bringing nothing but a criminal [to campus]. It looked so horrible, and my name was attached to it, and I raised hell....And [I also thought,] “Why would you have on the front page a whole Valentine’s Day thing on the day Angela Davis is supposed to come here? It’s Angela Davis!”...But, you know, half of them wouldn’t know who she was unless they did a Google search, and they didn’t understand the significance of her coming here besides the propaganda of all that they heard.

As Ida’s story shows, she was erased as a contributing member of the student newspaper while

her readers were robbed of the opportunity to learn about an important scholar of color. In other words, Ida was rendered invisible by those in power functioned at the interpersonal level while a culture of invisibility was maintained on AAU's campus because important information about people of color was squelched by the newspaper's gatekeepers.

Some participants felt that feelings of invisibility harmed the ability of students of color to succeed in higher education. Chris, for example, stated:

When it comes to academics, yes I felt like, I think that that's a lot of the reason why a lot of African-American students don't succeed academically is that they just feel like they can't excel to that point that they want to excel and they probably feel like they can't get the help that they want to get, the attention that they need, to get themselves over the situation.

Chris's response points to the deleterious effects of invisibility. He argues that students of color are ignored by classmates and faculty, promotes a cultural climate that serves to foster a sense of disconnect between faculty and students of color. As a result, students that may have otherwise asked for help or clarification on assignments feel that they are unable to because it would break the imposed expectation that students of color should remain invisible.

As shown through the responses, students of color struggle with feeling invisible in institutions of higher education. Franklin (2004) writes that chronic feelings of invisibility (i.e., invisibility syndrome) can limit "the effective utilization of personal resources, the achievement of individual goals, the establishment of positive relationships, the satisfaction of family interactions, and the potential for life satisfaction" (p. 11). One can see through the participants' responses that living within a culture where they are made invisible can produce a cumulative negative effect on the efficacy and self-concept of students of color. Furthermore, invisibility, as

a form of racial microaggression, functions to create a cultural climate that neglects the contributions of students of color. By erasing the knowledges that students of color produce, members within institutions of higher education are able to maintain a set of cultural scripts that privilege whiteness as an institutional norm. Thus, on both an interpersonal and institutional level, invisibility as a form of racial microaggression constitutes a major threat to the success of students of color.

### **Summary**

In this section, I have examined ways that participants report feeling invisible due to the ways that they are treated by their white peers and supervisors. By conceptualizing these feelings as microaggressions, I argue that feeling invisible is more than just a subjective experience, but is a part of a network of communicative interactions that reinforces a culture of racism within higher education. Furthermore, by being treated as invisible, participants stated that they (and other students of color) do not seek or receive the help that they may need to successfully navigate higher education. As such, communicating feelings of invisibility is another kind of racial barrier that students of color must deal with in their effort to graduate from college. In the next section, I examine how institutions of higher education function to create a hostile environment that excludes and oppresses students of color.

### **Overt Racism and the Creation of a Hostile Environment**

*The clock hits 11:50 A.M., and the class gets up to leave. Chairs scrape the ground, zippers are cinched, and conversations slowly grow louder as the students leave the room. The professor, Dr. Adams, calls out over the din, “Don’t forget that the final paper is due this Friday!” Star shoves her history book into her backpack and walks up to where he is standing at the front of the room.*



*“Hello, Dr. Adams. I’m Star. I just wanted to know if you had some free time this week. I want to talk to you about the final paper,” Star says.*

*“Star, Star, Star,” he mumbles as he looks through his class roster. There’s over a hundred students in class, so it takes him a minute or two to find her name. “Ah! Okay, I see your name now. You know, you have not turned in your last two assignments, right? Those are going to be zeroes.”*

*“Yes,” she replies. Dr. Adam’s class is all lecture and book readings. Star doesn’t like it because students never get to talk about what they read or their assignments. All they ever do is just sit in class as he reads parts of the book at them—three days a week, every week, for fifteen weeks. “I know my grade is not great. That’s why I want to talk to you about the final paper. I want to do well on it, so I can pass this class.”*

*“Look, I don’t really have a lot of time to go over the assignment with you.”*

*“But—,” she starts to interject.*

*“I don’t have the time.” he says, speaking over her. He sighs in frustrations, then continues, “Let me give you probably the best advice I can give you and your parents: drop out. You’re not college material. You’ll save your parents’ money and your time if you just don’t come back. You shouldn’t be here.”*

*He grabs his briefcase and walks out. Other students look at Star and whisper to one another. She puts her head down so that no one can see the tears in her eyes, and walks out of the classroom. She tries to lose herself in the crowd of students walking down the hall. She is vaguely aware that everyone is chatting around her, but she can’t focus on them over the drone in her head, “You shouldn’t be here. You shouldn’t be here. You shouldn’t be here.”*

*Star quickens her pace to get away from the rest of the students and finally reaches the*

*doors to the building. She opens it to the strong light of the sun, momentarily blinding her. That's when she hears a male voice say, "That's her! That's the Muslim!"*

*Star hears the door shut behind her as she looks at the man that has just yelled at her. He's standing with three other men and a woman. She perceives them to be White, wearing blue jeans and t-shirts. "Yeah, I'm talking to you!" he yells.*

*"Great, just what I need," Star thinks. This type of behavior has just gotten worse since 9/11. She suspects that when people see her dark brown skin and long black hair, they think she is Middle Eastern and associate that racial identity with being Muslim. She steps toward the group and is about to give the speech that she has given a dozen times in the past few years: (1) Muslims aren't a race; you're thinking of Middle-Eastern people; (2) I'm not Muslim; (3) I'm not Middle Eastern; I'm Indian; and (4) Not all Muslims are terrorists, and not all terrorists are Muslims. She's probably said this speech nearly a dozen times in the past few years.*

*"Look, Muslims aren't—," Star starts to say, but she's cut off by one of the men punching her in the jaw. She falls to the ground, dazed by both the pain and shock.*

*"Shut your mouth," he screams. Star tries to get up, but someone else hits her in the back of the neck. She sinks down, covering her head with her arms as they kick her all over her body.*

*"We're going to throw you in the lake and drown you, terrorist!" Star hears the woman yell as she feels another kick to her side.*

*Star hears another person yelling now, but not at her. It's a group of people that has come out of a different side of the building. She can dimly see them running toward her. She can clearly hear them shouting for the first group of students to stop hitting her. The first group of students, seeing the new group of students, runs toward their cars to get away. They yell more epithets at her as they speed out of the parking lot. One of the men from the new group helps her*

*up. "Are you okay?" he asks, as she stands up on wobbly legs. "Do you need to see a doctor?"*

*Star doesn't reply. She just puts her head down and walks back toward her car in the parking lot. She barely hears the voices of people standing around her, but they are drowned out by the voice in her head chanting, "You shouldn't be here. You shouldn't be here. You shouldn't be here."*

\*\*\*\*

Although Star and I were never enrolled in the same coursework, I interacted with her through departmental functions, such as potlucks and happy-hours. She was often quiet in those social settings and sat outside of the general hubbub of the social gathering. During our first interview, she told me that she did not easily make connections or reveal information about herself because she was afraid that it might be used against her. I thought that her reticence to open up to other students in the department was unsurprising in regard to her story. How can (particularly White) individuals within higher education expect students of color to trust or open up to them when those students have so many experiences of emotional, psychological, and physical violence?

Star was born in India and then adopted along with her brother to White parents in rural Indiana. She described childhood as "hard" because she did not feel that her peers, who were primarily White and Black students, accepted her. Students from her own racial group did not associate with her either because she did not act "Indian enough." She described one instance in high school:

I was really excited because I think it was either my junior or senior year [that] an Indian girl, like her family moved into town. And, so I was all excited! And, so I asked her if she wanted to hang out, and she was like, "No! Get away from me," and I was like, "Wow,

that was kind of harsh,” and so I asked her again a couple of days later, and she was like, “No! Just leave me alone. I don’t want to hang out with you,” and so I asked her why, and she said, “You’re not Indian enough.” So I didn’t really hang out with anyone, so school was hard, I think.

After completing high school, Star went to ABU, a four-year state university in the area. As shown in the story, Star found that her sense of displacement was only heightened because Islamophobic students and racist instructors targeted her with verbal, physical, and psychological assaults. At the end of her first year, her experiences of racially-motivated attacks at the hands of teachers and fellow students led her to believe that the college culture was dangerous, so she decided to go to a cosmetology school. She completed her certification and, after nearly six years, decided to go back to college. Although she went to a different university, she found that she still had to face many of the same/similar problems that she had at ABU. However, this time she completed her bachelor’s and master’s degrees. She is currently working on her doctorate at AAU and plans to become a professor once she completes her degree.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Scholarship concerning racism often points to the covert or implicit nature of racist behaviors. Many scholars make the argument that individuals, and particularly White individuals, talk about instances of overt racism or overtly racist groups as a rhetorical strategy to elide their own culpability in racism (see Warren, 2003). For example, Delgado and Stefancic (2001) state that critical race scholars focus more on the “business-as-usual forms of racism” (p. xvi) that permeate all levels of US society than those unique cases of overt discrimination. Although I agree that racism does not need to be overt or egregious to be harmful, it is important to recognize that students of color face real and immediate threats to their mental, emotional, and

physical health due to overt racism in higher education. For example, students of color at the University of Texas were recently attacked by White students who threw water balloons filled with bleach (i.e., bleach-bombing) (Cavaliere, 2012; Milhiser, 2013). Such racially-motivated violence can give students of color the impression that they are unwelcome or unwanted by other members within an institution of higher education. I do not want to give the impression that overt forms of racism are “worse” or “more harmful” than the implicit types of everyday racism that students of color navigate. However, I believe it is important to recognize how overt racism still manifests in higher education, necessitating students of color to negotiate its deleterious effects in their lives. In other words, instances of overt racism should be interrogated to understand the immediate impact of racial violence, and how they serve to produce a culture of fear, self-doubt, anxiety, and depression that uniquely and negatively affects students of color in higher education.

Because of the pervasiveness of racism, it is unsurprising that White students and faculty often perpetuate an overtly hostile campus environment for students of color. For example, when all-White fraternities and sororities at the University of Alabama barred Black applicants from their organizations, the university responded by encouraging a few sororities to recruit a small number of Black women. Demands for full integration were either ignored or defeated by pro-White individuals within the university (Kingkade, 2014). In short, the university opted to maintain an illusion of progress while upholding a climate of overt racism against students of color.

### **How Overt Racism Manifests in Higher Education**

Participants’ responses concerning overt racism often revolved around verbal assaults about their intelligence. For example, when I asked Star if she had ever felt as though she had

been the target of racism in her classes, she explained,” I had on several occasions where professors, like once at ABU and once at ACU, where they would tell me that I’m the most unintelligent Indian person they have ever met.” She stated that professors often told her she was unintelligent when she asked the instructor for additional help understanding a concept or assignment.

Another participant, SK, stated that White managers and co-workers often watched him work or try to tell him how to do his campus-based job. He felt these situations were particularly troubling because individuals with less experience or knowledge tell him how to perform his duties. When I asked him if he thought his co-workers’ actions were racially motivated, he replied:

I do. For me, from my experiences, I think, “Yeah.” Because most of all of them have been White folk. For me, it is a question of my intelligence. It is a question because of my race.... You know, if it’s working in the book store, working in the LGBTQ Resource Center, working wherever I’m working, it’s always that underlying feeling of evaluating me and micromanaging me to where I do feel like it’s almost like I’m incompetent of doing my job. It’s insulting, which allows that angry, gay Black man to surface a lot because I’m like, “I know what I’m doing.” So yeah, yeah.

I asked if he felt that his identity as a gay male might have also affected the way that people treat him at his workplace. He said that the threat that he felt was primarily racial, although he had instances when his co-workers expressed hostility toward his gay identity. He stated:

The job that I have on campus, there’s...a [White] guy that I work with who is a student in the med prep program and out and me being Black and out. There is a lady [that I work with] who will barely speak to me, but will completely speak to the White gay man, like

she will completely avoid me. And in that case, that's a racial thing.

SK's response points to the uniqueness that racial oppression plays in this part of his everyday life.<sup>18</sup> His coworkers' actions toward him create and sustain a climate that is constantly at odds with his self-perception as a competent and hardworking Black, gay male. As such, SK, like many other students of color, may feel that institutions of higher education create a cultural atmosphere of doubt—doubt that students of color can and should be in college.

Other participants mentioned times when students made explicitly racist comments. For example, Seraphina recounted a time when she was singled out by classmates because of her Asian identity:

The big thing that happened in my class, I was called Ling Ling. We were playing a Jeopardy game, and [the teacher in class] had it to where we could only answer one question. We could help our team, but individually could only answer one question. I'm observing and I notice things so I knew a lot of the answers because I pay attention. So, I was sharing all the answers with my teammates like, "This is that one, and this is that one." I was just looking at the board to see what other questions there were, and this girl she goes, "Ling Ling can't answer another question because she already answered one."

Even though Seraphina was playing within the bounds of the game's rules, the other student in the class attempted to use racist language in an attempt to silence her. She said that she became so angry at the incident that she got up and left the room. In other words, she was forced to make a choice to either stay in the classroom and obtain valuable information (at the cost of her psychological and emotional well-being) or endure overtly racist insults to obtain class content.

---

<sup>18</sup> Of course, I do not want to give the impression that oppression based on sexuality is less important than racial oppression or even that they can be easily separated. As Collins (2000) writes, oppression is better understood as a matrix than as a hierarchy.

## Effects of Overt Racism in Higher Education

Many participants expressed a mixture of frustration, amusement, and anger as they recounted times when White students or teachers engaged in overtly racist behaviors. Some of the participants stated that they left one or more institution of higher education due to the pervasiveness of overt racism. Star left two college due to two different instances of racially-motivated physical assaults. SK left a community college because he felt that his professors did not want to help him due to his race. He recounted:

I got into it with [my White professor] over trying to get extra help [because] he refused. I'm like, "I tried the tutors they're not helping. I really need your assistance. I need your help," and he just continued to say he didn't have any time. You know—it sucked. Even though I see him helping other students who are White folks. It really pushed me to not care about my education.

Important in SK's statement is his belief that his professor's (in)actions were racially motivated based on his perception that the professor gave more attention to White students than to SK.

Both Star and SK's narrations point to how overt racism can create a climate that is so hostile to students of color that some may not stay enrolled to protect their mental, emotional, or physical health.

As I read through the participants' narratives, I was struck again and again by the question: Would I still pursue a doctorate if I had the same experiences that participants recounted? And the truth of the matter is I really cannot answer that question. I have never had experiences when my intelligence has been called into question, where my body has been beaten or bruised, or when my emotions have been traumatized because of the racial category that I occupy. I am reminded of McIntosh's (1988) metaphor of the knapsack of privilege that I carry;



that is, the cultural privileges that I am afforded that enable me to pursue my ambitions relatively unfettered by racial oppression. If I were faced with the types of discrimination that many of these participants' narrated, I do not know if I would have the psychological or emotional resources needed to not only meet but also overcome these challenges. Ida B. Wells stated in one of our conversations, "Most Black kids grow up hearing this phrase: you have to work twice as hard to get half as much. And I never knew how true that saying was until I started working with a bunch of White people." Institutions of higher education, through a myriad of mundane acts that are carried out by institutional members remain indifferent at best and overtly hostile at worst to the health and well-being of students of color. Recognizing this fact and connecting it to my lived experiences helps me reframe my success within higher education and see it as a result of the barriers that I will never have to negotiate encounter. I will never have to leave a college because I fear for my physical health, cannot find help from professors due to my race, or feel that my racial identity is under assault by my peers. I am not saying that I, or other White people, cannot be proud of our achievements; however, the participants' stories demands that I (and other White people ) must recognize that my success is made easier due to the absence of racialized barriers that hinder the efforts of students of color in higher education.

### **Summary**

Participants' responses point to the ways that their peers and teachers engage in overtly racist behaviors in institutions of higher education. Although some may believe that such racism is a thing of the past, stories such as the ones offered by participants highlight the very real threat of racial violence that they must navigate. Overt racism can create conditions where students of color feel that they must leave institutions of higher education to protect their physical, mental, or emotional health. Furthermore, connecting these stories to white privilege highlights the ways

that the oppression of students of color come with a corollary—the privilege of White students within institutions of higher education. Overall, understanding how overt racism manifests in higher education shows yet another ways that students of color must negotiate the ways that racism creates barriers to their ability to pursue success on college campuses.

### **Chapter Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have addressed my first research question by showing how students of color experience racism in higher education. Based on participants' responses, I presented stereotyping, invisibility, and hostile environment as three themes that point to some of the ways that racism manifests in higher education. I wove participants' responses and narratives with three conceptual tools (stereotype threat, microaggressions, and overt racism) to better understand how students of color identified the barriers of racism endemic to higher education. Through this analysis, I have showed that students of color face problems that are both unique to their specific racial identity and wide-ranging in scope and pervasiveness. Additionally, I have attempted to connect the participant' responses to my own lived experiences as a way to work toward a reflexive account of my subjectivity as a White, male researcher.

Critical scholars, and particularly critical scholars of color, have written an impressive amount of scholarship challenging the ways that whiteness ideologies function to exclude, dehumanize, and alienate students of color. One reason that students of color face barriers of racism is because White students and faculty often act as if racial discrimination is not a problem in higher education. For example, Ancis, Sedlacek, and Mohr (2000) claim that White students report less racial tension and fewer expectations to conform to stereotypic behavior than students of color. Additionally, White students characterized their experiences within higher education as fair and respectful to diversity at a significantly higher rate than students of color. Finally, White

students reported the most overall satisfaction of the racial groups surveyed. Additionally, Jayakumar, Howard, Allen, and Han (2009) report that White faculty members that characterized their campus climate as negative toward faculty of color were also likely to state that they were highly satisfied with their jobs and more likely to continue their employment. Studies such as these suggest that White people have little incentive to change a system that marginalizes students of color because those systems do not hinder White peoples' ability to pursue their goals within higher education.

That students of color are able to navigate these barriers is a testament to their tenacity and bravery. It is important to recognize that the presence of students of color, despite a racially hostile culture that higher education might present, is itself an act of resistance. For example, Star was told by one of her instructors that she should write an essay about how she did not have an identity because she was an adopted Indian female (rather than an "authentic" Indian female). Instead she wrote her essay about being adopted and her experiences navigating a society that views her as never acting "Indian enough." She said she received an "F" on the essay and that the teacher "shunned her" for the rest of the semester. Even though she knew she was going to fail the assignment and the course, she continued to attend every class and participate in classroom activities. Every day that she sat at her desk was an act of resistance, an open act of defiance against a system that had attempted to exclude her. Now a doctoral student, she conducts research and teaches about identity, postcolonialism, and resistance. Said differently, she now produces counter-knowledges that speak against the type of alienation she experiences. Of course, I do not want to give the impression that students of color that drop out are failures or that earning a degree is the only way of showing resistance. For example, Seraphina's choice to leave the classroom when she was targeted by racial slurs shows how she uses her absence in the

class as a critique of the classroom culture that made that racism possible. Overall, these examples provide show how the presence or absence of students of color should be acknowledged beyond the logics of individualism and be understood as an embodied critique of institutionalized racism in higher education.

In addition to showing how racism remains a barrier to the success and efficacy of students of color, I have revealed instances when the interview process introduced “critical incidents” where I (as the researcher) was encouraged to reflexively engage in my own cultural identity and politics in relation to the participants. Warren and Hytten (2004) offer that one way that White people can work toward a critical-democratic stance is to recognize that “all knowledge is partial and that there are experiences and understandings that White people cannot readily access” (p. 322) through engaged listening. They state:

Even when some claim to be listening, they often hear only part of another point of view and leap toward finishing the thought, filling in the gaps with assumptions of what they believe to be true. Ultimately, these attempts at dialogue impede complex visions to be sketched out from all points of view. Here, White people fail to actively listen, relying on misconceptions and partial tellings without ever hearing the fuller or more nuanced nature of arguments. (p. 332)

As I conversed with participants, listened to the audio files, and wrote and read the transcripts, I found that these critical incidents encouraged me to focus attention on my communicative practices as White, male academic. This type of listening challenged me to “work the hyphen” (Fine, 1998, p. 72) between participants and myself by challenging me to rethink my previously-held assumptions about the students of color that I interacted with on a daily basis. Moments that disrupted my sense of normalcy, such as my interaction with Jeff or Blake, encouraged me to

start talking with (and, more importantly, listening to) students of color about the ways that I should strive to unpack my whiteness in my work as a social-justice advocate.

Although one could understand the presence and success of students of color within higher education as overcoming racist barriers, I believe it is also important to understand their communicative performances within a theoretical framework that is sensitive to the process of socialization. If students of color are only able to succeed within higher education by embodying the dominant ideology of whiteness, then it would be unwarranted to call their victories “revolutionary” in the critical sense of the word. Therefore, the next chapter of this dissertation project seeks to understand how students of color identify and describe the process of socialization within higher education using the conceptual lens of the “white habitus.”

## CHAPTER IV

### SOCIALIZATION THROUGH THE WHITE HABITUS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

*Chris is on his way to his professor's office to talk about an assignment. Dr. Osborne teaches the 100-level Psychology course at AAU. She's White, with blonde hair, and around 40 years old. Chris likes the fact that she's so no-nonsense but thinks that she gets little carried away sometimes. He remembers the look of embarrassment on his classmate's face when Dr. Osborne made the student stand up during class and apologize to everyone for texting during class discussion.*

*"What can I help you with Chris?" Dr. Osborne replies after he knocks on the door. She looks over the thick, square-frames of her reading glasses and the stack of papers in front of her. "They look like tests, but we have not taken one yet," Chris thinks. "They must be from another class."*

*"Chris?" She says, breaking his thought.*

*"Sorry!" Chris exclaims. He meets her eyes and states, "I just wanted to know if we could talk about the next paper."*

*"Sure. These are my office hours after all. Have a seat," she says as he puts his book bag on the floor and sits down. "So, what about the paper is confusing?"*

*"Well, I don't know how to start," he says. He sighs in frustration and continues, "You said the paper is supposed to be a compare/contrast essay about nature vs. nurture. I think both of the positions are right, but the paper is supposed to be an argument about which is better."*

*"Do you have an outline?" Dr. Osborne asks.*

*"No..." he replies, while thinking, "Why would I have an outline if I don't know what to write about? That's why I'm here!"*

*“What about sources?”*

*“Not yet...” he says, hesitantly.*

*“What did you do last weekend?”*

*“What?” he says.*

*“What did you do last weekend?” she repeats, this time more firmly.*

*“I don’t know, I guess I hung out with my friends. We saw a movie...” he trails off under her stare.*

*“So, you didn’t work on this paper?” she asks tersely.*

*“Well, no,” he replies. He thinks to himself, “How could I have worked on the paper when I didn’t even know how to start it?”*

*Dr. Osborne sighs, looks out the window, and says, “Look, I’m going to tell you something that you probably already know. The drop-out rate of Black males at this university is abysmal. If you don’t want to end up as just another statistic of failure, you’re going to have to work hard.”*

*“But—” Chris starts to say.*

*“You’re going to have to work hard,” she repeats, interrupting him. “That means no friends, no going to movies, no partying, no nothing. You do your homework, you study, and you go to bed. Rinse and repeat. That’s what you have to do. That’s how you have to live if you want to be successful.”*

*Twenty minutes later, Chris leaves Dr. Osborne’s office after she has given him one of her spare daily planners to “help him keep track of his time management.” They never talk about his essay.*

\*\*\*\*\*

Chris has a frenetic energy as he tells me about his life and time at AAU. His feet tap on the floor as he speaks rapidly about his first year in college. He was born and raised on the south side of Chicago, where the school he attended was predominately comprised of Black and Hispanic students. His mother and father worked as stay-at-home parent and factory worker (respectively). He vividly remembers the first time his school's football team played a predominately White school from the north side of Chicago:

There was just a huge difference comparing the two schools....When you go to schools like that, you see [that they get] better quality teachers, everything....I used to think to myself like, "What makes these schools so [much] better compared to the school I went to?"

He joined an urban youth initiative organization after he graduated from high school. After working a few years at various banks and businesses, Chris decided to attend AAU to get a degree. He completed his first year of college and decided to go back to Chicago to find employment.

Chris's narrative at the beginning of the section can help understand some of the ways that whiteness functions within institutions of higher education. Dr. Osborne's advice is not explicitly racist; in fact, it could be that her intentions were from a place of care and well-meaning as she tried to make sure Chris did not drop out of college. However, for her to assert that there is only one way to be successful (while implying that Chris's struggles came from a lack of discipline or hard work) shows how whiteness can inform even well-meaning advice. As Garza (2000) argues, whiteness is:

*The compulsion to ascribe things or traits or attributes to different races...and this compulsion is accommodated without much thought to the consequences for the receiver*



in the process. People who act out of whiteness do so with the surety of their own assumptions, and without a second thought to how others might or might not fit those assumptions. (p. 61, emphasis in original)

Importantly, Garza's assertion links whiteness to the process of labeling others with a surety of one's race-based assumptions. We might ask the professor, "Why did you link Chris's struggle with a narrative of Black male failure in the university?" I believe the answers to this questions can be found by examining how institutionalized whiteness, understood through the concept of the white habitus, functions to categorize (and thus discipline) institutional members within higher education. The white habitus forms a set of expectations about how to act, dress, and talk within higher education and institutional members are rewarded/punished for their adherence/deviance to those scripts. Returning to Chris's opening story, we might agree that it is not problematic to give advice to students or even that Dr. Osborne's advice is bad in the sense that students should not be careful about how they manage their time. Rather, the problem lies in the series of assumptions that Dr. Osborne makes about Chris that, in turn, prompts her to give advice as if her strategies for success are ahistorical and neutral rather than a reflection of her assumptions concerning "hard work" and Black males. Overall, the problem with making a pronouncement like "To be successful people from Y group need to do X" lies in the way that it normalizes status quo and forecloses interrogation of the white habitus.

In this chapter, I draw upon participants' responses to answer two of my research questions by (1) describing the communicative practices that constitute the socializing mechanisms of the white habitus in higher education and (2) understanding how students of color narrate how they take up, defer, resist, adapt, mix, subvert and/or assimilate to the socializing mechanisms of the white habitus of higher education (Bonilla-Silva, 2006: Bourdieu &

Passerson, 2000). To realize these goals, I first describe and explain Co-Cultural Theory (Orbe, 1997; 1998; Orbe & Roberts, 2012) as the primary theoretical framework for this chapter. Co-Cultural Theory is a useful analytical lens to understand how people from marginalized identities communicatively negotiate the dominant culture. Second, I draw upon this theory to conceptualize the dominant culture as the white habitus, and examine participants' responses to identify the communicative practices that constitute the socializing mechanisms of the white habitus. Third, I analyze how students of color negotiate the socializing mechanisms of the white habitus in higher education by utilizing Co-Cultural Theory's concepts of assimilationist, accomodationist, and separatist communicative strategies. Finally, I conclude the chapter by articulating how my findings push against the dominant research practices in whiteness studies.

### **Co-Cultural Theory**

Co-Cultural Theory provides a framework for understanding the interactions between oppressed and dominant group members (Orbe, 1997; 1998; Orbe & Roberts, 2012). The theory builds upon existing frameworks such as muted group (e.g., Kramarae, 1981), standpoint (e.g., Smith 1987), and phenomenological theories (e.g., Lanigan, 1988). Specifically, the theory attempts to identify and explain both why and how individuals from oppressed identities<sup>19</sup> select communicative strategies that they use with dominant members.

Co-Cultural Theory is premised on the assertion that members from oppressed identities have developed rules and norms that guide their communicative interactions with dominant group members. Orbe (1997) inductively analyzed participants' responses to generate six different interrelated factors that "directly affect the communication styles of co-cultural

---

<sup>19</sup> Orbe and Roberts (2012) state that "co-cultural communication refers to interactions among underrepresented and dominant group members" (p. 294). I use the term "individuals from oppressed identities" instead of "underrepresented" to focus attention on way that some groups (e.g., people of color) are systemically marginalized.

members” (p. 37). These factors are preferred outcome, abilities (i.e., resources at hand), communicative approach (i.e., non-confrontational or aggressive), field of experience (i.e., individual’s lived history), situational context, and costs and rewards. Drawing upon these six factors, Orbe (1997) describes three different types of communication that individuals with oppressed identities use when speaking with members of a dominant group: assimilationist (i.e., communicative strategies that emphasize a desire to be a part of the dominant group), accommodationist (i.e., communicative strategies that attempt to promote acceptance of an individual’s oppressed culture while participating in the dominant group’s activities or organizations), and separationist (i.e., communicative strategies that challenge the ways that dominant groups maintain power through practices, such as stereotyping and microaggressions). Extant studies utilizing Co-Cultural Theory have shown that it is a useful framework for understanding the communicative strategies that individuals with oppressed identities use within higher education (Burnett et al., 2009; Lee, 2006; Orbe & Groscurth, 2004; Urban & Orbe, 2007).

In this section, I utilize Co-Cultural Theory as a theoretical framework that highlights the way that students of color identify and negotiate the socializing mechanisms of the white habitus in higher education. Co-Cultural Theory is uniquely suited to this task because it provides both a conceptual focal point to begin the investigation (i.e., identifying practices constitute the dominant culture) and a language to conceptualize how students of color take up, defer, resist, adapt, mix, subvert and/or assimilate to the socializing mechanism of the white habitus (i.e., assimilation, accommodation, and separation). To examine these two areas, I first review participants’ responses to identify and describe some of the socializing mechanisms of the white habitus. In this way, I hope to show how whiteness is constituted in the everyday communicative

practices that characterize higher education. I then utilize Co-Cultural Theory to understand how students of color communicatively navigate the socializing mechanisms of white habitus in higher education. I use the three general categories of co-cultural communication (i.e., assimilation, accommodation, and separation) as an organizational framework. Specifically, I examine participants' co-cultural communication through Tappan's (2006) appropriative framework to understand how it serves to take up, defer, resist, adapt, mix, subvert, and/or assimilate to the white habitus.

### **Identifying the White Habitus**

Co-Cultural Theory begins with the assumption that people from marginalized identities navigate dominant cultural systems in their everyday lives. In this section, I conceptualize the dominant culture within higher education as the white habitus. Bonilla-Silva (2006) defines the white habitus as "a racialized, uninterrupted socialization process that conditions and creates whites' racial tastes, perceptions, feelings, and emotions and their views on racial matters" (p. 104; see Chapter Two). Bonilla-Silva's work, as well as much of the subsequent scholarship that draws upon his concept, attempts to identify the white habitus by examining the ways that White people narrate their cultural expectations and behaviors (e.g., Bonilla-Silva et al., 2004). For this project, I describe the white habitus through the responses of students of color for the two following reasons. First, I agree with Leonardo's (2007) assertion that:

Oppression is best apprehended from the experiences or vantage point of the oppressed. This is not to suggest that oppressed people, as individual subjects of domination, somehow possess the correct or true understanding of racial oppression...[Rather it] is because people of color have no interest, and in fact have an active disinterest, in the maintenance of racist ideologies. (pp. 79-80)

Drawing upon his assertion, I argue the participants' identification and description of the socializing mechanisms of the white habitus offer insights into the contours of its cultural terrain because they can utilize their experiences of racialized oppression. Second, Rowe and Malhotra (2006) argue that whiteness is the process by which white identity is privileged as the ideal racial category. Rowe and Malhotra's work suggests that scholars should be attentive to how the white habitus constitutes a set of socializing mechanisms or "checkpoints" (p. 168) that (re)produce whiteness ideologies by differentiation among those who (dis)conform to its normalcy. As such, I look to participants' responses to identify the communicative practices that are viewed as components of the ideal White racial identity. This analysis provides insights into the idealized components of White racial identity that are normalized within higher education.

Participants' identification of the socializing mechanisms of the white habitus within higher education show that White racial identity is viewed as the ideal racial category (i.e., whiteness). For example, SK described what he called "talking white":

Talking white means...making sure there's a complete sentence, making sure the sentence is very clear, making sure you're assertive but not aggressive and making sure you have this persona to go with this language...and how you talk to certain people, especially when it comes to like deans and secretaries. And, for me, it's just the body, the clothes, the appearance is important, it's a big factor. Making sure you know what you want to say, don't stumble.

SK's description provides insights into the verbal and non-verbal communicative practices that constitute the white habitus. Students of color are expected to present themselves in particular ways to ensure that others (particularly White people) deem them acceptable to the institutional status quo. In other words, students of color engage in everyday communicative performances

that (dis)conform to “talking white,” highlighting the socializing components of the white habitus in higher education that privilege White identity as the racial ideal (i.e., whiteness). In this section, I identify four communicative performances that participants identified as the socializing mechanisms within white habitus: English language use, vernacular and linguistics, affective components of language use<sup>20</sup>, and attire.<sup>21</sup>

### **English language use.**

Bilingual participants<sup>22</sup> were adamant that they had to speak English instead of their native language. They argued that the normalcy of English-only speaking made it difficult for them to feel affirmed or safe within higher education. For example, Fernando stated, “Ever since I’ve been here in AAU, I don’t get to speak Spanish with anyone unless I call my mother or my girlfriend.” Rigoberto echoed Fernando’s sentiment when he said, “I don’t get to speak Spanish nearly as often as I’d like. I mean there’s not even a Spanish television station that I can get.” Their responses show how the expectation for English has made it almost impossible for them to practice the linguistic heritage that they associate with their racial identity.

Although Fernando and Rigoberto’s experiences point to the taken-for-grantedness of English, Seraphina’s attempt to speak in her language shows how attempting to speak in a language other than English is met with overt disapproval. She said that sometimes her fellow students would stare at her when she spoke Korean to her family when they visited her on campus or conversed over the phone with her family or friends in Korean. She stated that she constantly negotiated the sense that other students wanted her to “act American [and] speak

---

<sup>20</sup> The affective components of language use are heavily connected to the notion of civility, which I explore more in depth in Chapter 5.

<sup>21</sup> I do not offer this as an exhaustive list. Rather, these components serve as four major themes that have emerged from the data.

<sup>22</sup> Bilingual students were those who stated they could speak two languages. These students felt that because their racial and linguistic identities were intertwined (e.g., a Latino who speaks Spanish), that attacks on their linguistic identity also constituted an attack on their racial identity.

English.” She asserted that when she spoke Korean she felt as if other students thought she was doing something wrong or weird. She described her response, “[I’m] like shut up. I have another language. I don’t care. I’ll talk Korean all day....I can have an English conversation with you fluently, just as fluently as I can in a Korean conversation.” In other words, when she spoke Korean in contexts that did not require the use of the English language (e.g., talking with friends in the college cafeteria), she was still perceived as deviant for simply expressing herself in her native language.

No student had instances when they felt that they were free to converse with teachers or classmates in a language other than English. Instead, they complained that they had to confine instances of speaking their native languages to their dorm or residences, on the phone with family members or friends in private conversations, or with community members that were not affiliated with the campus. In other words, to be deemed normal or neutral within higher education, students of color were expected to speak only English regardless of context. The instances when they can speak either English or another language in the presence of their peers are the “checkpoints” (Rowe & Malhotra, 2006, p. 168) of whiteness. That is, they function to sort students of color by delineating who (dis)conforms to the white habitus.

### **Vernacular and linguistics.**

Participants stated that, in addition to having to speaking English, they were expected to conform to certain standards associated with language use. Specifically, participants stated that they had to communicate in ways that were corresponded with White, U.S. American accents and White, middle-class grammar. For example, Lucy was proud that she “didn’t speak with an accent,” and felt that Latina/os that did were at risk of being thought of as stupid or lazy.

Rigoberto affirmed this sentiment when he told me that he was able to speak “with a thick accent

or with no accent” when he needed to communicate with different audiences. Chris stated that he was frustrated that professors would try to “correct” his grammar when he communicated in the classroom. He complained:

Some instructors kind of throw people off, make you feel uncomfortable sometimes because they’ll try to correct you when you. Like, they’ll try to correct grammatical errors when you talk. You know what I’m saying? Like, they’ll try to catch on to the verb agreements and all that bull crap, and I think they kind of irritate people. People be like, “Why can’t I talk how I usually talk, or why can’t I speak how I usually speak?”

Chris’s response points to the way that he feels that instructors deem his normal language use as inappropriate and in need of correction. His complaint shows how these corrections are not only an irritant in the moment, but also function as a disciplinary critique about the way he should communicate with his peers in his everyday life. These participants’ responses illustrate how particular norms of English language use are required to be recognized within higher education. Participants stated that they were expected to use English in ways that conform to the linguistic norms (e.g. accent and grammar) of the white habitus or they run the risk of being deemed unintelligent or unintelligible.

#### **Affective components of language-use.**

Participants stated that when communicating with others in higher education it was important for them to perform in ways that were deemed calm, cool, and rational. If they communicated in ways that were deemed too emotional, they ran the risk of their communication (and, their body) being deemed as inappropriate by other members in higher education. For instance, Fernando delineated between “warm” and “cold” ways of communicating. He gave some examples of “warm” communication, which he ascribed to his communicative style with



other Latina/os. This style included communication behaviors, such as speaking at length with people that he may not know or kissing another person on the cheek as a sign of affection.

Fernando said that other people, and especially White people, often thought he was odd or weird because he preferred to communicate in a “warm” way. For example, he recounted a story about a time when he interacted with a White female student in class. The student did not greet him before the class started, nor did she say good-bye when she left. He described these behaviors as both normal and “cold”:

That’s something I’m so used to when it comes to White people, they tend to be a little bit colder. And, that’s something that doesn’t happen with my Mexican friends....I know that’s something very natural for [the White female] to do because of her cultural background. On the other hand, one of my older friends who is Mexican, I saw him and he actually stopped and said, “Hi.” And, he just said stupid stuff, but it felt the whole thing was very natural for me.

As Fernando explained, although it was natural for him to communicate in “warm” ways, he recognized that his preferred style of communication was not normal for the dominant White culture. Moreover, Rigoberto reinforced notion that there was a difference between his interactions with other Latina/os and his everyday communication within the white habitus. He stated:

I do I feel like there’s automatically a connect, and I feel like there’s already something there because they have this sort of vibrancy that I can relate to and understand whether they’re Mexican or not there’s still that Latin frenzy that just happens. And so, when I do bump into Latinos, it’s very exciting for me.

Rigoberto characterizes the communicative norms of his intra-racial communication as vibrant,

which is in contradistinction to the normalized or routine interactions he has within higher education. Both participants' communication points to their preferred style of communication—one that promotes connection above simply engaging in routinized forms of interaction. Overall, these participants' responses create a delineation between communicative performances that are acceptable within their racial groups that are not a part of their normal activities within higher education.

Other participants felt that they had to self-monitor and self-censor to be viewed as non-threatening or normal in higher education. For example, Blake stated that he had to be “very careful” when expressing frustration because he knew “how easy it would be for [him] to be deemed angry or dangerous.” Paul Jones told me that he sometimes felt out of place in public spaces on his college campus because, as he said, “I know there’s people that are going to stereotype [him and his African-American friends] if they see us [being] real loud, or being goofy, free style rapping or whatever.” Paul’s response highlights his preferred style of interacting with his African-American friends (e.g., being goofy) and simultaneously demonstrates how he talks about his own self-monitoring and self-censorship. Importantly, he connects his preferred style of interacting with the stereotypes threats that other institutional members use to categorize Black male students (see Chapter Two). In other words, he believes that if he engages in communicative performances that are deemed “excessive” (e.g., being goofy), then he will be subject to social discipline (e.g., being stereotyped). Overall, participants’ responses highlight how the white habitus is constituted by a normalization of certain affective components of language use that function to encourage limited or inauthentic communication.

### **Attire.**

Participants identified the ways that their attire could be evaluated by other members in

higher education for its (dis)conformity to the white habitus. In these instances, participants purposely dressed in ways that they felt differentiated them from negative stereotypes about their racial group or made it easier for them to “blend in” with the White establishment. For example, Fernando described this element by comparing the way that he currently dressed with the attire he wore before enrolling in higher education:

Yes, I was very ghetto. Back in the day, I wouldn't understand that. When I was in high school, I didn't really have my goals, my overall goals of career and stuff. I was more interested on fitting in, in school. And so, I would dress just like my friends or the ones who I wanted to be friends with....As I was trying to get a better idea where I wanted to be in my own life, I just decided that I needed to start looking more, or dressing more decent, more White, shoes, dressing shoes. Polo shirts, I have a lot of polo shirts.

Fernando argued that by wearing non-ghetto clothes (e.g., polo shirts) he was able to blend in with his White classmates, and gain their respect and trust. Although Fernando wore specific clothes to enhance his access, Jajuan chose his attire to avoid being stereotyped. He said, “I make sure to dress kind of professional. Sort of professional. Not sagging or any of those markers that are used to identify Blackness.” Jajuan was afraid that other institutional members would associate his “Blackness” with being stereotyped as a “thug.” Overall, Fernando and Jajuan's responses show how rewards (e.g., being viewed as respectable) and punishments (e.g., being stereotyped as a thug) are used to make certain forms of attire (e.g., polo shirts) or ways of wearing attire (e.g., not sagging) more desirable than others within the white habitus. Of course, socialization is not merely constitute by what a person wears; rather, it is the way that attire functions as a socializing mechanism that differentiates between (dis)conformity to the white habitus that marks its link to whiteness.

Although some participants narrated how they conformed to the white habitus, others discussed ways that they purposely resisted adhering to its norms. These instances highlight the normalcy of the white habitus through the intentional disruption of those expectations. For example, Star said her superiors told her when she interviewed for a graduate-teaching position that they would only hire her if she promised to wear U.S. American female business dress. She narrated that she decided to dress in a sari when the college held a “cultural diversity week”:

Well, I don't want to say I broke the rules, but I did dress differently during the weeks that we would teach about diversity or culture or things. So, I would wear more traditional clothes, and the students liked that. And, I never got in trouble for that, and during that time [my superiors] said it was fine. But, it almost felt like I was in costume. It was like, “Oh, she's just in costume or it's just a performance or something because it's diversity week.” So, I did feel kind of funny.

Star's response highlights the imposed normalcy of the white habitus. At first, she was told that she could not dress in ways that reflected her cultural heritage as an Indian female. Later, she broke the rule, using the cultural diversity week as a justification for her non-adherence.

Although she was not formally disciplined for her resistance to the imposed cultural norm of attire, she felt that her traditional Indian garb was perceived as a “costume” by members within her institution. In other words, Star's attire was tolerated by the other institutional members (e.g., her superiors) because they could view its difference from the norm as a non-threatening special event (i.e., she wore it during a time of institutionally sanctioned difference). Additionally Star stated that she never wore her garb outside of diversity week, showing how that its uniqueness highlights what constitutes “normal” dress for members in higher education (i.e., U.S. American female business garb). Overall, participants' responses show the way that they identify how attire

is used to differentiate between those who adhere to the white habitus and those deemed abnormal or weird for their disconformity.

**Molding students of color.**

Participants' descriptions of the socializing mechanisms within white habitus show that there are specific communicative practices (i.e., white habitus: English language use, vernacular and linguistics, affective components of language use, and attire) that function to create a student who (to borrow from SK) "talks White." That is, these practices function as socializing mechanisms that differentiate between those who adhere to the practices associated with idealized White identity (i.e., whiteness) and those who are deemed abnormal, weird, or deviant (and thus punished). Furthermore, their responses highlight some of the rewards and punishments used to enforce the normalcy of those practices. Overall, participants' responses offer insights into the communicative "checkpoints" (Rowe & Malhotra, 2006, p. 168) that constitute White identity as the racial ideal.

Participants were not only able to identify the socializing mechanisms of the white habitus, they were keenly aware of how those communicative practices can influence their identity development. Chris's delineation between "molding" and "changing" highlights how the communicative practices are not just isolated incidents, but are socializing mechanisms that function as a constitutive force on the identities of students of color:

There's a difference between trying to mold someone into something rather than trying to change someone into something. In the school parameters, I think [people in authority in higher education are] trying to change people....Like, when you're molding someone into something they can still be their self, but you try to teach them this way to talk, this way to walk, to advance in this area. But, the school, they're not trying to do that. I think the

school is trying to change you like, you need...to speak this way all the time, you need to stay away from this, you need to not do this at all no more, [don't] do anything that you do culturally back home, [don't] do that no more, we want you to do this all the time, we want you to speak this way, we want you to present this way, we want you to write [this way]. Yeah, I don't think, school wise they're trying to mold you. I think they're trying to change you, there's a difference.

Chris's statement powerfully describes some of ways that students of color identify and navigate institutional demands for cultural conformity. On one hand, Chris recognizes that as a member of an oppressed group, he must be able to identify and adhere to the communicative expectations of the culture of power (see Delpit, 1988). His notion of molding suggests that there are specific times or locations that he must be able to act in certain ways so that his communicative behaviors are intelligible or non-threatening to those in dominant positions. One way to understand Chris's concept of molding is to view it as a form of "code-switching" (Auer & Eastman, 2010). Many students of color may attempt to mimic dominant cultural codes to obtain some goal, but still try to maintain cultural practices (e.g., language or attire) that are separate from the dominant culture. On the other hand, Chris' statement points to the ways that institutions of higher education try to "change" students of color—to create an enduring alteration to their tastes, grammars, and behaviors. Chris's articulation of "change" shows how he is sensitive to the ways that institutions of higher education attempt to socialize students of color into dominant cultural logics.

In this section, I have offered that participants' responses highlight (1) some of the types of talking, acting, and dressing that are considered normal, natural, or desirable in higher education; (2) how those cultural practices are enforced or rewarded; and (3) that those practices

can function as a constitutive element in their identity formation (i.e., can “change” them). I am reminded of Warren’s (2003) metaphorical definition of white(ness) as purity, and conversely of non-white(ness) as “dirt...matter out of place” (p. 41) Warren’s metaphors powerfully illustrate how the white habitus is constituted through the socializing mechanisms that differentiate between those communicative performances that adhere to and perpetuate the notion that White racial identity is the ideal (i.e., whiteness) and those that are deemed hostile or deviant from this norm. Now that I have shown some of the ways that participants identify and describe the socializing mechanisms of the white habitus within institutions of higher education, I now turn to the communicative strategies that students of color employ as ways to navigate that system. In the next section, I answer the third research question of my dissertation by utilizing Co-Cultural Theory to describe how students of color take up, defer, resist, adapt, mix, subvert, and/or assimilate to the white habitus in higher education by examining their assimilationist, accomodationist, and separatist communicative strategies.

### **Assimilation and the White Habitus**

*Lucy and Tara walk under the oak and maple trees in the middle of campus. Even though it’s nearly November, the leaves stubbornly remain green. They’ve known each other since high school and are now dorm roommates in their first semester at AAU. Lucy knows that she probably wouldn’t be attending AAU if it weren’t for her friend. Tara had already applied to the school and wanted Lucy to be there, so Tara completed almost all of the paperwork for her.*

*“Lucy! Let’s go explore the campus!” Tara says.*

*“Explore? What do you mean? We know everything that’s on this campus!” Lucy replies.*

*“Yeah, but I haven’t gone everywhere yet!” Tara exclaims.*

*“What have you not seen?” Lucy asks.*

*“Well, the university museum—” Tara starts to say.*

*“We have one of those?!” Lucy interjects.*

*“Yeah! See! Don’t tell me that you’ve been everywhere on this campus!” Tara says, sticking out her tongue.*

*Lucy stops in the middle of the sidewalk and thinks, “There is one place I’d like to go, but Tara will think I’m a total geek if I say it.”*

*“Come on!” Tara says. “We’ll go wherever you want to go first.”*

*Mustering her courage, Lucy blurts out, “I’d love to go to the writing center!”*

*“The writing center!” Tara says, making a face. “Only you would want to go there.”*

*“That may be true, but you said we’d go anywhere I wanted to go,” Lucy says primly. She’s loved writing and speaking in English since she was a little girl. All of her family can speak in Spanish and English, but Lucy never wanted to learn Spanish. She reflects back when she was in kindergarten, sharing the classroom with other Hispanic students. She shudders a little when she remembers how the Hispanic students who were bilingual were placed into remedial classes. Ever since then, she has never let her teachers or classmates know that she came from a Spanish-speaking home.*

*“Alright, well, if that’s where you want to go,” Tara says. The writing center is in the library, so they walk toward the building. They walk up the concrete stairs and passed the fountain to open the doors to the building. Lucy feels the A/C envelope her as she breathes in deeply, relishing the smell of old books and coffee.*

*“The sign says the center is on the second floor,” Tara says. They walk past the statue of President Lincoln and up the stairs. They see a banner for the writing center posted above a doorway and walk inside.*



*“Can I help you?” a White woman, who Lucy assumes is the receptionist, asks them.*

*“No, we’re just looking around,” Lucy replies. The receptionist nods her head and goes back to typing on her computer. Lucy and Tara look around the room and see pictures on the walls of all the people that work at the writing center. They are all smiling in the pictures, which are framed by cut-out designs made out of yellow construction paper. Lucy thinks that everyone looks so happy.*

*A tutor and a student are talking near them, so Lucy edges closer, trying to listen to their conversation. The student seems to be a Latina female, although Lucy cannot pinpoint the country she is from. “Maybe she is from Mexico, too,” Lucy thinks. The tutor asks the student a question, and when she replies, Lucy’s face begins to heat up in shame as she thinks, “Her English is so terrible! Why didn’t she learn to speak English correctly?”*

*“Are you okay?” Tara asks.*

*“I’m fine, I’m fine!” Lucy pants. She turns, looks back at the receptionist and asks, “How can I become a tutor?”*

*“Well, first you have to be an English major,” she replies.*

*“Great, I think I know what major I’m going to choose now,” Lucy says. She turns back to look at the other Latina student again. “Soon, I’ll be able to work here,” she thinks. “Soon, I can fix you.”*

\*\*\*\*

Lucy was born in Chicago but grew up in a small town on the Wisconsin-Illinois border. I asked her about whether or not she had any experiences with racism before enrolling in higher education. She replied:

I was like 4 years old, and I didn’t speak English. My parents are both from Mexico, and

they always talked to me in Spanish even though I was born in Chicago. They placed me in a private school. So, I was four years-old talking to my little Hispanic four year-old friends in Spanish, and I remember our teacher told us not to speak Spanish, and then I remember our principal telling us, “No Spanish allowed.” And so, I always thought Spanish was bad, so I didn’t talk to anybody anymore, which probably explains why I’m kind of awkward and a little bit anti-social.

Lucy’s response highlights the connection between her understanding of racism against Latina/os and the enforced normalcy of the English language through schooling. For Lucy, speaking Spanish was a way to immediately be racially categorized by those in positions of power (i.e., White teachers and administrators). To combat this categorization, Lucy said that she began to take a greater interest in the English language during middle school. By high school, Lucy reported that she had begun to lose her ability to speak Spanish. When I interviewed her, Lucy said that she could answer simple questions in Spanish. Otherwise, she had almost completely lost the ability to speak Spanish.

### **Assimilating to the ideal.**

Participants’ responses in this section point to how the socializing mechanisms of the white habitus are utilized by students of color to assimilate to White racial identity as the ideal. In other words, participants’ statements point to how and why they engage in assimilationist communicative strategies in regard to the four components of the white habitus (i.e., white habitus: English language use, vernacular and linguistics, affective components of language use, and attire). For example, Lucy currently works at the writing center and the housing office. She told me that she was extremely proud of working at the writing center because it gave her the opportunity to “fix” other students. When I asked Lucy what made her think she needed to fix

others, she replied:

I think that the way that I speak just makes me better than the Hispanic people with accents who speak improperly or like the Black people who don't speak in formal ways. And, that's awful, and I know that's awful, but I can't help it. And, I think that just goes back to language, and I made an effort in educating myself when I was younger and that's what I strived for. And so now, I view people as maybe being lazy. I don't know, I always think that Hispanic people, like if you don't speak English, you don't care because all you want to do is just get a job, that's really how I think.

The link Lucy makes between language-use and “just getting a job” reveals how she assimilates to the white habitus through privileging English language use and particular vernacular and linguistic codes. Her assertion is based on her devaluation of Hispanic people who do not assimilate enough to communicative practices (i.e., they are lazy), which functions to help her craft her own identity (i.e., successful and hard-working). Lucy felt that, by obtaining a degree (particularly a degree in English), she would be able to do more than simply get a job— she would be viewed as educated. She stated, “It's only because I cannot identify as White because I have obviously dark hair, darker kind of complexion...or else I probably would. If I could pull it off, I would so say, ‘Yes, I am White.’” Lucy's co-cultural communication suggests that she actively and intentionally attempts to assimilate to dominant cultural codes.

The interviews in which participants narrated assimilationist stances were probably the most emotionally challenging for me as a critical-researcher and a White person. Lucy's responses highlight both the privileges that I take for granted as a White, middle-class male, as well as the ways that my success functions to (re)produce a system that demands cultural conformity. For example, when Lucy said, “I think that's why in some ways I dislike my mother

because she's been here for a really long time and her English is pretty awful and all she does is work," and when she explained that she had been going to counseling to try to reconnect with her family, I felt implicated as a beneficiary of White racial privilege. My father is a police officer, and my mother is a K-12 teacher. Both have obtained master's degrees in their fields of study. The economic, social, and cultural capital that they have produced as raced and classed subjects provides a foundation from which I am able to pursue my own success within the system. When Lucy talked about the parts of her cultural heritage that she had given up to pursue success, I was forcibly reminded of the sacrifices that I never had or will have to make to achieve mine. As I navigate higher education as a monolingual person that speaks and writes in "standard English," it is impossible to deny that the essays that I have written for college classes, studies that I have produced for publication, and manuscripts that I have read at conferences function within the socializing mechanisms of the white habitus. Moreover, even this dissertation I currently write upholds the white habitus through its adherence to English language use and vernacular and linguistic codes. As such, my success within the system of higher education not only highlights the relative privilege between Lucy and myself, it also functions to perpetuate those norms into the future, ensuring that future students will have to navigate the system that I am currently upholding.

The ways that Lucy described how the white habitus of higher education rewarded her (or, would reward her in the future) for engaging in assimilationist communication was echoed by other participants. For example, Fernando spoke about the ways that he consciously and intentionally changed the way that he communicated with others within higher education to access resources. I asked him if he thought that his family or friends felt like he acted or talked differently since enrolling in higher education. He replied:

They have noticed that I'm more cold. Yes, I'm trying to think of someone who has been with me long enough to see my change, [but] my Mexican friends who have been, who I've known since high school I tend...to de-friend because...they're working right now they have families and none of them made it to college. Sometimes I do get comments [like], "You've become more White, you're getting whiter," things like that. And, it's mostly [a way to get me to] stop acting like that, which I don't know how to react to...because I feel like the more I assimilate to the environment where I want to belong to, the more chance I have of actually becoming successful in that environment.

Fernando's statement that he purposely engages in "cold" communication shows how this socializing mechanism influences his communicative style. He felt that he had to intentionally engage in this type of communicative performances to be successful in higher education.

Additionally, he wore clothes that he termed "professional" as opposed to "ghetto" and continually practiced his English to ensure he was assimilating to the white habitus. When I asked him if he thought that he was assimilating to white culture and he replied:

I'm fighting to make sure, or I'm pushing to make sure I'm acting White enough. I'm not bothered by that, and I even get incentive to assimilate [because] I believe that I get more chances of moving forward or upwards if I have a very close relationship with those who I think can help me to succeed.

Fernando described acting "White enough" as being eloquent, assertive, and confident. He juxtaposed those descriptors with a story about one of his fellow Latino students that would only park at the back of a campus building because he did not feel that he had earned the right to park in the front. Fernando stated, "So, there's a sense of not enough confidence [on the part of his friend]. And, that's what I try to assimilate, to imitate the fact that I'm confident and stuff, to the

point where I try to make it a part of my personality.” To Fernando, his classmate’s feelings of self-doubt were a foil for the successful identity he had crafted for himself by assimilating to the white habitus. Overall, his responses show how and why he communicatively assimilates to the idealized components of white identity that function as socializing mechanisms within the white habitus (e.g., English language use and affective components of language).

### **Assimilation as appropriation.**

Lucy and Fernando’s assimilationist strategies, in relation to the socializing components of the white habitus, encourage us to think about how their assimilation to dominant culture codes highlight the double-bind between non-white racial identity and capital accumulation. To better understand this dynamic, I utilize Tappan’s (2006) appropriative framework in this section. Tappan argues that traditional understandings of this dynamic all-too-often rely on a false consciousness thesis. That is, traditionally Lucy and Fernando’s assimilationist communicative strategies would be viewed as the behaviors of cultural sell-outs or dupes. He asserts that, by utilizing his appropriative framework, researchers can understand communicative performances as “material, commodifiable, cultural products—cultural tools—that are used, transmitted, and thus reified to reinforce and perpetuate appropriated oppression among [people of color]” (p. 2129). In other words, it encourages us to see Lucy and Fernando’s assimilationist strategies as the appropriation of the socializing mechanisms (i.e., cultural tools) of the white habitus that functions to simultaneously challenge and (re)produce their normalcy.

Tappan’s framework allows me to glean some insights into the choices of Lucy and Fernando. For example, Lucy’s desire for employment at the writing center highlights how her early childhood trauma of having her Spanish language deemed inappropriate by institutional members of authority and the continued perceived threat to her identity as a non-White member

of higher education. She is able to challenge the perceived inadequacy of Latina/os' English language use by refining her own English language skills, differentiating her from the perceived "lazy" Hispanics who she believes do not try hard enough to assimilate. Her struggle to master English gains her rewards both immediate (e.g., paycheck, prestige, and fixing others) and long-term (e.g., a line on a résumé and respectability as a proficient language user). In short, the writing center codifies particular components of the white habitus (e.g., English use and vernacular and linguistics), and Lucy utilizes those components as cultural tools to exercise both horizontal violence on members of oppressed groups (i.e., disparage non-assimilating Latina/os), and obtain cultural, economic, and social capital by utilizing those tools that the institution privileges as the components of the white habitus. At the same time, she recognizes that she will never be recognized as "White" (despite her desire to be recognized as such) even though she engages in assimilationist communicative strategies. Overall, her assimilationist communicative strategies highlight how institutions of higher education reinforce the perceived normalcy of the socializing components of the white habitus through institutional rewards (i.e., commodifying cultural tools).

As Bourdieu and Passeron (2000) argue, the power of the social habitus is not just in the fact that an individual adheres to institutional norms. Rather, the habitus creates a lasting preference for institutional norms beyond the context of higher education. Said differently, individuals appropriate the cultural tools that characterize the institution, and continue to act on and (re)produce their normalcy beyond the institutional context. For example, I spoke with Fernando about the possibility that his drive for success was a way for him to break stereotypes about Latinos. He replied:

Even though I'm telling myself that I'm helping my community by breaking the

stereotypes, I don't think I'm necessarily helping the big goal because the big goal would be to get the [Latina/o] community, the culture to be accepted, not to make it fully assimilate or embrace the [White] American culture....And, I think what I'm doing is simply turning out other Latinos who can also act White....So, that's sort of the lie I'm telling myself that I'm actually helping. But, in reality, it's just that I care about my personal success.

Here, Fernando narrated a delineation similar to Chris's distinction between molding and changing. Fernando recognized that he was not simply adapting to the situation of higher education, but was reinforcing the normalcy of the white habitus on himself and others. I asked him to imagine a young Latino from his same background that wanted to work in an architecture business that Fernando owned. I then asked if he would use his success to create a space where that young Latino could become successful without having to make the same assimilationist choices that Fernando had made. He said:

I think it would all depend on the money. Because, if I have this position of power and [it] is dependent on the amount of influence that I have, [then] the way that it's judged is on the amount of resources and money that [I] bring into an organization. And, if I feel that that is in any way affecting those resources, that money, I would ask him to change that.

Fernando viewed his identity as a set of different practices (e.g., language use, mannerisms, and attire) that he intentionally changed to further his pursuit of cultural, economic, and social capital. He told me that he tried to teach his brother, sisters, and friends the paths he had chosen to be successful so that they too could prosper in higher education and U.S. society. Overall, his responses point to how he has appropriated the cultural tools that constitute higher education as a



white habitus and how his assimilationist communicative strategies reinforce their normalcy.

In this section, I have used the concept of assimilation from Co-Cultural Theory to identify how students of color utilize assimilationist strategies when confronted with the socializing mechanisms of the white habitus. I have argued that the socializing mechanisms of the white habitus condition the desires of students of color within higher education and highlighted the assimilationist strategies they use to adhere to its normalcy. Finally, I have offered that one way that the white habitus maintains its perceived normalcy within higher education is through the way that the components of the white habitus function to idealize communicative components of White racial identity (i.e., whiteness). From Tappan's (2006) framework, I argued that the ways that students of color assimilate to the white habitus are not forms of internalized domination. Rather, they constitute a form of cultural appropriation that allow students of color to take up the cultural tools that are made available to them through the functioning of the system. This view encourages us to see the socializing process less as an active disciplining (e.g., how a White professor's actions affect a student of color) and more as a form of communicative actions done in relation to the idealization of White racial identity within higher education. By doing so, this study connects how students of color communicatively negotiate the checkpoints of Whiteness that encourage them to engage in a form of racialized self-discipline. In the next section, I examine the responses of students of color through the conceptual lens of accommodationist strategies.

### **Accommodation and the White Habitus**

*Ida B. Wells is angry. She storms into the newspaper office, past the green chairs and receptionist, and heads straight for Dave's (the editor-in-chief) office. Ida had been working on an article for the newspaper when she received an email from Dave. It said that he would fire*

*her if she didn't turn in a completed draft of her article by the end of the day. Ida has a test and two essays due by the end of the week. Her part-time job at the newspaper is supposed to be just that—part time. However, every week it seems as if the work load just gets heavier and heavier. And so, she decided that she needed to remind Dave about her work load.*

*"Dave, we need to talk," Ida says as she walks through the door.*

*"Uh, sure," Dave replies. "Have a seat."*

*"No, I'll stand," she retorts. "I just read your email. You're threatening to fire me?! Listen—"*

*"Whoa, whoa, slow down," Dave interjects, laughing. "Look, you're cute when you're angry, but I'm going to need you to calm down if we're going to talk about this."*

*"Cute?!" Ida thinks. "I'm cute when I'm angry?!" Ida doesn't change her tone as she says, "Listen, I read that email, and I want to know why you would send it."*

*"Well, you're supposed to write three articles a week, and you haven't," he said, sounding defensive. "Those are the rules we all abide by."*

*"Yeah, but most of you write stories about the sports teams. They practically write themselves. All you do is just report the scores! I'm doing investigatory journalism about things like diversity, the Women's Center, and the experiences of Black students on campus. It takes a lot longer to produce a good piece—"*

*"Ida," Dave interrupts again. "I know that you are a good writer, and I like your stories. But, you're the one that chooses to do them."*

*"If I didn't write them, then they wouldn't get written!" Ida exclaims. As the only reporter that identifies as a Black female, it seemed to her as if no one else wanted to talk about the things that affected people from her identity positions. Just last week, Ida had to tell another*

reporter when *Black History Month* was!

*“I don’t care,” Dave snaps. He pauses, visibly trying to calm himself, “Okay, here’s what we’ll do. You write two stories a week, and we’ll call it square, deal?”*

*Ida hesitates. She would rather just turn in articles as she finishes them. The amount of time it takes to create relationships with people, many of whom are already suspicious of reporters, is never consistent. If Ida takes this deal and she can’t deliver, then she won’t have a job at the end of the school year. At the same time, if she knows that if she doesn’t write stories about people from the margins, who will? Just yesterday, she received a phone call from one of her mentors, a Black male journalist, praising her for her latest article and exhorting her to stay at her job so she could continue writing stories that disproved stereotypes.*

*“Deal,” she says, sighing. The look on Dave’s face, angry that he had to change the rules for her, tells her that she should feel like this is a victory. “So, why does it feel so hollow then?” Ida wonders.*

\*\*\*\*

If one could not tell by her chosen pseudonym, Ida B. Wells cares deeply about social justice and the oppression of marginalized groups (and, in particular, Black females). Furthermore, she loves her job at the newspaper where she is able to advocate on behalf of these groups. She grew up in the south side of Chicago, where her neighborhood and public schools were predominately Black. Her father worked as a freelance musician and her mother as a health aide. They separated when she was young, so Ida spent most of her time growing up in her grandparents’ home. She told me:

In multiple parts of the city, it’s like you’re living in a different world. You can live on the south side of Chicago and live completely different than someone who lives in the

north side of Chicago, which is usually more affluent. And, it's interesting how the racial dynamics are as far as like housing, jobs, education. Education especially!

While in high school, Ida worked with a local magazine that was run by Black females. She said that she loved feeling the combination of stress and familial love that characterized her work days. After graduating high school, Ida decided to go to AAU to pursue a degree in journalism.

**Accommodation to the ideal.**

Accommodationist strategies refer to way that oppressed group members try to change dominant members' beliefs about their co-cultural group while still exhibiting a desire to be a part of the dominant culture (Orbe, 1997). These strategies often include behaviors, such as dispelling stereotypes (i.e., intentionally acting in ways that are counter to a myths about an individual's racial group) and educating others (i.e., teaching members of the dominant group about an individual's cultural practices to increase acceptance). For example, Ida stated the primary reason she continued to work at the newspaper was due to her desire to write about the experiences of other students of color. She asserted:

I'm writing the stories and recording the experiences of the people who are marginalized on this campus, who are not accurately represented, who don't get a chance to have media coverage on the positive things that they're doing. Yes, it's a hard task to take on, and it's a lot of responsibility, but I wouldn't have it any other way because to leave it up to the majority to try to tell your stories the way that you want it to be told, it'll never get done. And, if it does get done, it will never get done correctly.

Ida's response highlights the components of accommodationist strategies in two ways. First, she desires to educate others (primarily dominant members) about the lived experiences of marginalized people. She asserts that writing about the margins as a person from the margins is

the only way it will “get done correctly.” Thus, she is not advocating for the erasure of marginalized people of cultures (i.e., assimilationist strategies); rather, she is interested in creating spaces for interaction, education, and growth across differences. Second, she feels that the best way to pursue her goal is to remain employed by a newspaper run predominately by White males, such as Dave. She did not desire to create her own newspaper for people from the margins (i.e., separationist strategy) because she wanted to make sure that dominant members read her stories. Overall, Ida’s understanding of her role within the newspaper exhibits her strong desire to cultivate an accommodationist stance in the face of dominant groups in higher education.

One way that we can understand Idea’s opening narrative is through the conceptual lens of accommodationist communicative strategies. When she enters into Dave’s office, Ida is visibly and vocally angry and lets Dave know her displeasure. Dave’s attempt to minimize her anger, through laughing and telling her she was “cute,” functions as a gendered and racialized assault on her non-adherence to the socializing mechanisms of the white habitus (i.e., her communication is too “warm”). By the end of their exchange, Ida has modified her expression of anger (despite being as, if not more, angry than she was at the start of the conversation) to be intelligible to Dave’s communicative expectation for disagreement based on the socializing mechanisms of white habitus (i.e., “cold” communication). However, her modification is not because she believes that hiding her anger is desirable (i.e., assimilationist strategy); rather, she changes her expression of anger so she can obtain a chance to educate others about people from the margins. Therefore, Ida’s exchange with Dave highlights one way that students of color engage in accommodationist strategies in their negotiation of the socializing mechanisms of the white habitus.

Participants that utilized accommodationist strategies were quick to assert that they did not want to be a part of the dominant culture or believe their culture was inferior (i.e., assimilationist strategies). Rather, they used these strategies because they were both individually advantageous (i.e., reduced the chance for discrimination), and a way to dispel myths about their cultural groups. For example, SK said:

This is a game, it's like, this is an intellectual game. This is an intellectual manipulation and now I have to figure out how White people think...and then I have to incorporate that into how I need to think so I can get my message across. And, that was my strategy.

SK's assertion that incorporating White communicative strategies to get his "message across" was an "intellectual game" highlights how his communicative interactions reflect an accommodationist stance. He does not believe that White cultural codes are superior; rather, he tries to incorporate these behaviors to be intelligible to dominant members within higher education. Of course, just because he narrates it as a "game" does not mean that he enjoys having to engage in accommodationist communication. He went on to complain:

I get nervous sometimes. My stomach tightens up because I'm like, "Okay, I can do this shit, what the fuck, I can do this shit." But, then I get nervous because it's like "What am I or how am I supposed to do this here and over here and over here. And, I'm sure all the departments are different in how you can talk and say things, but I'm like "They're White so I have to make sure I know what the fuck I'm talking about. And, I can't mess the fuck up." So, it's difficult in a way.

In other words, although SK recognizes how to interact in ways that White people may find appealing, he does not view it as preferable to his normal way of communicating. Instead, he (like many of the participants) stated that the constant negotiation was "tiring," "exhausting," or

“draining.” In their collaborative work (Orbe, Smith, Groscurth, & Crawley, 2006), Crawley asserts that “it is easy to become overwhelmed with the cultural code-switching that [people of color] must do to maintain our professional space and emotional sanity” (p. 185). Many students of color echoed this sentiment, complaining that they had to act in ways that were not natural or normal for them to be taken seriously within higher education.

All the participants that communicated with dominant members using an accommodationist stance spoke of their communicative performances as a balancing act between their own cultural norms and that of the institution. Paul Jones, for example, said:

I think a lot before I say things. Like, usually when you're at home with your friends you just kind of say things and sometimes you say things that you don't mean you know that's kind of your place to learn this is what to say this is what not to say. And so, when it comes to being around White people, people of higher stature, you tend to think about what's the right vocabulary to say in this situation to get the right point across without seeming like you don't know what you're talking about.

Paul's delineation shows how he attempts to engage in an accommodationist stance while in higher education. He juxtaposes his normal way of interacting (i.e., when at home or with friends) and his communicative performances when around White people. His statement shows how he intentionally utilizes dominant vocabularies as a way to navigate (but, not assimilate) the institutional culture. When I asked him what it meant to use the “right vocabulary” in a classroom setting he replied:

I try, sit up straight, think before you speak, use acceptable language for the classroom, leave the slang. It's all in like perception really. You do things that are similar to, as we call it in speech class, the stereotypical normal man: the normal White guy, bright future,

that kind of thing. You try put on that perception that I'm just like him.

Importantly, his description of the “right vocabulary” echoes vernacular and linguistic socializing components of the white habitus. He connects the “right vocabulary” with an idealized version of White identity (i.e., normal with a bright future). However, he recognized that communicating in ways that adhere to the socializing mechanisms of the white habitus were contextually specifically (i.e., done in higher education) rather than a generalized pattern of behavior (i.e., assimilationist strategy).

Participants' accommodationist strategies were not confined to their verbal communication. Attire, as a socializing mechanisms of the white habitus, also emerged as a way to engage in accommodationist communication. Jajuan echoed Paul's stance when he explained:

Sometimes, I feel like I have to do that, either in dress or how I talk. I can't be sounding like the stereotypical thug...I have to sound “articulate” in some ways and in some form or fashion. I can't dress in a way that might be received as being ghetto, so I can't wear like baggy jeans or a hat. Or, like a hat, like a Starter cap or athletic cap or anything like that. I have to look nice. I have to look “a little bit more whitish” in some sense. I have to not be offensive in the sense, or not look the part of what society tells us what a Black man should be. So, I have to navigate that space. And, I'm very conscious of it even when I'm in the classroom, even when I'm with my other peers, not to appear to be that stereotypical figure.

Jajuan specifically pointed out types of clothing that he felt were associated with a ghetto identity (e.g., baggy jeans or a Starter cap) and, later in the interview, stated that there were ways of wearing clothing (i.e., sagging) that he avoided because he said they were “easy marker of blackness.” His delineation between a “ghetto” and “whitish” identity highlights how attire



functions as an institutional checkpoint that differentiates between those who (dis)conform to it. Importantly, Jajuan asserted that his choice in attire was predicated upon his intention to dispel the stereotypical understandings of dominant members who often linked classed and racialized meanings to Black male attire (e.g., the thug). He did not state that he preferred wearing clothes that made him appear more “whitish.” Rather he asserted that attire helped him accommodate the white habitus of higher education by engaging in the communicative practices that were normal for the idealized White racial identity while allowing him to dispel stereotypes about his racial group.

#### **Accommodation as appropriation.**

Participants’ use of accommodationist strategies of communication reflects that ways that they appropriate dominant cultural tools to navigate higher education (Tappan, 2006). Participants have mastered the cultural tools of the white habitus (i.e., they can play the “intellectual game” described by SK), yet they do not adhere to it wholesale (i.e., assimilation). Rather, the way they engage in accommodationist communication functions to draw upon the socializing mechanisms of the white habitus in ways that can be used to protect their identities or challenge White peers in higher education. Their communication functions “bi-directionally” (Tappan, 2006, p. 2128) in the sense that they take up the cultural tools that are privileged by the institution while simultaneously using them in ways that undermine dominant culture codes.

One instance where the appropriative dynamics of accommodationist communication can be understood is through Maya’s interactions with a White female student in class during her undergraduate enrollment. Maya recounted a narrative that highlighted how her accommodationist communication can serve to appropriate the socializing mechanisms of the white habitus, simultaneously challenging and (re)producing their normalcy. Maya told me that a particular

White female student would continually touch Maya's hair, even though Maya had given no indication that she desired physical interaction or had given permission for it. She felt that she could not speak with the White female student or the professor of the class about her discomfort without upsetting her or, as she put it, creating "drama in the department." In this instance, Maya's discomfort with creating "drama" points to the socializing mechanisms of the white habitus; that is, she is worried that someone in the exchange may get angry, defensive, or frustrated (i.e., "warm"). Such a rupture to the normalcy of this component of the white habitus would, Maya believed, reflect negatively on her as a person of color who was being too angry, potentially harming her ability to succeed. To navigate this tension, Maya said:

Maya: Maybe I'm going to just have a meltdown one day and just burst at her...So, how I check her is during class conversations I try to say, "Actually no, look at it this way" and that's the extent to which I can express my frustrations with her and directly at her.

Me: So, you use those classroom conversations as sort of a way of resistance against [her touching you].

Maya: Yeah...I [feel] that using academic conversations has been a good shield for me to talk about [racism] even though I can't directly tell this person, "Don't touch me, please."

Maya's responses points to her use of accommodationist strategies. She stated that one day she might "burst at [the White female student]," signaling a confrontational attitude, but one that she did not pursue through separationist communication. Additionally, although the White female student continued to touch her, Maya did not acquiesce or desire this form of interaction (i.e., assimilationist communication). Instead, she utilized the norms of the white habitus to communicate her displeasure with the White female student without causing "drama" that might get her ostracized by others in the class.

Maya's accommodationist communication with the White female student can be understood as a form of cultural appropriation (Tappan, 2006). Maya describes her communicative behaviors as an attempt to "check" the white female student. Checking, to Maya, consisted of publicly disagreeing, and thus undermining, the White female student's classroom discussion contributions. However, she felt that this "checking" went unnoticed (or, at least, uncommented on) by her peers or instructor because it was expected that students in the class discuss and disagree with each other during classroom conversation. In other words, Maya's checking drew upon the socializing mechanisms of the white habitus (e.g., affective components of language use) by challenging the White female student in a way that did not disrupt the everyday flow of the class (i.e., create drama). At the same time, Maya's accommodationist strategy of checking functions to reinforce the normalcy of the white habitus by not disrupting the socializing force that conditions students within higher education to view any sort of confrontation as non-normative (and, thus, worthy of social reprisal). Overall, her communicative choices highlight how accommodationist strategies inhabit a tension filled position of both resisting and (re)producing the socializing mechanisms of the white habitus by the way that they appropriate the cultural tools of higher education.

In this section, I used the concept of accommodation from Co-Cultural Theory to identify the communicative strategies used by students of color as they negotiate the socializing mechanisms of the white habitus. Their responses highlight the amount of work that students of color engage in to be intelligible to dominant members within higher education. Importantly, the accommodationist strategies of students of color are contextually specific (rather than general) forms of code switching, revealing how they resist assimilating to the socializing mechanisms of white education through their negotiation process. Finally, I examined their accommodationist

language through Tappan's (2006) appropriative framework to understand how their accommodationist language serves to appropriate the cultural tools of higher education in ways that both (re)produce and challenge the socializing mechanisms of the white habitus. In the next section, I examine the responses of students of color through the conceptual lens of separationist strategies.

### **Separation and the White Habitus**

*SK picks up a box of books off the stack and takes his box-knife out of his back pocket. With an expertise born of his own dexterity and long-practice, he quickly cuts through the thick tape that engulfs the cardboard without cutting the books on the inside. He brings out the packing manifest, scanning the contents and thinks, "Good, there's not too much to put up." Gary, the AAU's textbook store-manager, had told him that he could go home when he finished putting up books. SK is excited because it looks like he'll be clocking out early today.*

*SK picks up an armload of books and starts stacking them on the shelves. Economics 101, English 302, Finance 500, the departments and class codes are in alpha-numeric order so it's easy to find each one. SK carefully chooses each load of books that he takes so he can put books on the shelves in departments that are close to each other in the alphabet. He found that he can cut down the time it takes to put up the books considerably this way.*

*He finishes putting the books up, looks up at the clock, and sees that he is going to finish an hour before closing time. He's going to go home to his partner, who said he was going to make spaghetti and meatballs. After dinner, SK thinks he might just relax for a little while before starting on his homework.*

*He heads for the back room to clock out. As he reaches for the door, he hears a female voice behind him say, "Where do you think you're going?"*

*He turns around. It's Pam. She's as tall as he is, almost six feet, with brown hair and white skin. SK's worked at the bookstore for almost three years, and she just started in the last six months. SK feels that, even though he has more experience than Pam, she constantly tries to micromanage his work. They always seem to butt heads about the way SK does his job.*

*"Hey Pam," he says with a forced grin. "I'm going home for the day."*

*"Oh, you just decided to take the rest of the day off?" she asks, arching her eyebrow. SK bites the inside of his cheek. "My God! She gets under my skin," he thinks.*

*"No, Gary said I could go home when I finished. I'm finished, so I'm going home," he says, turning around to open the door again.*

*"Don't you turn your back on me!" she exclaims. SK turns around, startled by the anger in her voice. She continues, "Gary didn't say anything to me about you leaving early."*

*"Well, I don't know what to tell you. He said I could go, so I'm clocking out."*

*"No, you're coming to my office, right now," she says, turns around, and storms toward her office. "Great. Looks like spaghetti has to wait," SK thinks as he follows after her.*

*SK enters the office. Pam is already behind her desk and seated. He starts to shut the door behind him. "Leave it open," she barks. "Why does she want it open?" SK thinks. "Is it because she wants the others to hear her chew me out? Or is it because she's afraid because I'm a Black man?" He looks at her body posture. It looks like she's in a fox-hole, using the desk as a bunker against a horde of foes. "I guess I have my answer," he thinks, sighing to himself as he sits down.*

*"SK, we're going to have to do something about your attitude—," she says.*

*"Look, I don't know why I'm even here. Gary said I could go—" he starts to interject.*

*"Don't interrupt me!" she snaps. "Gary's not here. When he's not here, I'm the boss,*

*and you're the worker. If you won't do what I say then I have no use for you."*

*"Are you threatening to fire me?"*

*"If you won't follow the rules, then yes. I'll fire you."*

*SK leans forward, "Pam, no one's getting fired around here. Especially not me. I've worked here for three years, and I'm the best worker you've got. I think this conversation is over."*

*He gets up and has the satisfaction of seeing Pam's eyes bulge out of her head in anger before he turns to go. As he passes the door's threshold, he hears her say, "I guess you just don't care about working at this store."*

*SK turns around and, putting on his best customer service smile, says, "Pam, I do the work I'm assigned. I'll see you tomorrow at 8:00 A.M. to shelve the early-morning shipment. Have a nice evening."*

*"It looks like I'll get spaghetti after all," he thinks to himself as he walks out of the store.*

\*\*\*\*

When SK finishes his story, I cannot help but laugh. He seems to nearly ooze calm and cool when he sits across from me, nothing like the way he describes his actions in the story. He joins in the laughter and then begins to tell me about his life before enrolling in college. He was born in rural Illinois but lived the majority of his life in Philadelphia after he and his mother moved. His father, who was incarcerated when he was three, was not a prominent part of his childhood for most of his life. He moved back to Illinois with his mother when he was a teenager so that they could help his grandmother take care of herself. He told me that he struggled a lot growing up due to both his race and his genderqueer identity. He said:

When I came back to Peoria, living in an area that was pretty much a not so good area,

what we call the hood, or the ghetto...My last year exemplified how hyper-masculinity in the African American community [had become], where I felt like I had to strip my gender fluidity away just to fit in my last year and get to know people....White teachers really didn't care too much about people of color that pretty much made up 95% of the school, as well. So, I was struggling with that, struggling with the race, and struggling with my queerness and it was a lot going on there. It allowed me to be silenced and suppressed in so many ways.

After graduating high school, SK decided to go to AEU, a local community college, to pursue a higher education degree without exceeding his financial resources. However, he did not like the institutional culture, describing the atmosphere as catering toward the White, wealthy students. He complained:

There wasn't a lot of spaces for people of color to get help. It was almost like we were competing with this hierarchy of race....I honestly did not do very well because I couldn't find anybody that looked like me, which is usually the goal in my opinion—you want to go somewhere where people look like you in some kind of way. It was very limited.

He decided to transfer to AFU, another community college, where he finished his associate's degree in fashion design. He then enrolled in AAU to pursue an undergraduate degree in communication studies. He successfully completed his degree and has been accepted to a master's program at a different university in the fall.

### **Separating from the ideal.**

Separationist strategies attempt to create psychological or physical distance between co-cultural and dominant group members (Orbe, 1997). This distance can be achieved through a range of behaviors, such as physical separation (e.g., being in an all-Latino fraternity) or

attacking dominant members' self-concept (i.e. explicitly calling them "racist" when they perpetuate racism). For example, SK tried to leave the bookstore where he knew he would have to interact with Pam. His behaviors ranged from nonassertive (e.g., I'll ignore Pam and go home) to assertive (e.g., Telling Pam, "Gary said I could go") to aggressive (e.g., leaving Pam's office). When I asked SK why he engaged in separationist communication with his manager, he replied:

She cared more about the store and her job, [saying,] "Like you are completely replaceable, like [your] body's just replaceable and I can fire you." And so, I kind of had to reinforce to her, "I've been here longer than you, trust me, nobody's getting fired. Especially not me." And I had to let her know, "You need me, I don't need you." I did it in a professional way as much as I could, but it was very assertive and a little aggressive as far as like that angry, gay, Black man had to come out. Like stop, and as I say, "Bark." I had to bark a few times at her.

SK juxtaposed his notion of "barking" to "talking white." To SK, talking white meant using a softer voice, and being cooperative in his body posture and mannerisms. He knew that separationist strategies often run a higher risk of interpersonal conflict but maintained that sometimes it was the only way he could protect his sense of self within the institutional culture of the white habitus.

Participants that used separationist communicative strategies often narrated that they engaged in them to protect their sense of self against dominant members. The primary way that participants utilized separationist communication was by learning a situation that they felt was racially hostile (i.e., a nonassertive separationist strategy, see Orbe & Roberts, 2012). For example, Seraphina left class after being called "Ling Ling" by another student. Her departure functioned to protect her identity from a racist attack by creating distance between her and the



perpetrator. Star and SK left multiple colleges and universities in their attempt to remove themselves from racially hostile situations. Overall, separation through physical distance continued to emerge as an important strategy for participants in their attempt to maintain a positive self-concept.

Although many participants engaged in separationist communication by creating physical distance, others used separationist communication through withdrawing from racially threatening discussions while remaining physically present. In these instances, the participant narrated a time when they began a conversation with a White person, only to have it devolve into a racially charged argument. They stated that they protected their self-concept by simply withdrawing from interacting with dominant members who they thought were not talking about issues of race or racism in good faith. For example, Jeff described an instance when he began talking to a White male student in class about the racist implications of the student's utterance. Jeff stated:

We were talking about noise...and there was a student who was a White male and he was talking about how he lived in one of the dorms and on the floor that he lived on, some guys were playing loud music. Now, before he says this we don't know who he's talking about, I don't know him but he says, "Yeah, these guys were just playing loud music and it was hip-hop so you knew it was a bunch of Black guys."

Jeff stated that he asked the White male student why he made a link between Black male bodies and "excessive" noise. Jeff said that the student replied that he did not understand why Jeff kept focusing on the race of the students because it should not matter. Jeff recounted feeling frustrated because he felt that "if the race of the students didn't matter, then why did [the White male student] keep bringing it up?" Jeff said that he engaged in conversation with the other student, interrogating his insertion of race into a story that (from Jeff's perspective) did not need to be

racialized. However, Jeff said that after a few minutes of conversation, he withdrew from the conversation, even though the White male student continued to explain to Jeff and the rest of the class that race did not have anything to do with the story. When I asked Jeff why he stopped talking with the White male student, he explained:

I realized that a long time ago, trying to change somebody's mind is one thing, but getting them to at least see the problematic language that they're using is something totally different. So, even trying to get [the White male student] to see how problematic he was, that was frustrating, so I didn't want to get back into it.

Jeff's response points to the ways that he is able to recognize how a dominant member may talk about race and racism in good faith. For Jeff, "trying to change someone's mind" suggested that a person had a sensitive vocabulary about race and racism, but did not agree with Jeff about the racial dynamics of a particular situation. Conversely, "getting them to...see the problematic language" refers to the notion that the person has not even attempted to create a sensitive vocabulary concerning race or racism. In this latter manifestation, the person is not worth Jeff's frustration. In other words, when discussing race and racism with someone who does not have a sensitive language about those subjects, Jeff's response was to engage in a nonassertive separationist stance to protect his own identity and mental wellbeing.

Jeff's narrative provides insights into the ways that separationist communication acts as a form of resistance to the socializing mechanisms of the white habitus. Jeff recognized he was becoming frustrated with the White male student's lack of sensitivity during the disagreement. Jeff could have continued to disagree with the White male student, engaging in a form of self-discipline to begin embodying the "cold" affective components of the white habitus (i.e., assimilationist communication). Or, he could have continued to speak with the White male

student, but recognize that it was the particular situation that called for adherence to the socializing mechanisms of the white habitus (i.e., accommodation). However, his narration points to how he rejects the socializing mechanisms of the white habitus by simply refusing to speak within the confines of its normalizing force. Overall, his story shows how separationist communicative strategies function to challenge the white habitus by refusing to interact by its strictures.

### **Separation when re-appropriated.**

Participants' responses show how separationist communicative strategies function to reject the socializing components of the white habitus (e.g., affective components of language use). Tappan (2006) argues that outright rejection of hegemonic codes carry with it the possibility of institutional reprisal. In other words, the institutional hegemony of the white habitus functions to constrain the separationist strategies of students of color. This insight suggests that separationist strategies can be re-appropriated by dominant members of the institution to encourage students of color to conform to the strictures of the white habitus.

The notion that separationist communication could be re-appropriated by dominant members to undermine the resistance of students of color to the white habitus was best displayed in a narrative told by Blake. He described an instance when he became frustrated with a White male classmate that expressed disbelief during a classroom discussion about recent textbook choices in Texas that were racially motivated. Blake narrated:

There was a movement of conservative people in Texas who were lobbying to have the term slavery removed from textbooks and call it unpaid labor....This [White] student basically stopped the entire discussion with this huge disbelief that any such kind of a proposition could even be taken seriously.

Blake said that he and the other students of color became frustrated because the student kept derailing the conversation about racism by voicing disbelief. They continued to discuss the situation with the White student until, Blake believed, the students of color stopped speaking because it seemed as if the White student was not really interested in learning from their experiences.

After class was over, Blake said that he packed his bag and began to leave the building. He said he had to go down and then around a central flight of stairs to leave the building and the White male student was standing under the stairs. He explained:

[The White male student from class] kind of leaned out [from under the stairs] to do kind of a poke, finger poke, you know, playful move, which wasn't necessarily completely out of routine, but not necessarily a regular thing....Where I feel I was in my mind, "I just don't really need to be bothered right now." I was trying to continue walking straight, so I was like, "Get out of my way" [and made an arm motion to brush off the poke]....And, by the time I'm halfway across the grass, that person is outside and calls out to me. And, I'm just like, "I don't want to talk to you."

As Blake's narrative reveals, he was faced with a situation where he was expected to adhere to certain affective component of interaction (e.g., being playful). However, not only did he not fulfill that role, Blake then ignored the White male student to gain physical and psychological distance. He then recounted:

So, I get a text message that basically says, "I've been waiting for you to talk to me and you haven't, so why don't we?" And, I don't pay it any attention...And, another few hours pass and I get a text that says something to the effect [of,] "I would appreciate it if you would reply to my text. I'm still not able to understand what it is that I said or did that

made you so angry.” And, then there was some little blurb [that] I took as a threat, “I would hate to have to take this higher up to get it resolved. I'd like for us to do it ourselves.” I took it to mean our chairperson.

In Blake's situation, his separationist communicative strategy challenges the other student's conception that they should talk about their situation. In response, the White male student first tried to overcome Blake's separation through repeated attempts to establish contact. When those failed, the White male student threatened to use the power of the institution to force Blake to interact with him. Furthermore, Blake felt that the White male student utilized racial stereotypes about Black male violence to imply that Blake was being too aggressive (i.e., not adhering to the affective component of the white habitus). He recounted:

[The White male] said, “Since you physically hit me, I need to know what's making you so angry because now I'm afraid of you because I don't have a conflict.” And, I'm like, “Hmm, so now I have become the perpetrator and I'm being singled out,” and possibly what I felt like in that moment was, “You [are] threatening to go and tell our chairperson that I'm violent and that I struck you.”

Blake's story shows that he directly challenges the affective components of the white habitus by engaging in separationist communication with the other student through his non-verbal communication (e.g., brushing the student's hands aside, walking away while the other student is trying to talk, and avoiding text messages). He believed that (based on his experience in the classroom) that the White student did not display the disposition of someone that was sensitive to the experiences of people of color (i.e., he did not listen to the students of color during class). His separation serves to call into question the normative expectation that they should amicably disagree (i.e., adhere to the affective component of the white habitus).

Despite his use of separationist communicative strategies, the White male student invokes the power of the white habitus to elicit his desired interaction. Blake felt that he had to eventually give into the White male student's demand if he wanted to remain an institutional member. He stated:

What I felt like really came out of [the situation] was, you have me, who feels like they've already been silenced or in some way. I felt like I was just trying to keep the peace and go along because it wasn't important. And then, I go from there...to all of a sudden, I'm the violent person. It just felt like it was kind of a double jeopardy.

Blake feared that such a label (i.e., a violent person) would, at the very least, lead to his ostracism, if not his expulsion from the program. As a result, he eventually talked with White male student, even though he did not feel that the conversation actually helped repair their relationship. He said he still had reservations about the White student and had not been able to see him as a friend since the incident.

Blake's story shows the power of the white habitus to maintain its normalcy, even in the face of resistance. Blake's separationist communication strategy serves to reject the cultural tool of the white habitus (i.e., disagreeing within the bounds of the affective components of language use). However, the White male student re-appropriates Blake's communicative strategy by linking his separationist strategy with the stereotype of the angry Black male. Blake feared that his continued use of using separationist communication with the White male student ran the risk of departmental ostracism or even expulsion from the program. In the end, Blake decided to talk with the White male student about the instance to alleviate the fears and anxiety that the White male felt about their disagreement. As Tappan (2006) states:

[Socialization can] occur almost instantaneously; just as one picks up a tool and begins to use it, one's physical and mental functioning—one's thoughts, feelings, and actions—begins to change, as one appropriates...oppressive cultural tools via the interrelated processes of cultural participation, guided participation, and participatory appropriation. (p. 2133)

Even though there is the possibility that Blake's actions can serve to undermine the angry Black male stereotype (Griffin & Cummins, 2012), it is important to note that his eventual interaction with the White student is a performance that is extracted by a person in power. As such, Blake's interaction serves as a reminder of the power of the white habitus to re-appropriate and undermine the resistant elements of separationist communication by constraining the communication choices of students of color (i.e., how and when to interact with dominant members).

In this section, I have used the concept of separationist communicative strategies from Co-Cultural theory to identify some of the ways that participants narrated their resistance to the white habitus. I then unpacked how, even when using strategies that explicitly call the white habitus into question, those communicative performances are often met and overcome with the institutionalized power of the white habitus. In the next section, I offer some insights that I have gleaned from my analysis.

### **Chapter Conclusion**

In this chapter, I examined participants' responses to answer two of my research questions by (1) identifying and describing the communicative practices that constitute the socializing mechanisms of the white habitus in higher education and (2) understanding how students of color narrate how they take up, defer, resist, adapt, mix, subvert and/or assimilate to

the socializing mechanisms of the white habitus of higher education (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Bourdieu & Passeron, 2000). After describing the tenets of Co-Cultural Theory (Orbe, 1997; 1998; Orbe & Roberts, 2012) I identified four communicative practices that constitute the socializing mechanisms of the white habitus of higher education. These mechanisms include English language use (i.e., exclusively speaking the English language), vernacular and linguistics (i.e., speaking White, middle class English), affective components of language use (i.e., speaking in a “cold” manner), and attire (i.e., wearing White, middle-class clothing). Drawing upon Garza (2000), I argue that these socializing mechanisms function to perpetuate whiteness ideologies because they allow one to categorize with the “surety of [one’s] assumptions” (p. 61). Said differently, they provide the “checkpoints” (Rowe & Malhotra, 2006, p. 168) that students of color navigate.

Utilizing Co-Cultural Theory, I delineated among the assimilationist, accommodationist, and separationist communicative strategies of the participants to understand how they take up, defer, resist, adapt, mix, subvert and/or assimilate to the four socializing mechanisms of the white habitus of higher education. I argued that assimilationist strategies were employed by students of color who recognize the socializing mechanisms of the white habitus and discipline themselves to mimic those communicative codes. Importantly, I do not frame this process as false consciousness or internalized oppression; instead, I utilize Tappan’s (2006) appropriate framework to argue that their behaviors constitute a form of cultural appropriation that allows students of color to take up the cultural tools that are made available to them through the functioning of the system. I then showed how accommodationist strategies were used by students of color who wished to dispel myths or stereotypes about their racial group while still maintaining ties to the dominant culture. Drawing upon Tappan’s framework, I argued that



accommodationist communicative choices inhabit a tension filled position of both resisting and (re)producing the socializing mechanisms of the white habitus by the way that they appropriate the cultural tools of higher education. Finally, I proposed that the separationist communicative strategies of students of color functioned primarily to secure physical or mental distance from dominant members. However, Tappan's work encourages me to see how separationist communication can become re-appropriated by dominant members by linking separation with negative stereotypes. Overall, these insights highlight the back-and-forth play of racialized power within the confines of the white habitus in higher education.

## CHAPTER V

### CIVILITY AND HIGHER EDUCATION

*Jeff looks around the room at the other students in the Race in Contemporary Society class. Many of the students are African-American, but there are a few White students interspersed as well as a group of four Latinas that usually sit toward the back of the room. He's gotten used to this demographic in his raced-based classes—a lot of people of color and a few White folks. Most of the time there are good interactions among the different groups. Other times, he wonders why some of these students even enroll in race-based courses when all they do is deny that racism exists.*

*Dr. Cunningham, an African-American professor, walks into the class and sets his briefcase down on the desk. "Okay everyone," he says. "I know it's a few minutes early, but let's get started. Let's all arrange our desks in a circle and we'll talk about the reading assigned for today's class."*

*The class has been reading Toni Morrison's "The Bluest Eye" for the past two weeks. They are supposed to finish a chapter every Monday and Wednesday and discuss what they thought about the story during class on Tuesday and Thursday. They should have finished the book last night.*

*"So, what did you all think about the book?" Dr. Cunningham asks.*

*No one says anything. Jeff looks around the room. He knows that someone will eventually start off the conversation if he waits long enough. After a few minutes, Bob, a White male student, raises his hand.*

*"One of the things that I didn't like about the book was that it made the White family look bad. I mean, like I don't have Black servants or maids so I don't know what the author is trying*

*to say by acting like all White people have them. I don't know, I think it's a bit racist," he finishes hurriedly.*

*"Racist?!" Alexis, a Black female, exclaims. "Did you even read the story?"*

*"He asked for our opinion, and I gave it," Bob retorted defensively. "You can't get mad because opinions can't be wrong."*

*"They can if you didn't read the book!" Alexis says, pointing at him. "The point isn't about the White family. It's about whiteness and white standards of beauty. Even Maureen is a part of it, and she's an African-American character."*

*"Alexis, Alexis," Dr. Cunningham interjects calmly. "When you're rude like that, you take away from the other members in our class." Alexis, obviously fuming, slouches in her chair and looks toward the window. "Are you kidding?" Jeff thinks. "Bob doesn't read, and Alexis is the one that gets in trouble? That isn't right."*

*"I think everyone should just calm down a little." Dr. Cunningham continues, "Now Bob, you were saying what you thought about the novel."*

*Bob continues talking about how he didn't like the book because it was racist against White people. No one says anything while he talks—or, after he finishes. As the silence stretches out, Dr. Cunningham asks, "Doesn't anyone else have an opinion?" There's no sound except for the rustling of clothing as students shift in their seats uncomfortably. Finally Jasmine, another African-American female, raises her hand and comments on the connection between the death of Percola's child and the marigolds. Dr. Cunningham nods his head after she finishes, and slowly all the other students join into the discussion. All, that is, except Alexis.*

*At the end of the class, the students arrange their backpacks and school bags and walk out the door. Dr. Cunningham asks Alexis to stay behind. Jeff takes his time putting his things*

away so he can listen to their conversation.

*“Alexis, we really can’t have outbursts like that in class—,” Dr. Cunningham begins.*

*“But, it makes me angry when Bob just doesn’t get it. Like, it’s obvious that he’s not even trying to understand,” Alexis interjects.*

*“But, you can’t show that anger,” Dr. Cunningham says.*

*“Why not?” Jeff thinks. When both Alexis and Dr. Cunningham look at him, Jeff realizes that he has actually said it out loud. Blushing a little at interrupting their conversation, he continues, “I mean, really, why not? This is a class about race and ethnicity. If we can’t be angry in a class that talks about our oppression, then where can we be angry?”*

*“The problem with that type of thinking is that everyone is angry,” Dr. Cunningham says. “I’d have to give everyone time to be angry in class. Frankly, we have too much to do, to read and write, to take time for everyone to be angry. So, just keep it to yourselves.”*

*Jeff and Alexis look at each other, their eyes widening a little in response to Dr. Cunningham’s statement. Alexis grabs her book bag and storms out of the room. Jeff looks at her and then back at Dr. Cunningham, standing at the front of the classroom. Reluctantly, he hitches his book bag higher on his shoulder and walks out after Alexis.*

\*\*\*\*

How norms of civility function in higher education, and the ways that students and teachers (dis)conform to those values, provides a potentially rich site in which to view how racial power and privilege are marshalled through their communicative interactions. Jeff’s opening narrative invites multiple readings about the interactions in the classroom. Should the class give Bob class time to talk about his (apparently misinformed) understanding of *The Bluest Eye* (Morrison, 2007) or should he be silenced so he can listen to others’ interpretation of Morrison’s

work? Was Alexis being rude by confronting Bob or was she justified in publicly disagreeing with him? Did Dr. Cunningham's admonishment, that there was not enough class time for Alexis or Jeff to display their anger at what they perceived were misinformed understandings of their racial heritage, a way to create a non-confrontational classroom or does it function to squelch their critique under the guise of civility and niceness? These questions invite an analysis that is sensitive to the ways that matters of race and racism play a role in how students and teachers understand and perform civility.

At stake in these questions is how a particular form of civility—hegemonic civility—is deployed in higher education. Hegemonic civility refers to “normalized or naturalized behavior—appropriate behavior—even as the action can be incivil or even silencing to uphold the hegemonic order” (Patton, 2004, p. 65). In other words, hegemonically-civil behaviors function to silence or alienate students of color even as those acts are deemed appropriate, nice, or polite. In this sense, privileged people utilize hegemonic civility to maintain their power by silencing conversations about race or racism.

In this chapter, I address my fourth research question concerning how students of color experience, understand, and account for civility in their process of becoming socialized into higher education as a white habitus. To pursue this goal, I first examine participants' descriptions of how individuals within higher education deploy hegemonic civility in their everyday talk. Next, I examine the ways that students of color subvert the communicative codes of hegemonic civility in their navigation of higher education. To date, the vast majority of critical scholarship on civility has conceptualized it as a way that “only serves to maintain the status quo, covers up institutionalized racism, and silences the experiences of marginalized students and communities of color” (Alemán, 2009, p. 291). However, I am reminded of Scott's (1990) admonition:

We are in danger of missing much of their significance if we see linguistic deference and gestures of subordination merely as performances extracted by power. The fact is they serve also as a barrier and a veil that the dominant find difficult or impossible to penetrate. (p. 32)

In other words, a critical understanding of civility can provide ways to understand how some dimensions of civility challenge oppressive logics even while others may serve to (re)produce hegemonic norms. Such a view of civility encourages a more thoughtful and nuanced account for the multiple functions that civil talk may have in contemporary society (i.e., beyond its status as an always already hegemonic code).

### **The Communicative Appeals to Hegemonic Civility**

*Star is sitting in her desk in the second row of her Environmental Conservation class. The class is tough and made tougher by the fact that the professor writes on the chalkboard in really small print. So, she sits in this desk, every day, so that she can make sure to copy all the notes down correctly. The class is a large-lecture format, so there's not a lot to do beside sit, listen, and write.*

*As she's opening up her notebook to prepare for that day's lesson, she hears a group of Black female students in the back of the classroom talking about what they did last weekend. One went to a party, another went to see a movie, and another went back home to see her family. Normal talk for a Monday in class. A White female student says that she went to the local mall and that's when things take a turn for the worse.*

*"I hate going to the mall," Star hears a male voice say in response to the White female. "The whole place is overrun by towel heads."*

*The hairs on the back of Star's neck stand up straight. She slowly turns around and sees*

*the owner of the voice. He's White, with blue jeans, and a cut-off t-shirt. And, he's looking straight at Star.*

*"Yeah," he continues. "There's foreigners all over that place. I wish they'd just go back to where they belong."*

*Star stands up, thinking, "I don't know what I'm going to say, but I know I'm going to say something! I'm going to—"*

*"Sit back down right now!" Star hears the professor say behind her. "I don't need any of your drama right now." Star turns around, confused, thinking, "Why am I the one in trouble?"*

*"Hey, that's not fair!" Star hears another classmate say. She turns and sees Kevin, a Black male. He's usually so quiet, but she's glad he decided to speak up today. Kevin continues, "He got to say something, why can't she respond?"*

*"I don't need your drama either!" the professor snaps. Star notices that the professor's white face is now red. Star can see that the professor is flustered that the students are talking so much more than normal.*

*"So, like I was saying, don't go to that mall," the White male continues. "The Collinsville mall is just as far and doesn't have all those dirty Indian people in it."*

*Star stands back up and whirls around to see the student looking at her with a smirk on his face.*

*"I said, 'Sit down!'" the professor nearly shouts. "If I see you get out of your desk one more time then I'll have you removed from class."*

*Star turns to look at the professor, who she see is now nearly panting with frustration, and then back to the smirking student. And then, slowly, she sits back down in her desk.*

*"Great," the professor says. "I guess now we can get back to having class?"*

*No one answers. Star puts her head down on her desk, shutting out the sounds of the professor's droning voice and the whispered chuckles from the students in the back of the class. And, class continues for another day.*

\*\*\*\*

Star's opening narrative highlights how members from dominant groups perpetuate norms of whiteness and racism. The White male's description of people at the local mall utilized racial and ethnic slurs while simultaneously conflating Middle-Eastern people (i.e., towel heads) and Indian people. From Star's perspective, the White male student was not simply recounting his prejudices, but was intentionally looking at her to make sure she was aware of his racist diatribe. Of particular interest in Star's story is the way that the White female professor's intervention into the discussion draws upon hegemonic civility.

Hegemonic civility in higher education refers to the behaviors of dominant members that serve to maintain order by silencing students of color (Patton, 2004). In this instance, Star thought that her instructor's intervention did nothing to challenge the White male student; instead, Star felt that both she and Kevin were silenced more than the White male. When I asked her why she thought her instructor treated her the way that she did, Star replied:

I think she was afraid that I was going to start something, but I wasn't. I was just, I don't really know what I was going to say to him, because I don't argue with people though, so it wouldn't have been that....But, she just didn't even want to talk about it. And, by her telling me that she didn't want my drama and that she didn't want me to start anything, I think she was afraid. I think she just didn't want to handle me or deal with that.

Star's response suggests that she thought her and Kevin's reproach of the White male student was viewed by the White female instructor as threatening. As such, Star thought the White



female instructor tried to silence the two students of color in the class who spoke to eliminate the threat they posed to an orderly, non-confrontational environment. Star said she was not allowed to defend her identity against the other student and as a result, she stated, “I sat back down and didn’t say anything....And, I just never said anything again, ever.” In other words, the instructor’s reprimand functioned to maintain the classroom climate at the expense of Star’s participation.

In this section, I examine participants’ narratives to understand how hegemonic civility is enforced in higher education. Based on their responses, I first argue that hegemonic civility is prescribed by instructors through appeals to learning or covering ground. Said differently, participants’ stories reveal that instructors often avoided conversations about race or racism by stating that course content is more important. Certainly, college instructors are tasked with the job of ensuring that students complete coursework and gain skill or content mastery. However, much like Star’s instructor in the opening narrative, participants’ responses reveal how they believe that instructors appeal to an onus to cover course content as an excuse to elide conversations about race and thus perpetuate an atmosphere of whiteness within higher education. Second, hegemonic civility is conflated with a sense of commonly shared beliefs or norms (e.g., common courtesy) that all institutional members are supposed to know and adhere to in their daily interactions. The idea that some values or norms are common or universal provides a mental framework used to evaluate students of color as deficit (see Garza, 2000).

### **“Covering Ground” as an Appeal to Hegemonic Civility**

Some participants described instances when they believed their instructors appealed to an imperative to focus on course content as a way to elide conversations about race and racism. In these instances, the participants described a case when a White peer said or did something that the participant felt was racially charged or motivated. However, when the participant disagreed

with the White peer, the instructor intervened and appealed to a need to cover course content to shut down the conversation. For example, Star narrated one instance when her instructor stopped her from disagreeing with a student who stereotyped her. Star stated:

It was a history class and the girl in class was White and blond. And, she turned around, and I don't think she was being mean, but she turned around...and said "Oh, I feel sorry for you." And, I had never talked to this girl before and I [didn't] know what she's talking about. The teacher asked her what she was talking about and she was like, "Your daddy picked out who you were going to marry. You've probably known since you were ten." And, the teacher said, "I don't want any of that. Let's get back to class." So, she wouldn't let me answer her or correct her.

Star's narrative reveals how she felt that she was the target of her classmate's ignorance about her culture.<sup>23</sup> Star stated that she wanted to answer the other student in an attempt to disabuse her of the cultural stereotype (e.g., that all Indian women have arranged marriages), but was unable to because the instructor stopped her. Importantly, the instructor did not correct the White female student, but simply stopped all conversation about the instance by appealing to getting back to class (i.e., covering material). As such, Star felt that her instructor's intervention silenced the chance for Star to challenge the stereotype.

Although in Star's instance a conversation about race or racism never materialized due to the instructor's intervention, in other instances participants narrated times when the conversation started, but was shut down by the instructor's intercession. In these cases, participants felt that instructors used their authority in the classroom to foreground the importance of course content

---

<sup>23</sup> Although some may see Star's narrative as an exemplar of ethnocentrism, rather than racism, I believe the White female's utterance was racially motivated. As Star stated, the two had never interacted before the exchange in Star's story. As such, I believe the primary motivation for the White female student's utterance was due to her appraisal of Star's culture based on her skin tone and hair color (i.e., a socio-cultural understanding of race, see Chapter Two).

in an emerging conversation about race as a way to derail the discussion about racism. For example, SK recounted an experience when a White female student challenged a Black male student's poem for not adhering to "standard" ways of writing, and the resulting (lack of) communication about the racial politics concerning "good" poetry. He stated that he was enrolled at AFU in a Poetry Fiction course when the students in the class were expected to write a poem and exchange it with each other. The students and professor sat in a circle during class and provided feedback to each other's poems. SK narrated a time when one of his Black male classmates had his poem reviewed by the class:

[The Black male author] was like, you know using a lot of cultural slang words [in his poem] and it was just like, "Mo money, hoes, dis is da life," and I'm reading this and I'm like, "Yep, yep, yep" because I know and it doesn't, my queerness doesn't overshadow my blackness. People tend to be like, "Well, you're queer," but I'm Black, so I know. So, I'm like, "Oh this is cool!" So, the girl that was sitting next to me was White girl [and] totally into the mechanics of writing, the way to write, the way to do a poem, [and] the structure of it. She critiqued everything! She's like, "I don't get it, I don't understand, this and that, this is poorly written and I think this is horrible." And, the teacher was just sitting there. So, I was like, "You're just going to let her say that?"

SK felt that the Black male author's work tapped into a shared ethic of blackness rooted in a tradition of hip-hop and spoken word poetry (see Kitwana, 2006). He thought that the White female's critique of the poem was due to her focus on standard (read: White) ways of thinking about poetry, writing, and mechanics. Furthermore, he felt that by not responding to the White female, the instructor perpetuated a racist climate against poetry rooted in Black culture and experiences. Overall, his story sets up a moment when different understandings of poetry (and its

traditions) emerge and demand some form of discussion or deliberation to articulate and explore those differences.

As SK continued to narrate his story, he detailed how he utilized the opportunity to challenge what he perceived to be the racially motivated assertions of the White female student. He described what he said to the White female student:

First of all, the reason you don't get it is because you're not a person of color and you won't get it. And, to be a writer you definitely need to read other work besides White folks. Work! And, you won't understand and if you want to be a better writer you need to try to understand it. And, I think [your characterization of the Black male students' poetry] is completely ridiculous.

SK's disagreement with the White female student serves to reframe the conversation about whose understanding of poetry is actually right or wrong. Although the White female student believes that the Black male author's poetry is bad because it does not conform to the ways she thinks of good poetry, SK's narration points to how he believes that her privileging of those formal rules makes it difficult (if not impossible) for her to appreciate poetry derived from a Black masculine perspective.

SK's story reveals what he thought was a disagreement among students that was rooted in a racially-motivated understanding of good and bad poetry. However, as he later described, the way that his instructor dealt with the disagreement highlights how using a concern for covering ground functions as an appeal for hegemonic civility. SK continued to narrate:

You could hear a pin drop! And the teacher didn't say anything. And, he was like, [SK emulating his professor's mannerism] "Sooooo [imitating pregnant pause and then slowly]. What are some good things that can come out of the poem? [Then, hurrying as if

the professor is giving no time for students to respond, in a high pitch voice] Or, if not we can also move onto a new one.” So, he completely brushed it aside. He was just like, “I’m not going to talk about it.”

SK’s emulation of his professor’s mannerisms suggested that SK thought the professor was trying to encourage students to respond to the suggestion to move on to a different poem. He felt that the instructor was using the excuse of covering course content (i.e., reviewing all of the students’ poems) as a way to shut down the conversation between SK and the White female about the racial dimensions of her critique of the Black male student’s poem. In this case, hegemonic civility is maintained by the instructor’s ability to impose silence on the emerging discussion of race and racism in the class.

The way that SK’s professor behaved reminds me of how I acted when I first began teaching. I naively believed that just being “nice” to students would automatically win their support and trust. I juxtaposed my communicative performances against the types of teachers I hated most when I was growing up: authoritarian, uncompromising, and arrogant. I thought if I could act nice to students, and (in turn) make sure they were nice to each other, then they would be willing to follow my directions. That, I think, was the important (and troubling) part—that the students, in the end, would recognize my good intentions and do what I wanted them to do. So, I made sure to intervene when students disagreed with one another by interrupting them before they could become loud, angry, or frustrated with one another. I thought that a good class was one where students never raised their voices or became upset, privileging a mythical “safe-space” that was both illusory and marginalizing (see Boler, 2006). I now realize that I tried to elicit through niceness what my former teachers had through force: conformity to the aims and culture of higher education. When students did not reciprocate my “benign” actions, then I either

characterized them as bad students (e.g., they just don't care about learning) or as rude people (e.g., they don't care about me). These ascriptions, in turn, prompted me to give my attention to those students that adhered to the "proper" ways that a student should act. As a result, I often downplayed or side-stepped confrontation in the classroom because I thought that recognizing it (or, heaven forbid, doing something about it) would undermine the "nice guy" persona that I was trying to cultivate.

### **Summary.**

As shown in Star and SK's narratives, covering ground, when used as an appeal to hegemonic civility, functions as a way for instructors appeal to institutional concerns as the legitimate or important issue in an effort to downplay or erase discussions about race or racism. Certainly, every instructor does not have the content knowledge or classroom management skills to have productive conversations about race or racism. Furthermore, it may be naïve to think that professors have a duty to challenge racism in the classroom (Fish, 2008). However, these narratives show how discussions concerning race and racism (especially when brought up by students of color) are all-too-often squelched because they are viewed as a threat to an enforced non-confrontational atmosphere (i.e., hegemonic civility). In this regard, the way that instructors privilege covering ground functions to "maintain relations of dominance by shifting the focus on structural inequities to matters of social interaction" (Mayo, 2004, p. 35). In other words, by introducing a new topic of conversation into the discussion (e.g., the need to cover course content), instructors are able to elide their culpability in racism by maintaining hegemonic civility in higher education.

### **"Common Courtesy" as an Appeal to Hegemonic Civility**

Some participants expected their peers in higher education to act in accordance with their

perceived understanding of civility. In these cases, participants regarded their expectations for civility as common courtesy and engaged in racialized understandings of the perceived deviance from those norms by their peers of color. In other words, they believed that their understanding of what constituted a civil or polite person was common or universal. Similar to Butler's (1990) notion of gender, I believe that this type of hegemonic civility is "a rule-bound discourse that inserts itself in the pervasive and mundane signifying acts of linguistic life" (p. 145). In other words, common courtesy, as an appeal to hegemonic civility, is a collection of norms and rules that individuals use in their everyday communication that serve to reify how a civil or polite person communicates. The best exemplar of this theme came from a narrative given by Seraphina that involves her, her White boyfriend, and a Black male student whom she was tutoring.

Seraphina recounted a narrative concerning scheduling with Black male client she tutored. In her story, she stated that the Black male student did not show up to their scheduled appointments on time. When she mentioned her frustration to her White boyfriend, he told her that it was because Black people are on "Black People Time." She recounted:

I was waiting on one of my students like two weeks ago maybe, and he showed up 30 minutes late. And, he's an African-American student, so I was telling my [White] boyfriend about this. He goes, "Haven't you ever heard of Black People Time?" And I'm like, "What?" Just because I grew up in a small White town, I didn't really have associations. And, he's like, "It's like they're never ever on time for anything or they're like 15, 30 minutes late." And, I'm like, "That's dumb. I don't understand." But after that, I rescheduled the appointment, and he still showed up late. And so this way, you know, it's kind of like, "Okay, maybe it is a real thing or maybe he just got busy or something."

You know, I kind of tried to rationalize it. But then, earlier this week, I met up with him, and he again showed up late.

Seraphina's story shows how her frustration with the Black male student prompted her to reevaluate her evaluation of him; that is, at first she attributed his behavior to personal choices (i.e., he was busy), but eventually began viewing his behavior through the lens of a racial stereotype (i.e., Black People Time). Seraphina's story shows how a cultural norm is transmitted from her boyfriend to her and how she then deploys that evaluatory frame against the Black male student.

The oppressive dimensions of hegemonic civility lie in the way that it imposes silence on conversations about race and racism. So, I was interested if Seraphina ever talked with the Black male student about what she perceived to be his tardiness. After I asked Seraphina about how she handled the discussion, she replied:

I talked to [him] yesterday because he showed up late. At that point, I had kind of really had it. So I said, "You know, I'm only obligated to wait a certain amount of time before I can leave, before I'm not like required to stay anymore. So, this showing up late needs to stop or you need to text me if you're going to be late, so I at least know you're coming. I don't [want to] sit here and wait for 30 minutes to an hour...because I have things to do. I have assignments and papers that I need to do that don't require me to sit here." So I said, "We need to fix that." And he said, "Okay, I'll come on time next time." And I'm like, "Thank you." I mean it's not like not talking about it with [him] didn't help. It's just the fact that to me, I was a little shocked that it's not just common courtesy...It just seems like something to me that would be common courtesy, something that should just, you know, punctuality should be something that you do, not something that should be asked



for in my opinion.

Seraphina's job as a tutor comes with a measure of institutional power and legitimacy that is not shared by the Black male student. She invokes the notion of common courtesy in her frustration concerning the Black male student's (perceived) lack of adherence to her understanding of a universal norm for punctuality. Even though she could have engaged in a conversation with the Black male student after the first time he was tardy to negotiate a shared understanding of time, she remained silent for almost three months. Rather, she spoke with her White boyfriend, whose appraisal of the situation invoked racial stereotypes about Black people and time.<sup>24</sup> By the end, Seraphina was so frustrated with the Black male student that she threatened to invoke the disciplining power of the institution (i.e., terminate the tutor-client relationship). However, when Seraphina spoke with the Black male student at the end, she found that he appreciated her situation and promised not to be late again. In this case, simply talking with the student, rather than maintaining silence, created a collaborative understanding of their roles and expectations for punctuality.

Seraphina's dilemma about time reminds me about my own practices as a teacher. I give assignments that students must complete to obtain a passing grade in class. One of my classroom policies is that I deduct 10 percent off of all work that is turned in late. I hope that the threat to students' grades will ensure that they turn in their work on the pre-set due dates. Every semester that I teach a class, I always debate with myself on whether I keep that rule in the syllabus or not, but I always end up leaving it. I struggle with it because (ostensibly) a grade is a reflection of one's learning in the class. To deduct points from a grade because the work was turned in late

---

<sup>24</sup> I am not interested in exploring this narrative through cultural norms by comparing different cultural values of time (e.g., East vs. West, Asian vs. Black). Rather, I am more interested in how the failure to communicate across cultural differences reveals how these communicative performances draw upon and (re)produce hegemonic civility and whiteness.

conflates academic knowledge with punctuality. Students' ability to turn work in on time says less about their academic performance and more about how I, as an institutional member, require them to behave in certain ways to ensure the smooth functioning of the classroom (i.e., my grading schedule). When I ask colleagues about their policies, they rarely seem to struggle with this concept like I do. Many of them say something like, "Well, they have to be ready for the 'real world' and in the 'real world' they have to meet deadlines." This makes me wonder, "Is that what I'm supposed to do as a teacher? Teach people how to conform to the demands of a capitalist society where the prevailing wisdom is that 'time equals money?'" Simultaneously, there is a certain pragmatic element to what they say. If I deny the reality of the culture of power (Delpit, 1988) and teach as if those normative codes do not exist, then I am doing a disservice to my students as well. I struggle with the problem, looking for answers that will give me the surety that I am doing the right thing.

Seraphina's narrative points to how individuals within higher education use notions of common courtesy to appeal to hegemonic civility. Common courtesy can be viewed as a mental framework that allows institutional members forego conversations about race or racism by relying on the surety of institutional norms (Garza, 2000). In other words, institutional members who appeal to hegemonic civility view certain actions as normal or appropriate (i.e., common courtesy), and rely upon that framework to evaluate other institutional members' actions or bodies as either adhering to or deviating from those norms. Seraphina, her boyfriend, and myself all engage in this form of hegemonic civility by relying upon our taken-for-granted assumptions about what a civil or good student should do (e.g., always be on time) rather than viewing those cultural practices as open for dialogue and change. Importantly, it is not that any one of these issues are hegemonic on its face; that is, there is nothing inherently racist about expecting people

to adhere to an expectation of punctuality, for example. Rather, the problematic logic that lie at the heart of hegemonic civility is the breakdown of communication across racial differences by relying on the “surety of [our] assumptions” (Garza, 2000, p. 61) about the way that institutional members should act. Overall, hegemonic civility both draws upon and (re)produces racial power by squelching dialogue under the guise of institutional harmony and efficiency.

### **Summary.**

In this section, I examined two ways that hegemonic civility is used by institutional members within higher education. Hegemonic civility, in my understanding, is a framework that imposes silence on discussions of race and racism. The first theme revealed that instructors use institutional concerns (e.g., covering ground) as a way to stifle conversations about race and racism. In these instances, participants felt that instructors were more interested in maintaining their authority in the classroom than challenging the ways that racism can manifest in everyday interactions in the classroom. The second theme showed how expectations for common courtesy interpose themselves in everyday interactions and breakdown the chance to form relationships across race. The appeal to common courtesy created a mental framework from which Seraphina and her White boyfriend found the Black client culturally deficit (i.e., Black People’s Time). Overall, these two themes highlight the ways that hegemonic civility creates an institutional culture of silence that marginalizes students of color.

### **Subversion and Hegemonic Civility**

*It is the first of Maya’s senior semester as an undergraduate. She squirms a little in her desk/chair combo, trying to get comfortable, but to no avail. She’s too nervous, and the seat is too unforgiving on her back. Eyes forward, notebook open, pen in hand, she gets ready for the professor to explain the course syllabus.*

*“You’re so beautiful,” she hears a female voice say behind her. Maya is caught off-guard. This is the first time that she has met this female classmate. Maya looks back and examines her peer. The classmate is white, with dark hair, and has a notepad on her desk.*

*“T-thanks,” Maya stutters, as she turns toward her.*

*She flashes a grin, “I’m Renee, by the way. I just wanted to tell you that I love your skin. And, your hair is really beautiful. What are you?”*

*“Human,” Maya responds curtly. She turns back around, facing the front of the classroom.*

*“No, silly!” Renee says jovially, obviously not picking up on Maya’s mood. “I mean, where are you from?”*

*“I’m from Malaysia. I’m Tamil,” she says, biting off every word.*

*“That’s so cool!” she exclaims. “I just love your brown skin and black hair. They’re just so beautiful!”*

*“Thanks,” Maya says again. “Jeez!” she thinks. “Why won’t she leave me alone? Does she just not get social cues?”*

*The professor walks in, thankfully saving her from further conversation. He talks about his expectations for reading and writing in the class. Maya feels a little daunted by how much work there is for the course, but she feels really excited by the readings he has chosen.*

*While he is talking, Maya feels a tug on her hair. It’s Renee. She’s stroking her hair. Maya starts to panic because the professor is talking and she doesn’t want to make a big scene on her first day in class. It continues for almost twenty minutes, but, for her, it seems like an eternity. After class, she throws her stuff into her backpack and nearly runs out of the classroom.*

*Every day in class for the next six weeks, it’s the same. The professor starts to talk, and,*

*as soon as all the students' eyes are firmly on him, Maya feels the tell-tale tug that signals her that Renee is stroking her hair. Sometimes Renee croons softly under her breath, like Maya is a nervous pet that needs to calm down.*

*"What are some of the ways that we see sexism manifest in our everyday lives?" the professor asks.*

*Renee raises her hand and responds, "Men acting like women are objects. Like, they think they just own them. I hate it when men come up to me and just start touching me, like my body is just there for their amusement."*

*At first, Maya doesn't say anything. The class's silence, Maya's silence, feels like a weight on her chest. She looks around the classroom and sees a few of her classmates, ones that Maya has confided in about Renee's actions, look at her with laughter dancing in their eyes at the irony of Renee's assertion. But, they don't say anything, either to Renee or Maya. Maya steels herself and raises her hand.*

*"I think it's really hard to separate sexism from other types of oppressions," she says, feeling Renee's eyes on the back of her head. She continues, "Like, when people touch me, it's not just because I'm a woman. It's also because of my skin color, my accent, and all the things that make me different from the perceived norm." She finishes the last part in a rush, feeling a sense of relief. She feels better after disagreeing, even slightly, with Renee in class while not having to deal with a public confrontation.*

*"That's true. That's a really good point, Maya," the professor states. Maya feels warm on the inside at the compliment, reveling in the fact that she disagreed with Renee, but in a way that was not viewed as mean or confrontational.*

*"You're smart and beautiful," she hears Renee whisper as the other students talk about*

*sexism. Then Maya, again, starts feeling the tug on her hair.*

*Maya wants to scream, but, instead, she just lets it happen. "I'm just so tired of this," she thinks as she feels Renee's fingers slide through her hair. She internally justifies her silence, reminding herself, "Just a few more weeks, and then I'm done with this class. A few more weeks, and then I don't have to deal with this person anymore."*

\*\*\*\*

Maya alternates between excitement and despair as we talk about her time in higher education. On one hand, she is extremely proud of her accomplishments and seems to thrive on the stress that comes with being a graduate student. On the other hand, she is constantly confronted by people that marginalize her through their everyday communicative performances, such as uninvited touching and compliments about her physical appearance.

Maya, who identifies as a TAMILIAN, was born in Malaysia and came to the U.S. with her family when she was 13. Her father, a computer engineer, was transferred by his company to Minnesota. She said that her time in public schools was sometimes difficult because it was hard to know where to fit in with the other students. She stated:

We have this diaspora, it's kind of like really spread out. Like Southeast Asian have a very prominent population [in the St. Cloud area]...And, of course, there are ethnic politics...Like, the Indian Tamilians don't get along with the Singaporean. Like there's all these politics.

Despite having to negotiate both a largely White population, and the ethnic politics of her diasporic community, she graduated high school and decided to attend AGU, a local four-year university. She double-majored in anthropology and communication studies and successfully completed her bachelor's degree. She is now at AAU, where she has completed her first year of

coursework as a master's student.

### **Purposive Silence, Niceness, and Absurdity as Subversive Acts**

Maya's story highlights a few of the relationships among racism, socialization, and hegemonic civility within higher education. Although Renee recognized that she lives in a society dominated by patriarchy and, so must actively resist male advances, Maya felt that Renee did not understand (due to the cultural ignorance that comes with her racial privilege) how she enacted similar oppressive logics when she commented or touched Maya's body or hair. Maya described her interactions with the White female student:

When I walk into class, this person kind of, "Oooooooh," like a catcalling. I remember being very much uncomfortable in that moment. Or again, just hugging me from the back, randomly starting to touch my hair while we're sitting at a circle with a bunch of other people. Randomly reaching over and touching my hair. Sometimes I feel like I'm tokenized a lot so I guess this is where race plays in.

One way we can understand Renee's actions toward Maya is through the lens of racial fetishization; that is, Renee's unsolicited touching and compliments function as an exercise of racial power that serve to reinforce Maya's perceived non-normative racial body (i.e., being tokenized). Each time Renee touches Maya, it adds to an ongoing institutional culture that functions to socialize Maya to acquiesce to the notion that she must be silent when dominant members touch or comment on her body.

Maya felt that she could not speak with the other student without upsetting her or creating "drama in the department." Maya believed that because she was a student of color there was the chance that an explicit dispute between her and the other student may reflect negatively on her, potentially harming her ability to succeed. She said that she vented her frustrations to

other students in class in the hope that they would stand up for her. However, their help never materialized in class, as she described:

People after class would imitate that and kind of make fun of what had happened.

Purposely! People who I was a little bit more comfortable with would purposely come up to me and touch my hair and laugh at it.

Due to the way that the Maya was treated by her peers and the White female student, and her own internalized fear of creating drama, she remained silent about how she felt. She said, “I still feel like I’m frustrated. I’ve vented to many people, so why do I feel like I still can’t tell this particular person don’t touch me?” Her silence can be viewed as a function of the institutional culture created through hegemonic civility—silence about conversations concerning race and racism.

Although Maya’s silence can be viewed as an imposition from the norms of hegemonic civility, she also narrated how she attempted to subvert those values. For example, as I wrote in Chapter Four, Maya sought to outshine Renee in classroom contributions as a way to subvert the expectations of the white habitus. As such, she strategically challenged Renee as a dominant member in the classroom through an institutionally sanctioned activity—classroom discussion. Maya’s actions can be viewed as a form of cultural subversion; that is, those behaviors that draw upon dominant cultural norms to highlight their absurdity, artificiality, or contradictory nature. The work of de Certeau (1984) provides a framework for understanding cultural subversions. He differentiates between strategies and tactics. Strategies are those hegemonic cultural norms that dominant members impose on situations. Tactics, on the other hand, are those communicative performances used by marginalized peoples that seek to disrupt the imposed normalcy to foster ways of knowing and being outside of the structure of hegemonic strategies. Maya’s challenging



of the White females' classroom contribution can be viewed as a form of tactical communication. That is, Maya poaches the dominant strategies (e.g., classroom discussion) to create a third space where she challenges Renee without threatening the imposed silence of hegemonic civility (see de Certeau, 1984).

In this section, I examine participants' responses to map out three ways that students of color subvert hegemonic civility in higher education: purposive silence, niceness, and absurdity. Purposive silence refers to the ways that students of color draw upon the expectation that they should be silent about matters of race or racism, and instead utilize that space to monitor dominant members in the classroom. Participants described niceness as the times when they explicitly challenged a racist comment that was made, but purposively utilized a tone to make the dominant member who uttered the racist statement think that the student of color was not being serious or threatening. Absurdity denotes the times when participants described over-participating in behaviors prescribed by a dominant member as a way to resist the imposed culture. Overall, these behaviors constitute a form of tactical subversion that allows students of color to resist hegemonic civility through critiques that are hidden in plain sight.

#### **Purposive silence as a subversion of hegemonic civility.**

Hegemonic civility refers to the imposition of silence on conversations about race or racism. Participants described ways that they remained silent in the classroom, not because they felt it was imposed, but because it gave them the opportunity to monitor dominant group members. In this way, participants were able to fulfill the expectations of hegemonic civility while at the same time poaching it for their own ends (de Certeau, 1984).

Participants that engaged in purposive silence often looked at the ways that students and teachers talked about race or racism before engaging in class discussion. Ida B. Wells explained

about the way she acted in classes when the issue of race or racism was introduced:

If I'm in a class with all White people, I will be quiet because I'm observing. I'm usually observing because, it's not out of fear or anything, it's just like getting a feel for the room, like I really want to know who's in here, what's their story, things like that.

Ida's statement highlights how she remains silent until she can feel out the other members of the classroom. I asked Ida what she looked for when she monitored students and teachers in a classroom. She responded:

I think it starts with the teacher. First, I look to see how progressive the teacher is and look over the type of things in the syllabus. Like, I was very surprised [her instructor] read off a list of things and had us step back or step forward if we related to it. It was basically another white privilege test....But, it starts with the mental capacity of the students. I hate to say it, I don't know how that sounds but it's just like, "Okay! How smart are you? Let's unpack this like what do you think, how does this make you feel?" And, if everyone is open-minded and committed to contributing to a free flowing conversation, then that works, and I feel more comfortable speaking if it works out that way.

For Ida, the way that the instructor set up the class (e.g., syllabus construction or readings) let her know how she could (or could not) talk about race or racism in class. Additionally, she monitored not only what students in class said about race (e.g., "how smart are you?"), but also how they talked about it (e.g., open-minded). Ida monitored other members in class and, if they fulfilled her criteria of having a productive conversation about race or racism, she decided to join into the discussion.

Rigoberto stated that he also stayed silent to monitor the ways that dominant group members talked about race and racism. He stated:

We're expected to be politically conscious of what we're saying and so it becomes very difficult. For example, in just like classroom discussions, if I haven't quite figured out where a professor stands on the issue, I kind of bite my tongue and just kind of stay quiet until I figure it out. I can think about a class I took last semester where I was very sort of hesitant to describe myself [racially] for that reason because I didn't want to say Hispanic. And so, I was very hesitant in that class for a really long time because I didn't know where that professor stood in those terms.

Rigoberto's statement shows how he recognizes that topics that are political in nature (e.g., racism) can be difficult. As a result, he chooses to be silent in classes until he can figure out how his instructor will react to conversations about race.

Ida and Rigoberto's descriptions of purposive silence highlight the multiple functions that silence can have in the classroom. Hao (2011) argues that critical scholars should not view silence as simply the absence of communication or only in terms of imposed alienation. He proposes that silence can have meaning beyond its tradition or hegemonic dimensions to encompass resistive elements. Participants' descriptions of purposive silence show how they poach the strategy of hegemonic civility and subvert it by rearticulating silence as a "barrier and a veil that the dominant find difficult or impossible to penetrate" (Scott, 1990, p. 32). Overall, participants utilized the expectation for silence as a strategic communicative performance to protect themselves against potential discrimination.

**Niceness as a subversion of hegemonic civility.**

Because hegemonic civility functions to foreclose conversations about race and racism, it makes it difficult for students of color to explicitly challenge instances when they are targeted with racist attacks. Participants described niceness, as a subversive behavior, as instances when a member from an oppressed racial identity would explicitly call out a dominant member for saying or doing something that could be coded as racist, but in such a way as to make the challenge appear non-threatening. In these instances, participants drew upon the notion that conversations about race and racism must be avoided to maintain order and non-confrontation (i.e., hegemonic civility) and rearticulated that expectation by using verbal and non-verbal performances that were seemingly benign, but were intended to critique racist utterances.

One exemplar of niceness, as a form of subversion, came from Fernando in his narrative concerning how he and his Latino friend were treated by two White co-workers at his on-campus job. Fernando described how he and another Latino male were often told that they “looked like twins” by two White male students who they worked with at the student newspaper. He narrated:

It was a conversation that lasted for about probably five minutes, all this arguing. And, they [the White male students] both saying [that my Latino friend and I looked alike].

And then [one of them] kept just making the remarks....And, I remember them asking this other guy who also works at the office. And, he was like, “No, they don’t look alike.”

And, at some point, I think [the other Latino student] got fed up with the argument and he said, “It’s kind of racist for you to say that.” And, he just decided to make that statement in a friendlier tone for a number of reasons.

Fernando felt that the two White male students were making a racist comparison between him and the other Latino student because, as Fernando said, “We don’t look anything alike. That’s racism. And, I think [the Latino student] truly believes that it was a racist comment, race-based,

because we have no similarities.”

Important to Fernando’s story is his notion of a “friendlier tone.” I asked him what it meant to use a friendlier tone and he demonstrated by mimicking the Latino student from Fernando’s story. He said, “You’re a racist,” but with a high pitched voice, a fake chuckle, and an obviously artificial smile. I asked him why he would claim that a person was being a racist, but use this joking demeanor. He replied:

If I make any accusation of racism, it makes me look dumb or weak, or as someone who is always trying to be the victim....If it's out of something too light and you make a big deal out of it, it just looks as if you're being dramatic. So, someone can be asked to find a lighter way to deal with the issues, so I just go with that. I don't see any other way, I mean, I can't think of another way to have dealt with [the White male students] at the moment.

Fernando believed that if he was going to accuse someone engaging in racism, then the instance had to be overt and recognizable to other class members otherwise he may be thought of negatively. When instances of racism were more subtle, then Fernando decided to use a lighter one to challenge the racism without appearing weak or dramatic. He stated:

I want to make the statement [that someone is being racist], I want to make sure that these people don't repeat that kind of comments. At the same time, I don't want to make a drama out of it.

Fernando’s understanding of niceness, as a subversion of hegemonic civility, shows how students of color can directly call out the White students’ racist speech without disrupting the imposed silence concerning topics of race and racism. White students are made to feel comfortable because students of color are not viewed as threatening or injecting issues of race or

racism needlessly into a situation. At the same time, the way that students of color critique of the racist speech of White students is hidden in plain sight through their use of tactical communication (de Certeau, 1984).

On one hand, niceness, as a subversive strategy, allows students of color to challenge racism while being able to remain a part of the institutional culture because its use is not viewed by others as trying to be a “victim” or making “drama.” On the other hand, niceness allows dominant members the opportunity to call the bluff of the student of color and raise the stakes in the situation by ignoring (whether intentionally or not) the joke. For example, Fernando stated that the White students from his story continued to say he and the other Latino looked alike, even after the use of niceness as a subversive behavior. When dominant members ignore the joke, it forces students of color to make a choice to continue in the ineffectual joking, become silenced, or become more assertive in their challenge to racism. In other words, they are forced to either perform in ways that more closely adhere to the white habitus or risk being found uncivil and subsequently subjected to the disciplinary frames of hegemonic civility.

### **Absurdity as a subversion of hegemonic civility.**

Hegemonic civility, as a system that imposes silence on conversations about race and racism, functions to make it difficult to challenge subtle forms of racism. In these instances, participants talked about how they decided to follow the rules of the classroom, but in such a way as to call out what they perceived were racially motivated slights communicated by dominant members. Importantly, the ways that they called out dominant members’ use of subtly racist attacks were done in such a way as to ensure they did not disrupt the functioning of the classroom, but still made a point of challenging racism. An exemplar of this type of subversive behavior was demonstrated by Jeff’s decision to over contribute to classroom discussion due to

his perception that he was targeted by an instructor's racial slight.

Jeff recounted a story about a time in his Introduction to Environmental Science class concerning an instance when he engaged in over contributing as a form of subversive behavior. In his story, he narrates how he very rarely contributed to class discussion because he was uninterested in the subject matter. However, later in the semester, he felt his instructor attempted to single him out because he was a Black male. He recounted:

Because, at first, none of [the subject matter] interested me, it was just a class I had to take, so when I was in the lab I wouldn't speak at all. And, I understood what [the professor] was telling me, and I understood the material—it just wasn't of any interest to me, so I didn't feel the need to say anything. Then, there was one point where I felt like everyone was talking but me. And, I was the only Black guy in the class, and the teacher said something to the effect of, "I would appreciate it if everyone would give their input" so when he said that [I thought,] "Well, clearly you're talking about me. I'm the only person in here who's not talking."

Jeff told me that he felt that the professor singled him out because, by not talking, it may have given the impression that Jeff was not paying attention to classroom discussion. Jeff said he was puzzled though because he knew he was doing well in class, and he had always stayed silent in the past with no reprisal from the instructor.

Jeff felt that the professor's request may have singled him out in a way that perpetuated stereotypes about Black male intelligence and work ethic; that is, the idea that Jeff's perceived non-participation was a function of his unintelligence or laziness. He stated, "When [the professor] said that, a couple people looked at me, and so I was like, 'Shit. Alright. Now, I gotta play your game.'" In other words, Jeff did not think that the instructor was being racist, but

instead felt that the professor's comments drew upon stereotypes about Black male students, which created the "game" or system of implicit racism that he had to negotiate. Jeff then described his response:

So, for like four weeks, I dominated the conversation. *Dominated the conversation* [his emphasis]. And, I knew that I irritated a couple of people, but in my head I was like, "You shouldn't have said that. That's what you get for singling me out."

Jeff's over-contribution to classroom discussion functions as a way to challenge the way he perceived he was being singled out and implicitly linked to negative stereotypes about Black male students. Importantly, even though his communicative choice clearly frustrates his other class members, they are unable to reprimand him because his behavior adheres to the instructor's request to contribute to class discussion

Jeff's actions function as a form of poaching dominant forms of expression to challenge the strategy of hegemonic civility through a form of absurdist behavior. Jeff's response to the seeming binary (e.g., be silent or overtly calling out the racial stereotype he thought was being invoked) was to instead choose a third option—over-contributing to the discussion. By engaging absurdist behaviors, Jeff implicitly called out what he perceived to be the link between his classroom discussion contributions and stereotypes regarding Black male students, and disrupted the classroom climate that would have allowed (what Jeff perceived was) a racially-linked slight to go unchallenged.

### **Summary.**

In this section, I examined the ways that participants subvert norms of hegemonic civility within higher education. The participants' responses show how they are discerning and strategic in their subversive communicative behaviors. They continually find elements within the



oppressive logics of hegemonic civility that can be rearticulated in ways that challenge the seeming normalcy of silence concerning topics of race and racism in higher education.

As de Certeau's (1984) metaphor of "walking the city" suggests, even when oppressed members find ways to get off what he calls the "map" (i.e., those institutionally sanctioned pathways of thought) by taking side-streets or shortcuts, the map maintains itself as the preferred or dominant way of walking (and thus, knowing) the city. Similarly, when students of color draw upon the logics of hegemonic civility to subvert its perceived normalcy, it runs the risk of (re)producing the institutional culture. In other words, subversive communicative performances may serve to constitute the map as "normal" even as the map constitutes subversive communication as deviant or abnormal.

### **Chapter Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have shown some of the ways that hegemonic civility manifests within higher education and how students of color communicatively navigate its norms. As Patton (2004) writes, hegemonic civility fosters silence concerning topics of race and racism as a way to perpetuate a culture of racism. I have extended upon her work by showing how silence is marshalled through hegemonic civility to maintain the white habitus within higher education. Silence is not only the cultural expectation that is fostered in regard to race and racism (as shown in Chapter Two), but is also imposed upon students of color that try to speak out about racism in higher education. Furthermore, by drawing from Scott's (1990) call to view civility beyond its hegemonic dimensions, I have shown how students of color utilize the logics of hegemonic civility to subvert the hegemonic civility (i.e., poaching).

Overall, their responses show how they engage in intentional and strategic communicative performances to navigate hegemonic civility within the white habitus. I believe

their communicative performance of civility shows how it can be viewed as a multidimensional construct. Hegemonic civility can best be understood as a strategy and the ways that students of color subvert it can be thought of as different forms of tactics (de Certeau, 1984). This framework has the benefit of offering a nuanced view of civility and calling attention to the communicative interplay between oppression and subordination. Finally, it provides the impetus to theorize “off the map” as a way to challenge hegemonic civility and, through it, the white habitus and the (re)production of whiteness. In the following chapter, I take up the challenge to do this type of theorization as a way to produce a language of critique and hope for a critical communication scholarship concerning higher education (Giroux, 1983).

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **SUMMARY, INTERPRETATION, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

The purpose of this chapter is to review the findings of my dissertation and theorize their implications. Therefore, I first summarize my findings in relation to the first four research questions that I proposed in Chapter Two. Specifically, I review the major themes that emerged through my study concerning racism, the socialization through the white habitus, and civility. I then move to an interpretation of those findings to address my final research question and show how my findings highlight new directions for the study in these respective areas. I draw upon Black Feminist Thought (BFT; Collins, 2000) and Critical Communication Pedagogy (CCP; Fassett & Warren, 2007; Freire, 2000) to articulate an ethic of communicating through inclusive civility. Finally, I review the limitations of my study and point to some future directions for scholarly research concerning racism, socialization through the white habitus, and civility.

#### **Summary of Major Findings**

The purpose of this study was to understand how institutions of higher education, through both punishments and rewards, ensure that dominant cultural codes are implicitly “taught” to students of color by normalizing whiteness ideologies. I wanted to understand racism in higher education through the lens of socialization to show the ways in which institutional members (un)intentionally conflate dominant cultural codes with the “correct” or “normal” way to think, act, or speak. Furthermore, I was interested in the ways that students of color take up, defer, resist, adapt, mix, subvert, and/or accommodate the institutional practices that (re)produce racial power within contemporary U.S. higher education. To pursue these goals, I focused on topics of racism, socialization through the white habitus, and civility utilizing critical-qualitative methodologies. I interviewed fourteen participants of various racial backgrounds a total of

twenty-eight times to understand how they identified and negotiated the institutional norms of higher education. Specially, I utilized in-depth interviewing methods (Johnson & Rowland, 2012) with narrative analysis (Polkinghorne, 1995; Reissman, 2008) and counterstory techniques (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) to present stories concerning racism, socialization through the white habitus, and hegemonic civility within institutions of higher education from the perspectives of students of color. The conclusions that I have drawn from my investigation are summarized below.

### **Racism in Higher Education**

The first research question queried how students of color experienced racism within higher education. I addressed this research question through my analysis in Chapter Three. I sought to contribute to previous literature concerning racism by examining the barriers that students of color negotiate while enrolled in higher education. My goal was to confirm and extend research that shows that higher education maintains a cultural climate that is indifferent at best and overtly hostile at worst to students of color (Cobham & Parker, 2007; Harper & Hurtado, 2007). To achieve this aim, I analyzed participants' responses and initially generated six themes concerning racism: stereotyping, invisibility, hostile environment, tokenism, segregation, and exoticization. After my initial coding, I then compared the themes to literature concerning racism in higher education and crafted three themes regarding the ways that racism is communicated in higher education: Stereotyping and stereotype threat, invisibility as a racial microaggression, and overt racism and the creation of a hostile environment.

Stereotypes and stereotype threats remain a significant challenge to the ability of students of color to successfully navigate higher education. Intercultural communication scholars Samovar and Porter (1988) define stereotypes as “the perceptions or beliefs we hold about

groups or individuals based on previously formed opinions and attitudes” (p. 280, as cited in Kanaraha, 2006). Stereotypes, whether positive or negative, function as a set of cultural expectations about racial, gender, sexual, and/or other identity markers. Stereotypes produce a phenomenon known as stereotype threat due to their pervasiveness. Davies, Spencer, and Steel (2005) define stereotype threat as those instances when “negative stereotypes targeting a social identity provide a framework for interpreting behavior in a given domain, the risk of being judged by, or treated in terms of, those negative stereotypes can evoke a disruptive state among stigmatized individuals” (p. 277).

Participants’ narratives and responses showed that stereotypes and stereotype threats are still a major problem in institutions of higher education. They stated that they used their psychological and emotional resources to challenge cultural stereotypes about them. Many participants described stereotypes that they dealt with on a daily basis. These stereotypes threaten their ability to maintain a positive self-concept and/or feel as if they could succeed in higher education. Even when other institutional members are not explicitly using stereotypes, participants often felt that they had to communicatively perform in ways that defied cultural misperceptions about their racial group. In other words, many students of color are always using their psychological and emotional resources to negotiate a system of institutionalized racism. Overall, stereotypes and stereotype threat are an omnipresent danger to many students of color within higher education.

The next major theme that emerged from my analysis concerned how racial microaggressions of invisibility within higher education serve to impose a culture of silence and isolation that students of color try to negotiate. Racial microaggressions refer to a “stunning small encounter with racism, usually unnoticed by members of the majority race” (Delgado &

Stefancic, 2001, p. 151). Franklin (2004) writes that chronic feelings of invisibility (i.e., “invisibility syndrome”) can limit “the effective utilization of personal resources, the achievement of individual goals, the establishment of positive relationships, the satisfaction of family interactions, and the potential for life satisfaction” (p. 11).

My analysis revealed that many of the participants felt invisible in higher education due to the ways that dominant members within higher education made them feel under-appreciated at their campus-based jobs or in their academic performances. Furthermore, institutional gatekeepers, such as student newspapers, perpetuate an institutional culture of invisibility because they often did not give adequate attention to the issues and problems that students of color face. Although participants stated that there were some programs that helped them navigate this barrier (e.g., race-based student groups), many participants still narrated feelings of isolation and disconnect within higher education. Participants’ responses showed how living within a culture where microaggressions of invisibility are routine can produce a cumulative negative effect on their efficacy and self-concept. Thus, on both an interpersonal and institutional level, invisibility as a microaggression constitutes a major barrier to the success of students of color.

The final theme that emerged through participants’ responses concerned overt racism and the creation of a hostile atmosphere. Although many scholars argue that individuals, and particularly White individuals, talk about instances of overt racism or overtly racist groups as a rhetorical strategy to elide their own culpability in racism (see Warren, 2003), I argued that overt racism remains a significant barrier to the success of students of color. Participants identified acts of overt racism, such as explicit and confrontational stereotyping, threats of physical violence, actual physical violence, racial/ethnic slurs, and appropriating cultural norms or language. Many participants stated that they felt that being the target of overt racism made them

more likely to feel disconnected with their peers and teachers. Furthermore, some participants stated that they were more likely to remain silent in the face of racism after being targeted by overt racism. In other words, the threat of overt racism serves to enforce a culture of silence on students of color and limits their ability to express their cultural knowledges. Overall, overt racism reinforces the racist idea that students of color do not belong in higher education.

Overall, my findings in regard to the research question, concerning how students of color experience racism in higher education, were consistent with extant literature concerning this topic (e.g., Griffin & Cummins, 2012; Ng, Lee, & Pak, 2007; Vasquez, 1982). Through this analysis, I showed that students of color face problems that are both unique to their specific racial identity while also being general in their scope and pervasiveness. As my analysis revealed, students of color are able to successfully navigate the racism in higher education while they pursue their degrees by drawing upon their families, friends, and sources of meaning to protect their sense of self. However, this success prompted me to ask questions concerning the role of socialization and the white habitus within higher education.

### **Mapping Socialization: Identifying the White Habitus in Higher Education**

I addressed the second research question in Chapter Four. This research question asked how students of color describe the cultural practices of higher education as they relate to the white habitus. Bonilla-Silva (2006) defines the white habitus as “a racialized, uninterrupted socialization process that conditions and creates whites’ racial taste, perceptions, feelings, and emotions and their views on racial matters” (p. 104; see Chapter Two). I was interested in understanding the white habitus from the perspectives of students of color for two reasons. First, I believed that participants’ identification and description of the white habitus would offer insights into the contours of its cultural terrain because they draw upon their experiences of

racialized oppression (see Leonardo, 2007). Second, Rowe and Malhotra (2006) suggest that scholars should be attentive to how the white habitus constitutes a set of socializing mechanisms or “checkpoints” (p. 168) that (re)produce whiteness ideologies by differentiation among those who (dis)conform to its normalcy. As such, I analyzed participants’ responses to identify the communicative practices that were viewed as components of the ideal White racial identity. My analysis of participants’ responses revealed four components of the white habitus: English language use, vernacular and linguistics, affective components of language use, and attire.

Participants that were bilingual stated that they were discouraged, both overtly and covertly, from speaking languages other than English. Bilingual participants felt that their non-English language use was tied to their racial identity, so when it was deemed non-normative by institutional members (e.g., through stares or insults), they felt their racial identity (in addition to their linguistic identity) was attacked. They recounted times when people treated them as if they were weird or odd for speaking in a non-English language around monolingual English language users. Furthermore, there were little or no resources for them to access if they wished to speak with others in a language other than English. Bilingual participants complained that to be deemed normal or neutral within higher education, they were expected to speak only English regardless of context. The instances when they can speak either English or another language in the presence of their peers are the “checkpoints” (Rowe & Malhotra, 2006, p. 168) of whiteness. That is, they function to sort students of color by delineating who (dis)conforms to the white habitus.

Participants also stated that they had to adhere to the vernacular and linguistic codes that were privileged by institutions of higher education. They were expected to speak and write in standard (White) English; that is, they should speak with no accent or no culturally specific



vernaculars (e.g., Ebonics). Some participants recounted how they practiced their language use to eliminate their accent or be able to switch between high/low accents. Other participants complained that institutional members sometimes corrected their grammar in public spaces (e.g., the classroom) while they tried to speak. Overall, the participants' narratives point to how institutions of higher education demand a certain type of English language use to be viewed as intelligent or intelligible.

The affective components of language use highlighted how so-called excessive displays of emotion were regarded as improper within institutions of higher education. Often these cultural norms were used to silence emotions such as anger or frustration; however, even displays of affection were deemed unsuitable. This component of the white habitus was particularly troubling because often conversations about race and racism in classrooms can invoke strong emotional responses in all students, but particularly for students of color. As such, this component has the unfortunate tendency to teach students of color that they do not have a right to be angry in the face of their own oppression.

The final component of the white habitus that participants described concerned attire. Many participants juxtaposed wearing "ghetto" clothing or styles (e.g., baggy jeans or sagging) with the "decent" clothing (e.g., polo shirts) that was privileged by institutions of higher education. Even when students were able to wear clothing that they felt reflected their own cultural backgrounds, they felt that they were often viewed as being in "costume" by other institutional members. As participants' responses showed, attire was often the way that institutional members identified the cultural expressions of students of color as "abnormal" or "deviant" (e.g., a thug) and thus in need of discipline (e.g., expulsion).

Overall, participants' responses point to the ways that the white habitus functions as a

communicative culture that privileges certain ways of talking, acting, and dressing that draw upon and (re)produce whiteness ideologies by constructing non-institutionally sanctioned forms of expression as abnormal or deviant (see Warren, 2003). Participants' responses point to the hoops that they must jump through to be viewed as a part of the institutional culture. In the next section, I examine how participants narrated how they attempted to navigate the white habitus and how, through those communicative performances, they take up, defer, resist, adapt, mix, subvert and/or assimilate to the white habitus.

### **Navigating the Socializing Influence of the White Habitus in Higher Education**

The third research question was also addressed in Chapter Four. This research question queried how students of color take up, defer, resist, adapt, mix, subvert and/or assimilate to the white habitus of higher education during their socialization process. I utilized Co-Cultural Theory (Orbe, 1997; 1998; Orbe & Roberts, 2012) to conceptually delineate participants' communicative performances into three types: assimilation, accommodation, and separation. After my initial analysis, I then went back to scholarly literature to better understand the socializing elements within co-cultural communicative acts. Specifically, I drew upon Tappan's (2006) notion of appropriated domination/oppression to examine the "cultural tools" (p. 2129) that institutions of higher education codify and make available to institutional members.

Participants that engaged in assimilationist co-cultural strategies often felt that adhering to dominant cultural norms in higher education (i.e., the white habitus) gave them more opportunities to succeed (Orbe & Roberts, 2012). Furthermore, they felt that it was their job to show their non-White friends, family, and peers how to engage in assimilationist communicative strategies. They often narrated that they should "fix" others that they perceived deficit to the racialized ideal of whiteness. From Tappan's (2006) framework, I offered that the ways that

students of color assimilate to the white habitus is not a form of internalized domination or false consciousness. Rather, it constituted a form of cultural appropriation whereby students of color take up the cultural tools that are made available to them through the functioning of the white habitus. This view encouraged an understanding of the white habitus that is attentive to how socialization occurs through the codified and commodified cultural tools that constitute the idealized notion of White racial identity within higher education. By doing so, this study connected how students of color communicatively negotiate the checkpoints of whiteness that encourage them to engage in a form of racialized self-discipline.

The second concept that I utilized to understand participants' communicative strategies was the notion of accommodation (Orbe & Roberts, 2012). Participants that engaged in accommodationist strategies often stated that they adhered to the norms of the white habitus at specific times or for specific reasons, but did not believe White racial norms were superior to their own. Participants often engaged in accommodationist behaviors to either challenge stereotypes about their racial group or to protect their own identity in a hostile situation. Participants that engaged in accommodationist types of communication often characterized it as "adjusting," "giving the perception [of talking White]," "navigating a space," or playing an "intellectual game." I found that many students engaged in behaviors that adhered (or seemed to adhere) to the white habitus to resist or subvert racism in higher education. Drawing upon Tappan's (2006) framework, I argued that engaging in these accommodationist communication can serve to (re)produce the normalcy of the white habitus. Said differently, even when accommodationist communication is used to resist or challenge the components of the white habitus, they also have the effect of drawing upon (and therefore reproducing) the norms that are privileged within the white habitus.

Participants also narrated how they engage in separationist communicative strategies within institutions of higher education (Orbe & Roberts, 2012). They identified the ways that they attempted to create psychological or physical distance between themselves and dominant group members. Many participants recognized that they ran the risk of violating the norms of the white habitus when they engaged in separationist strategies. This fear was particularly true when they felt they violated the affective components of language use dimension of the white habitus. Specifically, they knew that they ran the risk of being viewed as angry, violent, or uncaring when they tried to separate from dominant group members. However, many participants stated that separationist strategies were the only way for them to maintain their emotional and psychological health while holding onto their sense of self-worth within an institution dominated by the white habitus. Some participants narrated times when they would walk away from conversations that they felt were hostile or unproductive. Others would explicitly challenge the racial assumptions or attacks that were made by other institutional members. Although participants utilized separationist strategies to resist the white habitus, they recounted times when institutional members utilized the logics of the white habitus to re-appropriate and undermine the resistant elements of separationist communication by constraining the communication choices of students of color (i.e., how and when to interact with dominant members). Thus, even when using strategies that explicitly call the white habitus into question, those communicative performances are often met and overcome with the institutionalized power of the white habitus.

Overall, the findings in regard to this research question suggest that the white habitus within higher education is a system of communicative rules that codifies whiteness ideologies into normative frameworks for attitudes, behaviors, and thoughts. These rules can be viewed as cultural tools that students of color take up, defer, resist, adapt, mix, subvert and/or assimilate to

in their navigation of the white habitus. Some students of color may view those tools as superior to those of their own racial group, others may pick up or discard tools as the context requires, and others may reject those tools. Each communicative strategy affects their level of access to cultural, economic, and social capital within higher education. The socializing elements of the white habitus are inherent in each type of communicative strategy due to the way that the white habitus enforces adherence to its codes. This insight suggests that as long as the communicative performances of institutional members remain within the bounds of the institutional culture of the white habitus, there is little hope that its institutional hegemony (or the hegemony of whiteness) will be significantly changed. In the next section, I focus on one part of the white habitus by utilizing the conceptual lens of civility.

### **Communicating (In)Civility in Higher Education**

The fourth research question was addressed through my analysis in Chapter Five. This research question asked how students of color experience, understand, and account for civility in their process of becoming socialized through the white habitus. I defined hegemonic civility as the behaviors that institutional members engaged in that silenced or avoided conversations about race or racism in higher education. Hegemonic civility, in this sense, refers to “normalized or naturalized behavior—appropriate behavior—even as the action can be incivil or even silencing to uphold the hegemonic order” (Patton, 2004, p. 65). I coded participants’ responses convening hegemonic civility into two primary themes: (1) “Covering Ground” as an Appeal to Hegemonic Civility and (2) “Common Courtesy” as an Appeal to Hegemonic Civility. I argued that these two themes show how institutional members appeal to silence about race and racism by privileging institutional concerns. I then attempted to expand upon a critical understanding of civility by finding ways that participants used civility “as a barrier and a veil that the dominant

[culture] find[s] difficult or impossible to penetrate” (Scott, 1990, p. 32). In other words, I sought to identify ways that participants subverted hegemonic civility through their communicative performances within higher education.

### **Appeals to hegemonic civility.**

In the theme, “‘Covering Ground’ as an Appeal to Hegemonic Civility,” participants described cases when a White peer would say or do something that the participant felt was racially charged or motivated. However, when the participant tried to voice disagreement with the White peer, the instructor intervened and appealed to a need to cover course content to shut down the conversation. Instructors’ use of covering ground as an appeal to hegemonic civility functioned to privilege institutional concerns (i.e., covering ground) as the legitimate or important issue in an effort to downplay or erase discussions about race or racism. Participants felt that their desire to talk about race and racism in the classroom were all-too-often squelched because they were viewed as a threat to an enforced non-confrontational atmosphere (i.e., hegemonic civility). In this regard, participants felt instructors’ habit of privileging covering ground functioned to “maintain relations of dominance by shifting the focus on structural inequities to matters of social interaction” (Mayo, 2004, p. 35). In other words, participant thought that by introducing a new topic of conversation into the discussion (e.g., the need to cover course content), instructors were able to elide their culpability in racism by maintaining hegemonic civility in higher education

The second theme, “Common Courtesy” as an Appeal to Hegemonic Civility,” concerned how participants regarded their expectations for civility as common courtesy and engaged in racialized understandings of the perceived deviance from those norms by their peers of color. Common courtesy, as an appeal to hegemonic civility, functioned as a collection of norms and

rules that individuals used in their everyday communication that served to reify how a civil or polite person should communicate. Common courtesy serves as a mental framework that allows institutional members to forego conversations about race or racism by relying on the surety of institutional norms (Garza, 2000). In other words, institutional members who appeal to hegemonic civility view certain actions as normal or appropriate (i.e., common courtesy), and rely upon that framework to evaluate other institutional members' actions or bodies as either adhering to or deviating from those norms. Overall, individuals' use of common courtesy both draws upon and (re)produces racial power by squelching dialogue under the guise of institutional harmony and efficiency.

My analysis of participants' responses revealed that hegemonic civility functions as a mental framework for evaluating the actions of institutional members against the racist expectations of the white habitus. The white habitus provides the cultural tools for individuals' behaviors while hegemonic civility provides the mental framework that allows individuals to evaluate each other "with a surety of their assumptions" (Garza, 2000, p. 61). In other words, hegemonic civility imposes an institutional climate of silence and non-confrontation about issues of race and racism. Hegemonic civility undermines the possibility to dialogue across and through our differences because it conflates silence concerning topics of race and racist speech with a civil or desirable culture. Demands to adhere to norms of hegemonic civility function as an evaluatory system that (while seemingly benign) actively polices the identities of students, and particularly students of color, into whiteness.

### **Subversion of hegemonic civility.**

Participants described ways that they were able to subvert the norms of hegemonic civility within higher education. Subversive communicative performances were those behaviors

that participants utilized that engaged in the communicative expectations of hegemonic civility (e.g., silence), but were rearticulated toward self-preservation against the system. Drawing upon the work of de Certeau (1986), we can view participants' subversive communicative performances as tactics that are marshalled in the face of the strategies of hegemonic civility. Participants sought to draw upon the imposed rules of the institution to make meaning within its confines (e.g., participate in class discussion), and find ways of making meaning outside of its conventions by rearticulating those rules for their own ends (e.g., protect their sense of self).

I examined participants' responses to map out three ways that students of color subvert hegemonic civility in higher education: purposive silence, niceness, and absurdity. Purposive silence referred to the ways that students of color utilized the expectation that they should be silent about matters of race or racism, and instead utilized that space to monitor dominant members in the classroom. Participants described niceness as the times when they explicitly challenged a racist comment that was made, but purposively utilized a tone to make the dominant member who uttered the racist statement think that the student of color was not being serious or threatening. Absurdity denoted times when participants described over-participating in behaviors prescribed by a dominant member as a way to resist the imposed culture. In each case, we can understand how the participants' responses function as rhetorical challenges to the norms of hegemonic civility in ways that are hidden in plain sight from dominant members.

Simultaneously, their subversive communicative performances can point researchers to the need to create alternative practices to constitute new types of interacting with each other in higher education. In the next section, I attempt to point to some ways that we might imagine and/or pursue these new territories through Black Feminist Thought (Collins, 2000) and Critical Communication Pedagogy (Fassett & Warren, 2007).



### **Interpretation of Major Findings**

In Chapter Two, I focused on three major areas of investigation that I identified within my research gaps and problems. These dealt with how to operationalize communication that (re)produces whiteness, how socialization troubles our notions of academic success within higher education, and the conceptual dimensions of civility. To address these areas, I formulated a final research question that asked how students of color communicatively navigate racism within higher education in order to offer insights into the relationship among racism, socialization through the white habitus, and civility. In this section, I first address each of these areas separately to show the specific insights gained through this dissertation project. I then draw upon Black Feminist Thought (BFT; Collins, 2000) and Critical Communication Pedagogy (Fassett & Warren, 2007; Freire, 2000) to connect these insights to theories that are sensitive to (racialized) power. Specially, I utilize Collins' (2000) notion of "domains of power" (p. 276) to examine the communicative performances of student of color, institutional culture of the white habitus, and the ideological dimensions of whiteness within higher education. I then turn to Fassett and Warren (2007) to offer that their understanding of dialogue can help students and instructors see how dialogic relationships can be a site for imagining alternatives to the evaluatory frame of hegemonic civility, the socializing force of the white habitus, and the (re)production of whiteness.

#### **Analysis of Communicating through Whiteness**

The first area pertains to long-standing debate on how best to conceptualize and study whiteness. I drew upon the work of Rowe and Malhotra (2006; see also Ringrose, 2007) to assert that mainstream critical whiteness literature conflates whiteness, white bodies, and white identity and, as such, overlooks the ideological dimensions of whiteness that constitute, yet transcends,

racial categories. Despite excellent conceptual frameworks that trouble this conflation (see Warren, 2003 for example) the vast majority of critical whiteness studies utilize white bodies as a way to evaluate how a communicative act functions to (re)produce whiteness (e.g., Nakayama & Krizek, 1997; Endres & Gould, 2012).

Leonardo's (2007) call to understand whiteness through a theory of oppression that is sensitive to "racial consequences and the upkeep of race relations" (p. 54), without relying on essentialized racial identities, provided a conceptual beginning point. I interviewed students of color to better understand how whiteness functions in everyday interactions without being able to rely on racial identities as analytical tools. Honestly, I still struggled with understanding the (re)production of whiteness without relying upon essentialism. This tension arose from the challenge of holding participants responsible for their communicative performances that (re)produced whiteness while also not relativizing the power they exercise with that of their White counterparts. I felt this tension particularly keenly because, as a White male, I know how seductive it can be to believe that "everyone is racist so I'm not really responsible." Furthermore, I did not want to give the impression that students of color are cultural "dupes" or "sell-outs" that were either too "stupid" or "greedy" to understand their own oppression.

I found the notion of the white habitus (Bonilla-Silva, 2006), melded with Tappan's (2006) idea of cultural tools, to be particularly helpful in resolving this impasse. Institutions of higher education codify whiteness into their rules, norms, and practices that constitute a cycle of business-as-usual. We can conceptualize the culture that is constituted through this system as a white habitus. Drawing from my findings, I believe we can expand the conceptual boundaries of the term white habitus to define it as both a process and product in the (re)production of whiteness:

- 1) The white habitus is the racialized, uninterrupted socialization process that conditions and creates individuals' racial taste, perceptions, feelings, and emotions and their views on racial matters (Bonilla-Silva, 2006, p. 104, original definition).
- 2) The white habitus is comprised of the institutional rules and norms that socialize institutional members into the notion that White identity is the ideal racial identity marker (i.e., whiteness) (proposed definition).

This two-part definition moves us away from essentializing racial politics (i.e., all individuals are conditioned by and perpetuate the white habitus) while focusing our attention on the ideological configuration (i.e., whiteness) that privileges white identity as the racial ideal within a specific context and through specific rules in an institution (see Rowe & Malhotra, 2006). The codification of whiteness into an institutional culture brings us to Tappan's (2006) framework. These codes are the cultural tools that institutional members take up, defer, resist, adapt, mix, subvert, and/or accommodate to be intelligible within institutions of higher education. These cultural tools include (but are not limited to) English language use, vernacular and linguistics, affective components of language use, and attire. Let me offer an extended example to highlight the insights gained about whiteness.

Let us say a monolingual English-language student enrolls in higher education and finds that everything that she needs to know is written or spoken in her language. We could say her communicative patterns (e.g., English language use) are a hammer (i.e., a cultural tool) and that the situations that she faces (e.g., passing a class in the U.S.) are nails. The situation appears normal or natural to the student because she has always used English within institutions of higher education. Now let us view it from the perspective of a non-English language user. We could say that her communicative patterns (e.g., Spanish language use) are a screwdriver and that the

situations she faces are nails. The situation is now in flux because the tool she owns is not intended for the job that the institution demands of her. The institution and the student now find themselves in a cultural contest. Members of the institution encourage that the student assimilate through punishments and rewards (both immediate and long-term) to the white habitus to maintain efficiency in its day-to-day functioning. Said differently, they attempt to socialize the student to believe that the hammer is so much “better” than the screwdriver.

Institutional members (e.g., students, teachers, and administrators) could change the institutional practices to include both English and Spanish, but they do not because the logics of the white habitus provide a comfortable mental framework that they can use to find the Spanish speaking student deviant from the normalized cycle of business-as-usual. Thus, they are able to (re)produce racial power because as long as they adhere to the white habitus, they are able to categorize others with a “surety of their assumptions” (Garza, 2000, p. 61) and thus (re)center their own performances as neutral, natural, and normal. Therefore, the student has to choose a course of action in relation to the institutional white habitus. She can stop using Spanish and only use English (i.e., assimilation). She may even come to believe that English is a superior cultural tool and that everyone should use it as well. She could learn to use English and Spanish and speak one language or another depending on the context (i.e., accommodation). She may feel that by doing so she defeats negative stereotypes about her identity while preserving her sense of self. Furthermore, she may believe that English and Spanish are two different tools that have their own unique value. Finally, she may believe that Spanish is better than English and that the institution should change to meet her needs (i.e., separation). If her needs are not met, then she either has to move to an accommodationist stance or leave the system (e.g., drop-out). Institutional members, all the while, continue to operate under the assumption that English language use is the

natural or normal choice and that it is the student that is deficit and in need of change.

Whatever choice the student makes, the white habitus remains largely unchallenged in its hegemony. Assimilating to the white habitus obviously serves to confirm the normalcy of its culture tools (e.g., English language use). Accommodating has the benefit of protecting the student's sense of self (e.g., helps her retain her cultural tool), but also serves to confirm the normalcy of the white habitus by adhering to its strictures within the institution. Finally, if she tries to separate from the culture, then the institution will deem her as unfit to be a "good" student. In other words, the logics of the white habitus put the blame back on her rather than understanding her struggles as a critique of the system. Overall, her communicative choices can take up, defer, resist, adapt, mix, subvert, and/or accommodate the cultural tools that constitute the white habitus. However, no matter what she chooses to do (i.e., assimilate, accommodate, or separate) the white habitus is (re)produced through her communicative performances. And, because the white habitus codifies whiteness within institutions of higher education, her communicative performances continue the "upkeep of race relations" (Leonardo, 2009, p. 54) within society.

Of course, we cannot overlook how the monolingual English speaker perpetuates this system. As a member of the cultural center, her communicative performances serve two important functions. First, every time she uses English within higher education, she is exercising privilege. Each word out of her mouth is deemed intelligible by other institutional members and she is rewarded accordingly (e.g., making good grades). Second, by never questioning the normalcy of her language use (and taking steps to de-center it), she confirms its legitimacy as the hegemonic norm within institutions of higher education. In short, because she (and other institutional members) do not de-center the normalcy of their own cultural values, it serves to

(re)produce the white habitus and thus whiteness ideologies. Her choices create and sustain a culture that demands that the Spanish-speaking student navigate the racist culture of the white habitus by confirming the legitimacy of one set of cultural tools over another.

Drawing from this example, we can see how focusing on the cultural tools that are used by institutional members provides insights into the way that power and privilege are marshaled without having to rely upon essentialized racial identities. This type of analysis begs scholars to look at not only what cultural norms are privileged within an institution, but also what sticks and carrots are used to elicit cultural conformity. The primary benefit of this view of whiteness is operational clarity. Instead of focusing on how individuals' communicative performances serve to (re)produce whiteness, we can instead see their performances as the invocation of cultural tools that are rewarded (or not) by institutions. As such, the racial identity of the individual is important insofar as it can help researchers contextualize their findings with regard to the racial history of the person who is acting/speaking, but it is not used as the primary analytical tool used to code the consequences of individuals actions concerning race or racism. Rather, researchers' focus would be on the way that some institutional rules become normalized and how those normative frames shape and constrain individuals' everyday communicative practices. Such a view encourages researchers to interrogate the ways that individuals' communicative choices (regardless of racial identity) can function to uphold the white habitus and connect that institutional hegemony to whiteness ideologies through their analysis.

### **Socialization and Success(?) within Higher Education**

The second area focused on how researchers may overlook the ways that (by only focusing on racism as a barrier to the success of students of color) academic success within higher education socializes students of color into the logics of whiteness. I offered that

institutions of higher education often privilege diversity logics that teach cultural tolerance (see Kanpol, 1999). Because there are very few alternatives to the institutional culture of the white habitus, I argued that we should trouble the cultural logics that may potentially conflate cultural conformity and academic success. I used the conceptual tool of the white habitus to understand how institutional norms provide a constitutive element within the identities of students of color and how they, through their communicative performances, take up, defer, resist, adapt, mix, and subvert those norms.

Participants within the study claimed that higher education was dominated by whiteness through the codified norms of the white habitus. Furthermore, they stated that there was a lack of spaces that students of color can go to interact with people outside of the strictures of the white habitus. Moreover, they argued that there seemed to be little effort on the part of university officials to recognize and combat the problems that uniquely affected students of color. SK for example, stated that he had to “talk White” as a way to navigate the white habitus:

Talking White means, for me, talking White is making sure there’s a complete sentence, making sure the sentence is very clear, making sure you’re assertive but not aggressive. And, making sure you have this persona to go with this language you know and how you talk to certain people, especially when it comes to like deans and secretaries. And, for me, it’s just the body, the clothes, the appearance is important, it’s a big factor. Making sure you know what you want to say, don’t stumble.

If students did not properly adhere to the norms of the white habitus, then they faced social discipline. The repercussions of non-compliance include punishments such as ostracism, stereotyping, racial epithets, and/or violence. On the other hand, some participants recounted the ways that they have benefited from adhering to the norms of the white habitus. Lucy, for

example, is a successful English major and writing center worker. She felt that these aspects of her life would help her get “more than just a job,” and differentiate her from other students of color that were too “lazy” to adhere to the white habitus. In short, the punishments and rewards that institutions of higher education use to elicit cultural conformity highlight the ways that academic success is tightly interwoven into the logics of the dominant culture. The realization that success within a system dominated by the white habitus (re)produces whiteness gives us the impetus to attempt to imagine alternative counter-knowledges.

### **The Conceptual Dimensions of Civility**

The final area that I examined in my dissertation was the way that civility has been conceptualized within critical scholarship to date. I argued that critical scholars have defined civility almost exclusively as a hegemonic norm that (re)produces whiteness. I believed that the term “civility” could be nuanced to account for the ways that it can be used to take up, defer, resist, adapt, mix, subvert, and/or accommodate the white habitus. As such, I attempted to understand the multiple ways that civility is used by individuals to navigate the white habitus within higher education. Through my analysis, I examined ways that hegemonic civility is used to perpetuate the racist norms of the white habitus. I also found that participants’ described ways that they subverted hegemonic civility through their communicative performances in higher education. These findings show that civility can be used to exacerbate hegemonic norms, it can also be used “as a barrier and a veil that the dominant find difficult or impossible to penetrate” (Scott, 1990, p. 32). Drawing upon this finding, I offer that it is vitally important that scholars begin to articulate a more nuanced conceptualization of civility in their critical scholarship.

I am concerned when critical scholars label civility only as a hegemonic practice because such a conceptualization puts critical thinking as always already uncivil. I do not think it is



politically wise to state that to be critical one has to be rude. I recognize that, as Brown (2005) points out, when individuals exercise their critical voice, then those in power will often label them as troublemakers, rude, uncivil, violent, and/or angry. However, I offer that conceptualizing civility as always a hegemonic practice implicitly marginalizes the voices of people of color. In other words, it gives the impression that the cultural practices that people of color engage in are always uncivil because they inhabit the margins of society. From my interview with participants, I do not think that many people of color think of their cultural practices as inherently rude. Rather, people of color have ways of understanding civility that is both shaped by and resistant to the dominant codes of hegemonic civility. For example, Jeff described being civil as making sure he did not “do anything that would embarrass my mother.” Do we say that Jeff’s understanding of civility is a hegemonic norm that exacerbates racism or sexism? I think his notion of civility points to a very precious thing: the desire to maintain a loving relationship with his mother. As such, critical scholars should be wary of offering blanket statements about social practices because each communicative performance holds the potential for multiple (and sometimes contradictory) effects.

Overall, I believe that conceptualizing civility as always already hegemonic is politically and pragmatically unwise. I hardly think that “Be Rude!” is going to be a rallying cry that galvanizes students and teachers to engage in anti-racist research or pedagogy. Instead, I think many will be turned off by the mantra and to what seems to be endless infighting across different understandings of critical activism. Thus, complicating our notion of the functions of civility can help us interrogate oppressive logics of hegemonic civility while still maintaining the hope that we can communicate through inclusive civilities to realize a more socially-just society. Not only does clearly delineating how civility functions help critically-minded scholars develop a more

precise conceptual language, it also begs us to understand the multiple ways that individuals communicate through and across their racial differences to build and sustain inclusive relationships. In the next section, I draw upon Black Feminist Thought and Critical Communication Pedagogy to attempt to point toward some of the ways that social-justice minded student and educators could pursue this goal.

### **Imagining a Critical Alternatives through BFT and CCP**

Through the course of this dissertation project, I have come to realize some of the ways that whiteness is (re)produced by and through the rules and norms of the white habitus in higher education. Drawing upon my findings, I have proposed that resistance and subversion from within the system (while necessary) is not sufficient to radically challenge the hegemony of the white habitus. Therefore, I draw upon Black Feminist Thought (BFT; Collins, 2000) and Critical Communication Pedagogy (CCP; Fassett & Warren, 2007) as two theoretical frameworks to imagine alternatives to the (re)production of whiteness within higher education. Although some might think that imagining alternatives to hegemonic civility, the white habitus, and whiteness constitutes the worst type of naiveté, I stand by Leonardo's (2000) assertion that "dreaming spurs people to act, if by dreaming we mean a sincere search for alternatives and not the evasion of reality" (p. 22). It is with his admonishment in mind that I use these theoretical traditions to articulate an interpersonal ethic of inclusive civility as an alternative to the (re)production of hegemonic civility within higher education.

### **Black Feminist Thought**

Black Feminist Thought (BFT) is a theoretical perspective that is developed through the standpoints of Black women to claim agency and empowerment within a society that is dominated by whiteness (Collins, 2000). Although the framework is developed by Black women,

Collins argues that its “significance is much greater” (p. 276) because it is sensitive to the ways that all people of color craft counter-knowledges in a white supremacist society. As such, it provides a suitable framework to begin forming the findings of this dissertation into a theoretically informed critique of institutions of higher education.

Collins’ articulation of the “domains of power” (276) provides a suitable conceptual foundation to explore the relationship among racism, socialization through the white habitus, and hegemonic civility as an interlocking system. She states:

The structural domain organizes oppression, whereas the disciplinary domain manages it.

The hegemonic domain justifies oppression, and the interpersonal domain influences everyday lived experience and the individual consciousness that ensues. (p. 276)

These domains of power function as a shifting collection of forces that characterize the relationship among ideological, institutional, and individual practices. Racism, as a cultural system predicated upon whiteness, constitutes the structural domain and organizes oppression by perpetuating the notion that all racial identities are compared to the normative ideal (i.e., White identity). The white habitus serves as both disciplinary and hegemonic domains of power. As disciplinary, the white habitus codifies whiteness into social practices within institutions of higher education. The white habitus “manages power relations . . . not through social policies that are explicitly racist or sexist, but through the ways in which organizations are run” (p. 280).

When students of color do not communicatively perform in ways that adhere to the white habitus, then they are often the targets of social discipline (e.g., stereotypes, microaggressions, and/or overt racism). As hegemonic, the institutions of higher education reward institutional members (e.g., good grades, jobs, or promises of future employment) when they engage in communicative performances that adhere to the white habitus. Thus, as both disciplinary and

hegemonic, the white habitus is best understood as a cycle of business-as-usual within higher education that serves to differentiate between those that adhere to the strictures of the white habitus (i.e., good students) and those that do not (i.e., bad students) and punish/reward those individuals accordingly. Hegemonic civility functions as the interpersonal domain within the white habitus. Institutional members believe they are being “nice” or “polite” when they engage in behaviors that uphold the white habitus. The ways that individuals engage in hegemonic civility are “systematic, recurrent, and so familiar that they often go unnoticed” (p. 287). Hegemonic civility is one way to view how individuals value one another’s racial identity through their mundane communicative practices. Overall, Collins’ framework allows us to see that each of these domains does not constitute a self-contained event; rather, each affects and is affected by one another to create a vast “matrix of domination” (p. 274).

Collins (2000) asserts that dismantling the matrix of domination requires a theory of power and agency that is sensitive to both interpersonal and group consciousness. She asserts:

Group-based consciousness emerges through developing oppositional knowledges... [and] individuals’ self-definitions and behaviors shift in tandem with a changed consciousness concerning everyday lived experiences. Black feminist thought encompasses both meanings of consciousness—neither is sufficient without the other. (p. 275)

In other words, agency is marshaled toward liberatory ends when critically-minded individuals foster coalitional solidarity toward change, and challenge hegemonic spaces (i.e., the white habitus) to provide ways for individuals to foster safety<sup>25</sup> and institutional transformation.

Collins (2000) asks us to not only find ways to affirm each other’s cultural differences but also

---

<sup>25</sup> Safe spaces are rarely “safe” in the sense that they are completely outside of hegemonic control. However, I do believe that spaces can be made that are, at the very least, safer than or resistant to the white habitus.

politicize those differences in ways that challenge the seeming normalcy of the white habitus and the (re)production of whiteness. One way to meet her call for group and interpersonal solidarity is to foster a form of inclusive civility predicated upon critical dialogue within a CCP framework (Fassett & Warren, 2007).

### **Critical Communication Pedagogy**

Critical communication pedagogy is a theoretical perspective that draws upon critical pedagogy (Freire, 2000) and post-structuralist philosophy (e.g., Butler, 1990) to interrogate how power is marshaled through and within communication. Fassett and Warren (2007) argue that dialogue is an important tool for critically-minded individuals to engage in as both an act of resisting power and a way to forge authentic and meaningful relationships. They claim that dialogue is “a process of sensitive and thorough inquiry, inquiry we undertake together to (de)construct ideologies, identities, and cultures” (p. 55). In other words, critical dialogue is an ongoing process of exploration and (self-) renewal through transforming the taken-for-granted norms and rules that constitute socializing mechanisms of institutional cultures (e.g., the components of the white habitus).

Fassett and Warren’s understanding of dialogue challenges members of higher education to realize its power as a tool to build relationships, and its ability to help them see and (hopefully) remedy the ways that racism manifests in higher education. On the interpersonal level, critical dialogue entails not only recognizing the way that whiteness creates and sustains system of exclusion, alienation, and harm to communities of color, but also supporting the right of people of color to express that hurt in ways that do not adhere to the white habitus. As Warren (2011) asserts, critical dialogue encourages members within higher education “to see the self and other as complex beings, each striving for meaning and purpose, is to engage them with a kind of

care that embraces the ethics of a critically compassionate communication pedagogy” (p. 215).

In other words, it demands that we change our everyday practices to resist the way that hegemonic civility attempts to enforce silence by continuing conversations about race and racism in higher education.

As I have argued in this dissertation, despite the need for interpersonal solidarity, institutional members’ communicative performances will (re)produce the white habitus as long as its institutional normalcy is only challenged by individuals’ subversive strategies. Therefore, it is important that institutional members engage in critical dialogue as a way to develop coalitional communities that imagine and pursue an institutional culture that is counter to the white habitus. In the next section, I take Fassett and Warren’s (2007) dialogic ethic to articulate communicating through inclusive civility as a way to create a coalitional ethic that challenges the socializing force of the white habitus and the (re)production of whiteness.

### **Imagining Communicating through Inclusive Civility**

One way that we might imagine these alternatives is by working to *communicate through inclusive civility*. Hegemonic civility serves to reify “the White supremacist patriarchal hegemonic order. It is not dynamic or inclusive. It is not a conversation, but a fixed pronouncement” (Patton, 2004, p. 81). Fassett and Warren (2007) insist, in their framework for dialogue, that members of higher education “must consider the ways this one moment made possible other reflections, other actions; [they] must consider the ways this moment is metonymic of an ongoing process” (p. 125). In other words, a counter to hegemonic civility is a form of civility that encourages conversations about race and racism in higher education that are neither fixed nor permanent. With this admonishment in mind, I utilize the following section to map out some of the counters of communicating through inclusive civility as a practice that

“works to keep conversations going that [seek] to enrich a life lived meaningfully through others—persons, institutions, places of work, and long-term friendships” (Arnett & Arneson, 1999, p. 288).

The notion that institutional members should communicate through inclusive civility suggests that meaningful dialogue about race and racism among individuals should be viewed as ongoing, dynamic, and politically hopeful. In other words, it calls attention to the idea that we should not reify “civility” by thinking it is decontextual or ahistorical. As this dissertation has shown, common courtesy is not common, but instead reflects and produces culturally specific norms as desirable while others are aberrant or foolish. As such, communicating through inclusive civility should be understood as an ethic that individuals practice through their dialogic communicative behaviors, such as active listening and affirming the legitimacy of emotional expressions. Imagining and working within this communicative ethic may help get individuals with higher education off the map (see de Certeau, 1986) and into new territories that are predicated upon the knowledges of people of color. This imperative encourages individuals to communicate with one another to break the silence that results from relying upon the “surety of [our] assumptions” (Garza, 2000, p. 61) when engaging in interracial communication.

Instructors should strive to practice communicating through inclusive civility within their classroom as a way to both model that ethic for students and to reflexively create a coalitional ethic in conversations about race and racism. The goal would be to teach students that the classroom (or any other space) cannot be safe (if by safe one means that difficult topics such as racism are silenced through hegemonic civility) by encouraging students to “keep conversations going” (Arnett & Arneson, 1999, p. 288) about race and racism in college classrooms (Boler, 2004; Patton, 2004). For example, instructors could collaborate with students to articulate how

they view communicating through inclusive civility as a way to encourage dialogue across/through/about racial difference. Importantly, instructors and students would work to understand how communicating through inclusive civility creates a coalitional ethic, challenging the notion that discussions about race or racism should be stifled in the interest of maintaining consensus and stability in the classroom. Such work can help instructors and students move beyond the comfortable (yet restrictive) confines of hegemonic civility and begin recognizing and appreciating racial difference. As Leonardo (2009) poignantly reminds us:

The idea of utopia is integral to the human educational progress because it guides thought and action toward a condition that is better than current reality, which is always a projection....Critical education is no less than the search for a language of utopia. (p. 24)

Responding to his plea necessitates that scholars continue dreaming about ways to communicate through inclusive civility as a way to imagine possibilities for resistance and, hopefully, a language for emancipation.

### **Limitations of Study**

Limitations are a part of every research project, and this dissertation is no exception. The first major limitation concerns the demographics of the participants. Although I believe that one of the strengths of this dissertation project is the diversity of participants' racial identifications, some racial groups were underrepresented or not represented at all. Future research might focus on the ways that members of a specific racial group communicatively negotiate hegemonic civility, the white habitus, and whiteness. Such a view might provide a more in-depth look into how members of a particular group take up, defer, resist, adapt, mix, subvert, and/or accommodate the institutional practice. Furthermore, it may offer insights into how members of a racial group may construct their own vernacular discourse of civility (see Ono & Sloop, 1995).



Conversely, future studies may draw upon a larger pool of participants to ensure that there is the similar amount of individuals to represent each racial group.

The second major limitation involves the exclusive use of interview methodology. Although I believe I obtained rich and meaningful responses from participants, longitudinal understanding of the ways that students of color navigate racism in higher education may provide a more detailed view of the mechanisms of socialization. Future research might utilize ethnographic methods as a way to gain a more *in situ* understanding of the (re)production of whiteness within higher education.

The final major limitation is my subjectivity as a White male. My interpretations of the data may not reflect the best critical insights; instead, they may focus on topics that serve to maintain the status quo. Throughout this project, I have tried to show how my own cultural biases, based on my racial identification, have shaped this project. Additionally, I have tried to use a large amount of research from scholars of color to help de-center my (White) voice as an authority on my topics of investigation. Such efforts, I hope, have provided avenues for discussion and dialogue about the politics of representation in this project and a chance for continued dialogue.

### **Future Directions for Study**

In this section, I present several directions that critical scholars might take to extend upon the research that I have presented in this dissertation project. First, scholars might find it beneficial to push for more research that does not rely on essentialized identities to interrogate whiteness. I think that this dissertation project has provided some glimpses into the benefit of this type of scholarship; however, it can be pushed further. Perhaps one way to pursue this goal is to conduct focus groups with groups of racially diverse participants concerning the function of

hegemonic civility, the white habitus, and whiteness within higher education. Such a format would not only allow researchers to see the ways that whiteness is (re)produced by different bodies, but may also serve as a site to better theorize the potential of communicating through inclusive civilities.

Second, scholarship concerning whiteness in higher education may be enhanced by using the conceptual language of the white habitus to study institutions other than higher education. I strongly believe that higher education can be a site for community-building and meaningful interracial dialogue, and so I am committed to producing research toward this goal. However, this is not to say that there is no merit in challenging the ways that other institutions serve to (re)produce whiteness ideologies. Organizational scholars have contributed excellent studies to the literature of critical whiteness studies (e.g., Ashcroft & Allen, 2003), and I am hopeful that they will take up and extend the white habitus into their own work.

Third, future scholars could examine the areas of hegemonic civility, the white habitus, and whiteness through a more intersectional lens (Crenshaw, 1991). I hope that this dissertation has shown that focusing on one system of oppression (i.e., racism) provides specific and in-depth insights into its functioning. However, intersectional analyses may help us understand how multiple oppressions operate within a matrix of interconnected cultural pressures. Such a view may help us see the ways that other ideologies are codified into institutional practices. I hope that such work yields new conceptual terms (e.g., a patriarchal-whiteness habitus) that can serve to identify and remedy different and intersecting forms of oppression in society.

Finally, studies concerning whiteness may be enhanced by more explicit attention to neoliberal capitalism. Although I tried to write about the racial politics that play out in higher education, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge how often participants stated that their

communicative choices were shaped by their desire to obtain a degree to secure employment. I am by no means advocating that capitalism is the root cause of racism; however, understanding how racialization is tied into capitalism could provide ways to articulate liberatory counter-knowledges to both. Scholars may wish to read Leonardo's (2012) "raceclass theory" as a starting point for this type of research. His theory attempts to utilize concepts from post-Marxist and Critical Race Theory to highlight the relationship between racialization and neoliberal capitalism. Such a view may help future scholars uncover the multiple ways that capitalism and racism shape the ways that individuals take up, defer, resist, adapt, mix, subvert, and/or accommodate the institutional practices that (re)produce power relations within contemporary U.S. society.

### **Conclusion**

As I draw this dissertation to a close, I think it is necessary to point out how this research project has affected my teaching and research practices. First, this dissertation project highlighted that understanding my culpability in the (re)production of racism while engaging in anti-racist research and pedagogy is a constant (re)negotiation. This realization provides two important lessons. First, while I claim to work toward anti-racism, I will always resist labeling myself an anti-racist researcher. Labeling oneself as an anti-racist researcher has a finality to it and serves as a pronouncement that I have "got it" or figured out all the ins and outs of racism. Throughout the course of this dissertation, I have come to realize some of the ways that I continue to (re)produce hegemonic logics even as I believe I am engaging in anti-racist pedagogy. Second, I must do more to provide spaces for communicating through inclusive civility within classes that I teach. All-too-often, I find myself eliding important conversations about race and racism because I do not wish to engage in the messiness of interracial dialogue.

My actions are often predicated upon hegemonic civility and the institutional rewards I receive for perpetuating the white habitus. However, as my dissertation has shown, the imposed silence of hegemonic civility only covers up the problems of racism and alienates the cultural knowledges of students of color. As such, I must do more to make the classroom culture a site of negotiation rather than a set of fixed rules that serve my own interests.

The final take-away from my dissertation is how embedded our critical scholarship and thinking is in the very institutions that we seek to change. Pelias' (2000) autoethnographic unpacking of a "critical life" shows the tension between hope and cynicism. He writes:

You drift off thinking that no moment passes without a critical eye. No moment escapes. Your day is nothing more than a series of pleasures and displeasures, a series of stances, object lessons in attitude. You are right; you are wrong. You are gracious; you are cruel. You are a critic. You are who you are because you exist in a critical life. You have no choice. You speak from your white, middle class, male body. You speak from the academy, perpetuating its logic, its standards, perpetuating the system. You speak from your vested interests. You speak out of belief. (p. 228)

I find his essay oddly comforting. On one hand, I think it speaks to the possibility that the system will continue to be (re)produced no matter how critical we think we are being. On the other, I believe it demands that we dream of world where we are not expected to make an endless stream of compromises in the face of institutionalized racism. And, although some might believe those dreams foolish or naïve, I want to believe that those dreams can exhort us to hope for and work toward a better society.

## REFERENCES

- Abrams, P. (Producer), & Becker, W. (2002). *Van Wilder* (Motion picture). Germany: Myriad Pictures.
- AFT. (2011). Promoting racial and ethnic diversity in the faculty: What higher education unions can do. *AFT Higher Education*. Retrieved from <http://www.aft.org/pdfs/highered/facultydiversity0310.pdf>
- Alberts, H. C., Hazen, H. D., & Theobald, R. B. (2010). Classroom incivilities: The challenge of interactions between college students and instructors in the US. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education, 34*, 439-462. doi:10.1080/03098260903502679
- Alcoff, L. M. (1998). What should White people do? *Hypatia, 13*, 6-26.
- Alemán, E. (2009). Through the prism of Critical Race Theory: *Niceness* and Latina/o leadership in the politics of education. *Journal of Latinos and Education, 8*, 290-311. doi: 10.1080/15348430902973351
- Allen, B. J. (2007). Theorizing communication and race. *Communication Monographs, 74*, 259-264.
- Althusser, L. (1971). *Lenin and philosophy*. (B. Brewster, Trans). New York, NY: Monthly Review Press.
- Ancis, J. R., Sedlacek, W. E., & Mohr, J. J. (2000). Student perceptions of campus cultural climate by race. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 78*, 180-185. doi: 10.1002/j.1556-6676.2000.tb02576.x
- Angrosino, M. V. (2008). Recontextualizing observation: Ethnography, pedagogy, and the prospects for a progressive political agenda. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials* (pp. 161-183). Thousand Oaks, CA:

Sage.

- Arnett, R. C., & Arneson, P. (1999). *Dialogic civility in a cynical age: Community, hope and interpersonal relationships*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Antonieiz, C. (Producer), & Korine, H. (Director). (2012). *Spring breakers* (Motion picture). United States of America: Muse Productions.
- Auer, P., & Eastman, C. M. (2010). Code-switching. *Society and language use*, 7, 84.
- Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination: Four essays by M. M. Bakhtin* (M. Holquist, Ed.; C. Emerson & M. Holquist, Trans.). Austin, TX: University of Texas.
- Baldwin, J. (2010). The white problem. In R. Kenan (Ed.), *The cross of redemption: Uncollected writings* (pp. 72-79). New York, NY: Pantheon Books.
- Baxter, L. A. (2011). *Voicing relationships: Dialogical perspectives*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Bell, L. A. (2007). Theoretical foundations for social justice. In M. Adams, L. A. Bell, & P. Griffin (Eds.), *Teaching for diversity and social justice* (pp. 1-14). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Berman, M. (2013, December 1). GOP: Racism is over. Most Americans: Nope. *National Journal*. Retrieved from <http://www.nationaljournal.com/politics/gop-racism-is-over-most-americans-nope-20131201>
- Boice, B. (1996). Classroom incivilities. *Research in Higher Education*, 37, 453-486. doi: 10.1007/ BF01730110
- Boler, M. (2004). All speech is not free: The ethics of “Affirmative Action Pedagogy.” In M. Boler (Ed.), *Democratic dialogue in education: Troubling speech, disturbing silence* (pp. 3-14). New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Bonilla-Silva, E. (2001). *White supremacy & racism in the post-civil rights era*. Boulder, CO:

Lynne Rienner Publishers.

- Bonilla-Silva, E. (2006). *Racism without racists: Color-blind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in the United States*. Lanham, MA: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Bonilla-Silva, E., Embrich, D. G., Ketchum, P. R., & Saenz, R. (2004). Where is the love? Why Whites have limited interaction with Blacks. *The Journal of Intergroup Relations*, 31(1), 24-38.
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241-258). New York, NY: Greenwood Press.
- Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J. (2000). *Reproduction in education, society, and culture* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Boykin, K. (2013). Commentary: Don Lemon's sagging pants problem. *Black Entertainment Television*. Retrieved from <http://www.bet.com/news/national/2013/07/28/commentary-don-lemon-s-sagging-pants-problem.html>
- Brunsma, D. L., Brown, E. S., & Placier, P. (2013). Teaching race at historically White colleges and universities: Identifying and dismantling the walls of whiteness. *Critical Sociology*, 39, 717-738. doi:10.1177/0896920512446759
- Burnett, A., Mattern, J. L., Herakova, L. L., Kahl, D. H., Tobola, C., & Bornsen, S. E. (2009). Communicating/muting date rape: A co-cultural theoretical analysis of communication factors related to rape culture on a college campus. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 37, 465-485. doi: 10.1080/00909880903233150
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Carspecken, P. F. (2001). Critical ethnographies from Houston: Distinctive features and

- directions. In P. F. Carspecken, & Walford, G. (Eds.), *Critical ethnography and education* (vol. 5, pp. 1-26). Oxford, United Kingdom: JAI.
- Carter, S. L. (1998). *Civility: Manners, morals, and the etiquette of democracy* New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Cavaliere, V. (2012). Austin police investigate reports of racially motivated 'bleach bomb' attacks near University of Texas. *Daily News*. Retrieved from <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/texas-cops-probe-race-related-bleach-bombs-article-1.1176611>
- Chang, M. J. (2007). Beyond artificial integration: Reimagining cross-racial interactions among undergraduates. In S. R. Harper & L. D. Patton (Eds.), *Responding to the realities of race on campus* (pp. 25-38). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Chang, M. J., Denson, N., Saenz, V., & Misa, K. (2006). The educational benefits of sustaining cross-cultural interaction among undergraduates. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 77, 430-455. doi: 10.1353/jhe.2006.0018
- Childress, S. (2013, June 26). With Voting Rights Act out, states push voter ID laws. *PBS Frontline*. Retrieved from <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/government-elections-politics/with-voting-rights-act-out-states-push-voter-id-laws>
- Cobham, B. A., & Parker, R. L. (2007). Resituating race into the movement toward multiculturalism and social justice. In S. R. Harper & L. D. Patton (Eds.), *Responding to the realities of race on campus* (pp. 85-93). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- College Portraits. (2013). *Northeastern State University college portrait*. Retrieved from <http://www.collegeportraits.org/OK/NSU/characteristics>
- Collier, M. J. (2002). Negotiating intercultural alliance relationships: Toward transformation. In



- M. J. Collier (Ed.), *Intercultural alliances: Critical transformation* (pp. 49–80). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Collins, P. H. (2000). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment* (Rev. ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Cooks, L., & Warren, J. T. (2011). Somebodies(‘) in school: Introduction. *Text and Performance Quarterly*, 31, 211-216. doi: 10.1080/10462937.2011.573183
- Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241-79.
- Creswell, J.W., & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory into Practice*, 39, 124-130. doi: 10.1207/s15430421tip3903\_2
- Cummins, M. W., & Griffin, R. A. (2012). Critical race theory and critical communication pedagogy: Articulating a pedagogy of love from Black male perspectives. *Liminalities: A Journal of Performance Studies*, 8, 85-106.
- D’Souza, D. (1996). *The end of racism: Principles for a multiracial society*. New York, NY: Free Press Paperbacks.
- Darder, A. (1991). *Culture and power in the classroom: A critical foundation for bicultural education*. Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey.
- Davies, P. G., Spencer, S. J., & Steele, C. M. (2005). Clearing the air: Identity safety moderates the effects of stereotype threat on women’s leadership aspirations. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, 88, 276-287. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.88.2.276
- de Certeau, M. (1984). *The practice of everyday life* (trans. Steven Rendell). Berkeley: University of California.
- Delgado, R. & Stefancic, J. (2000). Introduction. *Critical race theory: The cutting edge* (pp. xv-

- xix). Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2001). *Critical race theory: An introduction*. New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Delpit, L. (1988). The silenced dialogue: Power and pedagogy in educating other people's children. *Harvard Educational Review*, 58(3), 280-299.
- Dempsey, S., Dutta, M., Frey, L. R., Goodall, H. L., Madison, D., Mercieca, J., & Nakayama, T., & Miller, K. (2011). What is the role of the communication discipline in social justice, community engagement, and public scholarship? A Visit to the CM Cafe. *Communication Monographs*, 78, 256-271. doi:10.1080/03637751.2011.565062
- Denzin, N. K. (2007). Grounded theory and the politics of interpretation. In A. Bryant & K. Charmaz (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of grounded theory* (pp. 454-471). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- du Bois, W. E. B. (1997). *The souls of Black folk*. D. W. Blight & R. Gooding-Williams (Eds). Boston: MA: Bedford. (Original work published in 1903)
- Duncan, A. (2013, September 30). Remarks of U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan to the Congressional Caucus Hispanic Institute. *U.S. Department of Education*. Retrieved from <http://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/remarks-us-secretary-education-arne-duncan-congressional-caucus-hispanic-institute>
- Endres, D., & Gould, M. (2012). "I am also in the position to use my whiteness to help them out": The communication of whiteness in service learning. *Western Journal of Communication*, 73, 418-436. doi: 10.1080/10570310903279083

- Esposito, J. (2011). Negotiating the gaze and learning the hidden curriculum: A Critical Race Analysis of the embodiment of female students of color at a predominantly White institution. *The Journal for Critical Educational Policy Studies*, 9, 143-164.
- Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language*. Harlow, GB: Longman.
- Fassett D. L. & Warren, J. T. (2007). *Critical communication pedagogy*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Fernández, L. (2002). Telling stories about school: Using Critical Race and Latino Critical Theories to document Latina/Latino education and resistance. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8, 45-65. doi: 10.1177/107780040200800104
- Feagin, J. R., Vera, H., & Imani, N. (1996). *The agony of education: Black students at White colleges and universities*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Fine, M. (1998). Working the hyphens: Reinventing self and other in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The landscape of qualitative research: Theories and issues* (pp. 130-155). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Fish, S. E. (2008). *Save the world on your own time*. Oxford, NY: Oxford University.
- Fisher, W. R. (1984). Narration as human communication paradigm: The case of public moral argument. *Communication Monographs*, 51, 1-22.
- Flanagan, J. C. (1954). The critical incident technique. *Psychological Bulletin*, 51, 327-358.
- Fontana, A., & Frey, J. H. (1994). Interviewing: The art of science. In N. K. Denzin., & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research (1<sup>st</sup> ed.)* (pp. 361-376). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Forni, P. M. (2002). *Choosing civility: The twenty-five rules of considerate conduct*. New York,

- NY: St. Martin's Press.
- Franklin, A. J. (2004). *From brotherhood to manhood: How Black men rescue their relationships and dreams from the invisibility syndrome*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley.
- Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (30<sup>th</sup> anniversary ed.). New York, NY: Continuum International.
- Frey, L. R., Botan, C. H., & Kreps, G. L. (2000). *Investigating communication: An introduction to research methods* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Frey, L. R., Pierce, W. B., Pollock, M. A., Artz, L., & Murphy, B. A. O. (1996). Looking for justice in all the wrong places: On a communicative approach to social justice. *Communication Studies*, 47, 110-127.
- Garza, S. J. (2000). "As if bereav'd of light": Decoding whiteness in my academia. In N. M. Rodriguez & L. E. Villaverde (Eds.), *Dismantling white privilege: Pedagogy, politics, and whiteness* (pp. 59-74). New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Gatto, J. T. (2002). *Dumbing us down: The hidden curriculum of compulsory schooling*. Gabriola Island, British Columbia: New Society Publishers.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Gildersleeve, R. E. (2013). Commentary on Latino college success. *Journal of Latino/Latin American Studies*, 5, 126-128.
- Gilliam, F. D. (1999). The "welfare queen" experiment: How viewers react to images of African-American Mothers on welfare. *UCLA: Center for Communications and Community*. Retrieved from: <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/17m7r1rq>
- Giroux, H. A. (1983). *Theory and resistance in education: A pedagogy of the opposition*. South Hadley, MA: Bergin & Garvey Publishers.

- Giroux, H. A. (1988). *Teachers as intellectuals: Toward a critical pedagogy of learning*.  
Granby, MA: Bergin and Garvey.
- Giroux, H. A. (2003). Spectacles of race and pedagogies of denial: Anti-Black racist pedagogy under the reign of neoliberalism. *Communication Education*, 52, 191-211.  
doi:10.1080/0363452032000156190
- Giroux, H. A. (2007). *University in chains: Confronting the military-industrial-academic complex*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.
- Giroux, H. A., & Penna, A. (1983). Social education in the classroom: The dynamics of the hidden curriculum. In H. Giroux & D. Purpel (Eds.), *Hidden curriculum and moral education: Deception or Discovery?* (pp. 100-121). Berkeley, CA: McCutchan Publishing.
- Grande, S. (2004). *Red pedagogy: Native American social and political thought*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Gramsci, A. (1988). Hegemony, relations of force, historical bloc. In D. Forgacs (Ed.), *A Gramsci reader: Selected writings 1916-1935* (pp. 189-221). London, UK: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Griffin, R. A. (2010). Special issue introduction: Critical race theory as a means to deconstruct, recover, and evolve in Communication Studies. *Communication Law Review*, 10, 1-9.
- Griffin, R. A., & Cummins, M. W. (2012). "It's a struggle, it's a journey, it's a mountain that you gotta climb": Black misandry, education, and the strategic embrace of Black male counterstories. *Qualitative Communication Research*, 1, 257-289.

- Haft, S., (Producer) Henderson, D., (Producer) Witt, P. J., (Producer) Thomas, T. (1989) (Producer), & Weir, P. (Director). *Dead poets society* [motion picture]. United States of America: Touchstone Pictures.
- Hall S. (1996). The problem of ideology: Marxism without guarantees. In S. Hall (Ed.), *Critical dialogues in cultural studies* (pp. 26-45). London, United Kingdom: Routledge.
- Hall, D. (2003). *Queer theories*. New York, NY: Palgrave.
- Hao, R. N. (2011). Rethinking critical pedagogy: Implications for silence and silent bodies. *Text and Performance Quarterly*, 31, 267-284. doi: 10.1080/10462937.2011.573185
- Hardiman, R., Jackson, B., & Griffin, P. (2007). Conceptual foundations for social justice education. In M. Adams, L. A. Bell, & P. Griffin (Eds.), *Teaching for diversity and social justice* (pp. 35-66). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Harper, S. R., & Harris, F. (2012). Men of color: A role for policymakers in improving the status of Black male students in U.S. higher education. *Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education*. Retrieved from [https://www.gse.upenn.edu/equity/sites/gse.upenn.edu/equity/files/publications/harper\\_harris\\_2012.pdf](https://www.gse.upenn.edu/equity/sites/gse.upenn.edu/equity/files/publications/harper_harris_2012.pdf)
- Harper, S. R., & Hurtado, S. (2007). Nine themes in campus racial climates and implications for institutional transformation, In S. R. Harper & L. D. Patton (Eds.), *Responding to the realities of race on campus* (pp. 7-24). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Harris, C. (1995). Whiteness as property. In K. Crenshaw, N. Gotanda, G. Peller, & K. Thomas (Eds.), *Critical race theory* (pp. 276–291). New York: New Press.
- hooks, b. (1990). *Yearning: Race, gender, and cultural politics*. Boston, MA: South End.
- hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*. New York, NY: Routledge.

- Hendrix, K., Jackson, R. L., & Warren, J. R. (2003). Shifting academic landscapes: Exploring co-identities, identity negotiation, and critical progressive pedagogy. *Communication Education, 52*, 177-190. doi:10.1080/0363452032000156181
- Hickman, L. A. (2006). Socialization, social efficiency, and social control: Putting pragmatism to work. In D. T. Hansen (Ed.), *John Dewey and our educational prospect: A critical engagement with Dewey's Democracy an Education* (pp. 67-79). Albany: State University of New York.
- Huber, L. P. (2009). Challenging racist nativist framing: Acknowledging the community cultural wealth of undocumented Chicana college students to reframe the immigration debate. *Harvard Educational Review, 79*, 704-729.
- Hughes, H. (2007). Critical incident technique. In S. Lipu & A. Lloyd (Eds.), *Exploring methods in information literacy research* (pp. 49-66). Wagga Wagga, New South Wales: Center for Information Studies.
- Hyttén, K. & Warren, J. T. (2003). Engaging whiteness: How racial power gets reified in education. *Qualitative Studies in Education, 16*, 51-63. doi: 10.1080/0951839032000033509a
- Jacobs, B. A. (2006). *Race manners in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: Navigating the minefield between Black and White Americans in the Age of Fear* (rev. ed.). New York, NY: Hatchett Book Group.
- Jayakumar, U. M., Howards, T. C., Allen, W. R., & Han, J. C. (2009). Racial privilege in the professoriate: An exploration of campus climate, retention, and satisfaction. *The Journal of Higher Education, 80*, 538-563. doi: 10.1353/jhe.0.0063
- Johnson, A. (2006). *Power, privilege, and difference* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

- Johnson, J. M., & Rowland, T. (2012). The interpersonal dynamics of in-depth interviewing. In J. F. Gubrium, J. A. Holstein, A. B. Marvasti, & K. D. McKinney (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of interview research: The complexity of the craft* (pp. 99-113). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Johnson-Bailey, J., Valentine, T., Cervero, R. M., & Bowles, T. A. (2009). Rooted in the soil: The social experiences of Black graduate students at a southern research university. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 80, 178-203.
- Jones, V. (2011). Black people “loot” food...White people “find” food. *Huffington Post*. Retrieved from [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/van-jones/black-people-loot-food-wh\\_b\\_6614.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/van-jones/black-people-loot-food-wh_b_6614.html)
- Kanahara, S. (2006). A review of the definitions of stereotype and a proposal for a progressional model. *Individual Differences Research*, 4, 306-321.
- Kanpol, B. (1999). *Critical pedagogy: An introduction* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey.
- Kincheloe, J. L., & McLaren, P. L. (2008). Rethinking critical theory and qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The landscape of qualitative research* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.) (pp. 195-220). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kingkade, T. (2014, August). 1 Percent of women joining University Of Alabama sororities this year are Black. *Huffington Post*. Retrieved from [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/08/18/alabama-sorority-black-women\\_n\\_5688022.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/08/18/alabama-sorority-black-women_n_5688022.html)
- Kitwana, B. (2005). *Why White kids love hip hop: Wankstas, wiggers, and wannabes and the new reality of race in America*. New York, NY: Basic Civitas Books.



- Koppel, N. (2007). Are your jeans sagging? Go directly to jail. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from [http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/30/fashion/30baggy.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/30/fashion/30baggy.html?_r=0)
- Kozol, J. (2005). *The shame of the nation: The restoration of apartheid school in America*. New York, NY: Crown Publishing
- Kramarae, C. (1981). *Women and men speaking*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Laclau, E., & Mouffe, C. (1985). *Hegemony and socialist strategy: Towards a radical democratic politics*. London, GB: Verso.
- Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teachers College Record*, 97, 47-68.
- Lanigan, R. L. (1988). *Phenomenology of communication: Merleau-Ponty's thematics in communicology and semiology*. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquense University Press.
- Larson, L. (2013, December 2). Republicans declare racism is over in Rosa Parks tweet, then retract statement. *The Daily News*. Retrieved from <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/politics/gop-declares-racism-retracts-statement-article-1.1534762>
- Lather, P. (1991). *Getting smart: Feminist research and pedagogy within/in the postmodern*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Lee, P.W. (2006). Teaching as a co-cultural instructor in a diverse classroom. *Transit: The LaGuardia Journal of Teaching and Learning*, 1, 25–28.
- Leonardo, Z. (2009). *Race, whiteness, and education*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Leonardo, Z. (2012). The race for class: Reflections on a critical raceclass theory of education. *Educational Studies*, 48, 427-449. doi: 10.1080/00131946.2012.715831
- Lindlof, T. R. (1995). *Qualitative communication research methods*. From Current

- communication: An advanced text series (vol. 3). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Lindlof, T. R., & Taylor, B. C. (2011). *Qualitative communication research methods* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Liptak, A. (2013, June 25). Supreme court strikes down key part of Voting Rights Act. *New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/26/us/supreme-court-ruling.html>
- Lorde, A. (1984). *Sister outsider*. Berkeley, CA: Crossing.
- Mayo, C. (2002). The binds that tie: Civility and social difference. *Educational Theory*, 52 (2), 169-186.
- Mayo, C. (2004). The tolerance that dare not speak its name. In M. Boler (Ed.), *Democratic dialogue in education: Troubling speech, disturbing silence* (pp. 33-47). New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- McIntosh, P. (1988). *White Privilege and male privilege: A personal account of coming to see correspondences through work in Women's Studies*. Working Paper No. 189. Wellesley College Center for Research on Women.
- McLaren, P. (2002). *Life in schools* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- McWhorter, J. (2008, December 30). Racism in America is over. *Forbes*. Retrieved from [http://www.forbes.com/2008/12/30/end-of-racism-oped-cx\\_jm\\_1230mcwhorter.html](http://www.forbes.com/2008/12/30/end-of-racism-oped-cx_jm_1230mcwhorter.html)
- Milhiser, I. (2013). UPDATED: Minority students at University of Texas reportedly attacked by an epidemic of 'bleach bombs.' *Think Progress*. Retrieved from <http://thinkprogress.org/justice/2013/08/24/2523051/minority-students-university-texas-attacked-epidemic-bleach-bombs/>
- Milkman, K. L., Akinola, M., & Chugh, D. (2012). Temporal distance and discrimination: An

- audit study in academia. 23, 710-717. doi:10.1177/0956797611434539
- Miller, A. N., Katt, J. A., & Brown, T., & Sivo, S. A. (2013). The relationship of instructor self-disclosure, nonverbal immediacy, and credibility to student incivility in the college classroom. *Communication Education*, 63, 1-16. doi: 10.1080/03634523.2013.835054
- Moon, D. G. (1999). White enculturation and bourgeois ideology: The discursive production of "good (white) girls." In T. K. Nakayama & J. N. Martin (Eds.), *Whiteness: The social communication of identity* (pp.177-197). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Morrison, T. (2007). *The bluest eye*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.
- Morrison, T. (1992). *Playing in the dark: Whiteness and the literary imagination*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Nakayama, T. K., & Krizek, R. L. (1995). Whiteness: A strategic rhetoric. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 81, 291-309.
- Nakayama, T. K., & Martin, J. N. (1999). *Whiteness: The communication of social identity*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Navarro, Z. (2006). In search of a cultural interpretation of power: The contribution of Pierre Bourdieu. *IDS Bulletin*, 37, 11-22. doi: 10.1111/j.1759-5436.2006.tb00319.x
- NCES. (2011). *Digest of education statistics: 2011*. Retrieved from [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d11/tables/dt11\\_237.asp?referrer=report](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d11/tables/dt11_237.asp?referrer=report)
- NCES. (2013). Fast facts. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=372>
- Ng, J. C., Lee, S. S., & Pak, Y. K.(2007). Chapter 4: Contesting the model minority and perpetual foreigner stereotypes: A critical review of literature on Asian Americans in education. *Review of Research in Education*, 31, 95-130. doi: 10.3102/0091732X06298015

- Nussbaum, M. C. (1997). *Cultivating humanity: A classical defense of reform in liberal education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard.
- Ono, K. A., & Sloop, J. M. (1995). The critique of vernacular discourse. *Communication Monographs*, 62, 19-46. doi: 10.1080/03637759509376346
- Orbe, M. P. (1997). A co-cultural communication approach to intergroup relations. *The Journal of Intergroup Relations*, 24, 36-49.
- Orbe, M. P. (1998). *Constructing co-cultural theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Orbe, M. P. (2003). African American first generation college student communicative experiences. *Electronic Journal of Communication/La Revue Electronique de Communication*, 13(2-3). Retrieved from <http://www.cios.org/EJCPUBLIC/013/2/01322.html>
- Orbe, M. P., & Allen, B. J. (2008). "Race matters" in the journal of applied communication research. *The Howard Journal of Communications*, 19, 201-220.
- Orbe, M. P., & Harris, T. M. (2008). *Interracial communication: Theory into practice* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Orbe, M., & Groscurth, C. R. (2004). A co-cultural theoretical analysis of communicating on campus: Exploring the negotiation strategies of first generation college (FGC) students. *Qualitative Research Reports in Communication*, 5, 41-47.
- Orbe, M. P., & Roberts, T. L. (2012). Co-cultural theorizing: Foundations, applications & extensions. *The Howard Journal of Communications*, 23, 293-311. doi: 10.1080/10646175.2012.722838
- Orbe, M. P., Smith, D. C., Groscurth, C. R., & Crawley, R. L. (2010). Exhaling so that we can catch our breath and sing: Reflections on issues inherent in publishing race-related

- communication research. *Southern Communication Journal*, 75, 184-194.  
doi:10.1080/10417941003613305
- Parker, P. (1990). For the white person who wants to know how to be my friend. In G. Anzaldúa (Ed.), *Making face, making soul, haciendo caras: Creative and critical perspectives by feminists of color* (p. 297). San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books.
- Patton, T. O. (2004). In the guise of civility: The complicitous maintenance of inferential forms of sexism and racism in higher education. *Women's Studies in Communication*, 27, 60-87. doi: 10.1080/07491409.2004.10162466
- Pierce, C. (1995). Stress analogs of racism and sexism: Terrorism, torture, and disaster. In C. Willie, P. Rieker, B. Kramer, & B. Brown (Eds.), *Mental health, racism, and sexism* (pp. 277-293). Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (1995). Narrative configuration in qualitative analysis. *Qualitative Studies in Education*, 8, 5-23.
- Pratt, R. (1892/1973). The advantages of mingling Indians with Whites. In F. P. Prucha (Ed.), *Americanizing the American Indians: Writing by the "friends of the Indian" 1880-1900*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Pollock, M. A., Artz, L., Frey, L. R., Pearce, W. B., & Murphy, B. A. (1996). Navigating between Scylla and Charybdis: Continuing the dialogue on communication and social justice. *Communication Studies*, 47, 142-151. doi: 10.1080/10510979609368470
- Rampell, C. (2013, February 19). It takes a B.A. to find a job as a file clerk. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/20/business/college-degree-required-by-increasing-number-of-companies.html?pagewanted=all>
- Reitman, I. (Producer), & Landis, J. (Director). (1978). *Animal house* (Motion picture). United

States of America: Universal Pictures.

- Riessman, C. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ringrose, J. (2007). Rethinking white resistance: exploring the discursive practices and psychical negotiations of 'whiteness' in feminist, anti-racist education. *Race, Ethnicity, and Education, 10*, 323-344. doi: 10.1080/13613320701503330
- Rudick, C. K. (2012). *Towards a critical-hermeneutic politeness*. Paper presented at the National Communication Association Conference, Orlando, FL.
- Rudick, C. K., & Golsan, K. B. (2014). Revisiting the Relational Communication Perspective: Drawing upon Relational Dialectics Theory to map an expanded research agenda for communication and instruction scholarship. *Western Journal of Communication, 78*, 255-273. doi: 10.1080/10570314.2014.905796
- Ryan, C. (2013). Language use in the United States: 2011. *American Community Survey Reports*. U.S. Department of Commerce. Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/prod/2013pubs/acs-22.pdf>
- Scott, J. C. (1990). *Domination and the arts of resistance*. New Haven, CT: Yale.
- Simmons, J., Lowery-Hart, R., Wahl, S. T., & McBride, M. C. (2013). Understanding the African-American student experience in higher education through a relational dialectics perspective. *Communication Education, 62*, 376-394. doi: 10.1080/03634523.2013.813631
- Simpson, J. S. (2003). *'I have been waiting': Race and U.S. higher education*. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press.
- Simpson, J. L. (2008). The color-blind double bind: Whiteness and the (im)possibility of dialogue. *Communication Theory, 18*, 139-159. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2885.2007.00317.x

- Simpson, J. S., James, C. E., & Mack, J. (2011). Multiculturalism, colonialism, and racialization: Conceptual starting points. *Review of Education, Pedagogy & Cultural Studies*, 33, 285-305. doi:10.1080/10714413.2011.597637
- Siy, J. O., & Cheryan, S. (2013). When compliments fail to flatter: American individualism and responses to positive stereotypes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 104, 87-102. doi: 10.1037/a0030183
- Smith, D. E. (1987). *The everyday world as problematic: A feminist sociology of knowledge*. Boston, MA:Northeastern University Press.
- Smith, L. T. (2005). On tricky ground: researching the native in the age of uncertainty. In N. K. Dezin & T. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.) (pp. 85-107). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Smith, W. A., Yosso, T. J., & Solórzano, D. G. (2007). Racial primes and Black misandry on historically White campuses: Toward critical race accountability in education administration. *Education Administrative Quarterly*, 43, 559-585.
- Solórzano, D. G., & Villalpando, O. (1998). Critical Race Theory, marginality, and the experience of students of color in higher education, In C. A. Torres & T. R. Mitchell (Eds.), *Sociology of education: Emerging perspectives* (pp. 211-224). Albany, NY: State University of New York.
- Solórzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. (2002). Critical Race Methodology: Counterstorytelling as an analytical framework for education research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8, 23-44. doi: 10.1177/107780040200800103
- Spring, J. (2012). *Deculturation and the struggle for equality: A brief history of the education of dominated cultures in the United States* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Steele, C. M. (1997). A threat in the air: How stereotypes shape intellectual identity and performance. *American Psychologist*, *52*, 613–629.
- Steele, C. M., Spencer, S. J., & Aronson, J. (2002). Contending with group image: The psychology of stereotype and social identity threat. In M. P. Zanna (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 34, pp. 379 – 440). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Sue, D. W. (2010). *Microaggressions in everyday life: Race, gender, and sexual orientation*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Swail, W. S., Redd, K. E., & Perna, L. W. (2003). Retaining minority students in higher education: A framework for success. *Educational Policy Institute*. Retrieved from <http://www.educationalpolicy.org/pdf/Retaining%20Minority%20Students.pdf>
- Tappan, M. B. (2006). Reframing internalized oppression and internalized domination: From psychological to sociocultural. *Teachers College Record*, *108*, 2115-2144.
- Terkourafi, M. (2011). From Politeness1 to Politeness2: Tracking norms of im/politeness across time and space. *Journal of Politeness Research: Language, Behavior, and Culture*, *7*, 159-185. doi:10.1515/JPLR.2011.009
- Tienabeso, S. (2014, February 17). ‘I was the victim,’ says loud music trial shooter in jailhouse phone call. *ABC News*. Retrieved from <http://abcnews.go.com/US/victim-loud-music-trial-shooter-jailhouse-phone-call/story?id=22558295>
- Toyosaki, S. Pensoneau-Conway, S. L., Wendt, N. A., & Leathers, K. (2009). Community autoethnography: Compiling the personal and resituating whiteness. *Cultural Studies* ↔



- Critical Methodologies, 9, 56-83.
- Urban, E., & Orbe, M. (2007). "The syndrome of the boiled frog:" Exploring international students on US campuses as co-cultural group members. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, 36, 117–138.
- Vasquez, M. J. T. (1982). Confronting barriers to the participation of Mexican American women higher education. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 4, 147-165. doi: 10.1177/07399863820042002
- Wander, P. G., Martin, J. N., & Nakayama, T. K. (1999). Whiteness and beyond: Sociohistorical foundations of whiteness and contemporary challenges. In T. K. Nakayama & J. N. Martin (Eds.), *Whiteness: The communication of social identity* (pp. 13-26). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Wang, T. (2014). "I'm the only person from where I'm from to go to college": Understanding the memorable messages of first-generation college students receive from parents. *Journal of Family Communication*, 14, 270-290. doi: 10.1080/15267431.2014.908195
- Watzlawick, P., Beavin, J. H., & Jackson, D. D. (1967). *Pragmatics of human communication: A study of interactional patterns, pathologies, and paradoxes*. New York, NY: Norton.
- Ward, L. T. (2013). "Oh, you are an exception!" *academic success and Black male students resistance to systemic racism* (master's thesis). Unpublished.
- Warren, J. T. (1999). Whiteness and cultural theory: Perspectives on research and education. *The Urban Review*, 31, 185-203.
- Warren, J. T. (2001). Doing whiteness: On the performative dimensions of race in the classroom. *Communication Education*, 50, 91-108. doi: 10.1080/03634520109379237
- Warren, J. T. (2003). *Performing purity: Whiteness, pedagogy, and the reconstitution of power*.

New York: Peter Lang.

Warren, J. T. (2011). Critical communication pedagogy. In S. W. Littlejohn & K. A. Foss (Eds.),

*Encyclopedia of communication theory* (pp. 213-216). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Warren, J. T., & Hytten, K. (2004). The faces of whiteness: Pitfalls and the critical democrat.

*Communication Education*, 53, 321-339. doi: 10.1080/0363452032000305931

Wolcott, H. F. (1994). *Transforming qualitative data*. London, United Kingdom: Sage.

Young, I. M. (1990). *Justice and the politics of difference*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University

Press.

Zinn, H. (2001). *A people's history of the United States: 1492-present*. New York, NY: Perennial

Books.

## APPENDICES

## Appendix A

## SPEECH COMMUNICATION INSTRUCTOR SOLICITATION SCRIPT

Good morning/afternoon! My name is C. Kyle Rudick and I am a doctoral student in the Speech Communication department at Southern Illinois University-Carbondale. I am conducting research to understand the relationship among racism, socialization, and civility within higher education. Ultimately, the study will offer insights into institutional racism as well as give practical solutions for how to help remedy racism in higher education.

I am contacting you because you teach a class within the Speech Communication Department. I would like the opportunity to come to your class and ask your students if they would like to be a part of my research. The research will consist of one-on-one interviews and ethnographic fieldwork. Students' information will be confidential. I have attached the recruitment script, cover letter, and consent form in case you want to review it before making a decision.

Volunteers must be full-time students who are above the age of 18, be a full-time student at SIUC, and identify as a student of color. Please respond to this email at your convenience. If you are willing to allow me to recruit in your class, please include the day/time/room that you teach. Thank you for your time!

## Appendix B

## RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

Good morning/afternoon! My name is Kyle Rudick, and I am a doctoral student in the speech communication department at Southern Illinois University-Carbondale. I am conducting research for my dissertation about racism in higher education. The purpose of this study is to understand how self-identified students of color talk about their experiences of racism in higher education. Specifically, I am interested in understanding how the “business-as-usual” of higher education often serves to perpetuate racism. The research project is designed to listen to students of colors’ stories and testimonies in order create research that helps remedy racism on university campuses.

There are two ways that you can participate: interviews and ethnographic fieldwork. Interviews will include 2-4 audio recorded sessions that are 45-75 minutes in duration. During that time, we will talk about your time within higher education and your experiences (or lack thereof) of racism. The fieldwork component is a chance for me to accompany you around places that are meaningful in relation to racism in higher education (e.g., the cafeteria or dorm). I will only accompany you when and where you have invited me.

Please know that you do not have to participate in both ways. You are free to participate to the extent that you feel most comfortable. You are also free to choose to not participate in the study.

A digital audio recording device will be used in the interviews. The device is needed to capture verbatim statements. I will take notes for the ethnographic observation component. Audio files and notes will be kept in a secure place at my home. I will do everything I can to ensure that your confidentiality is protected; however, I cannot guarantee your confidentiality. Data will be transcribed (i.e., written) by either myself or a professional transcriptionist. I will destroy the data approximately one year from today. Audio files and notes will be destroyed approximately one (1) year from this date.

Additionally, you can choose to withdraw from the study at any time. Your participation in this study will not affect your grade in this class in any way.

Volunteers must be full-time, self-identify as a students of color, and be above the age of 18. Please read the cover letter that has been provided to you and then fill out the consent form. If you have any questions about the research afterwards, please contact either me at the email address provided on the cover letter. Thank you for your time!

## Appendix C

## INFORMATION CARD GIVEN FOR SNOWBALL SAMPLING RECRUITMENT

Hello! My name is Kyle Rudick, and I am a doctoral student in the speech communication department at Southern Illinois University-Carbondale. I am conducting research for my dissertation about racism in higher education. The purpose of this study is to understand how self-identified students of color talk about their experiences of racism in higher education. The research project is designed to listen to students of colors' stories and testimonies in order create research that helps remedy racism on university campuses.

There are two ways that you can participate: interview and ethnographic fieldwork. Interviews will include 2-4 sessions that are 45-75 minutes in duration. During that time, we will talk about your time within higher education and your experiences (or lack thereof) of racism. The fieldwork component is a chance for me to accompany you around places that are meaningful in relation to racism in higher education (e.g., the cafeteria or dorm).

You are being handed this information because someone you know thought you might want to participate in my research project. If you are interested in participating then please contact me using the information below to set up a time, date, and place to meet. I will bring a cover letter and consent form that will give more details about your rights as a participant.

C. Kyle Rudick  
Southern Illinois University, Carbondale  
Department of Speech Communication - 2002P  
Southern Illinois University  
Carbondale, IL 62901  
crudick@siu.edu  
918-519-4857

This project has been reviewed and approved by the SIUC Human Subjects Committee. Questions concerning your rights as a participant in this research may be addressed to the Committee Chairperson, Office of Sponsored Projects Administration, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL 62901-4709. Phone (618) 453-4533. E-mail siuhsc@siu.edu

## Appendix D

## COVER LETTER FOR STUDY



## Southern Illinois University Carbondale

Dear Participant:

You are being asked to participate in a study conducted by Principal Investigator Kyle Rudick in the Department of Speech Communication at Southern Illinois University-Carbondale. I am conducting this research as a part of my dissertation project. I am interested your accounts concerning how racism is communicated in higher education. Your consent will be obtained by your response on the informed consent form. To participate in this study, you must be at least 18 years old, identify as a person of color, and currently be enrolled full time at SIUC.

I will take all reasonable steps to protect your identity. I will not use your name in the report to maintain your confidentiality. However, even though I will take all precautions to make sure you cannot be identified (e.g., using a pseudonym, omitting identifiers, and keeping data in a secure location), I cannot guarantee that your responses will remain confidential. I will have a master list connecting your pseudonym to your real name kept on my password-protected home computer. Interviews will be audio taped in order to ensure verbatim quotes in the paper. Interview data will be transcribed (i.e., written) by either myself or a professional transcriptionist. The data will be securely kept either on my computer or in a locked drawer at my home. All data and lists will be destroyed at the end of the study (approximately 1 year from today).

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may skip certain questions if you want and you may stop at any time without fear of penalty. Your actual performance in this study, your refusal to participate, or withdrawal from this study will in no way affect your class standing, grades, job status, or status in any athletic or other activity associated with Southern Illinois University-Carbondale. There are no known risks associated with participation in this study.

There are two ways that you can participate: interview and ethnographic fieldwork. Interviews will include 2-4 sessions that are 45-75 minutes in duration. During that time, we will talk about your time within higher education and your experiences (or lack thereof) of racism. The fieldwork component is a chance for me to accompany you around places that are meaningful in relation to racism in higher education (e.g., the cafeteria or dorm).

To consent to the study, please fill out the consent form with your information on it. I will contact you at the information you provide to set up a time/place to meet. If you would like more information about this research project, feel free to contact the Principal Investigator C. Kyle Rudick by email.

Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

C. Kyle Rudick  
 Doctoral Candidate  
 Principle Investigator  
 Southern Illinois University, Carbondale

Satoshi Toyosaki  
 Assistant Professor  
 Project Advisor  
 Southern Illinois University, Carbondale

Department of Speech Communication  
crudick@siu.edu 918.519.4857

Department of Speech Communication  
tsatoshi@siu.edu 618.453.1886

This project has been reviewed and approved by the SIUC Human Subjects Committee. Questions concerning your rights as a participant in this research may be addressed to the Committee Chairperson, Office of Sponsored Projects Administration, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL 62901-4709. Phone (618) 453-4533. E-mail siuhsc@siu.edu



## Appendix E

## INFORMED CONSENT FORM

<u>Principal Researcher</u> C. Kyle Rudick Southern Illinois University, Carbondale Department of Speech Communication - 2002P Southern Illinois University Carbondale, IL 62901 <a href="mailto:crudick@siu.edu">crudick@siu.edu</a>	<u>Project Advisor</u> Satoshi Toyosaki, Ph.D. Southern Illinois University, Carbondale Department of Speech Communication – 2246 Southern Illinois University Carbondale, IL 62901 tsatoshi@siu.edu 618.453.1886
---	---

**Race, Socialization, and Civility: Interrogating the Communicative Construction of the White Habitus in Higher Education**

Purpose of the Research:

The purpose of this study is to understand how self-identified students of color narrate their experiences of racism in higher education. Specifically, I am interested in understanding how the “business-as-usual” of higher education often serves to perpetuate racism. The research project is designed to listen to students of colors’ stories and testimonies in order create research that helps remedy racism on university campuses.

About your participation

There are two ways that you can participate: interview and ethnographic fieldwork. Interviews will include 2-4 audio recorded sessions that are 45-75 minutes in duration. During that time, we will talk about your time within higher education and your experiences (or lack thereof) of racism. The fieldwork component is a chance for me to accompany you around places that are meaningful in relation to racism in higher education (e.g., the cafeteria or classroom). I will only accompany you at when and where you have invited me. You can participate in either or both ways.

Please note that by signing this form, you indicate **voluntary consent** to participate in this study.

Inclusion Criteria

To participate in this study, you must be at least 18 years old, identify as a student of color, and currently be enrolled full time at SIUC.

Confidentiality

All your responses will be kept confidential within reasonable limits. This means that I will use a pseudonym in place of your name and will remove all identifiers from our conversations in the final report. Only C. Kyle Rudick and his advisor will have access to the list of participants’ names. Data will be transcribed (i.e., written) by either myself or a professional transcriptionist.

Privacy

You have a right to privacy when participating in research. Your privacy will be protected by giving you the choice of where to go for the interview. You are encouraged to choose a place where it is unlikely that

your peers will see you to protect your right to privacy. If at any time you feel uneasy about the location of choice, you are free to end the interview.

### Questions

If you have any questions prior to or following completion of this study, please contact C. Kyle Rudick or his advisor.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to allow C. Kyle Rudick to audio record my participation during interviews.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to allow C. Kyle Rudick to accompany me and observe my behavior.

I agree \_\_\_\_\_ I disagree \_\_\_\_\_ that (C. Kyle Rudick) may quote me in his published materials (e.g., dissertation).

I want to be contacted using this directory information \_\_\_\_\_  
(Place email or phone number here)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

This project has been reviewed and approved by the SIUC Human Subjects Committee. Questions concerning your rights as a participant in this research may be addressed to the Committee Chairperson, Office of Sponsored Projects Administration, SIUC, Carbondale, IL 62901-4709. Phone (618) 453-4533. E-mail: [siuhsc@siu.edu](mailto:siuhsc@siu.edu)

## Appendix F

## SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

## 1. Opening

- a. Hello my name is Kyle Rudick and I'm a doctoral student in the Speech Communication Department at SIUC. I'm really glad you agreed to be a part of this project!
- b. I would like to ask you some questions about your experiences with racism while enrolled in higher education. I'm really interested in having a conversation with you. Whether we get to all my questions or not is less important to me than you getting to voice your opinions. I really want you to think of this as a conversation rather than an interview.
- c. My intention is to use the transcripts from this interview, as well as others, to create a dissertation document that identifies how racism operates in higher education. My hope is that it helps people see that racism continues to be a serious problem in higher education and that we should all feel an obligation to challenge it.
- d. This interview will probably take 45-75 minutes. However, it can go for as long or as little as you want. If you feel uncomfortable at any time and want to forego a question or stop participating then you can do that without fear of penalty. Before we begin, are there any questions or comments that you have about me or the research project? I'm really interested in what you have to say.

## 2. Questions

## a. Opening

- i. Where are you originally from? What was it like growing up there?
- ii. What are some of your favorite things to do now that you're in college? Why?
- iii. What's your major? What made you want to pick that? Do you like it?
- iv. What are your goals after college? Why?

## b. Race and Racism

- i. How do you racially identify? What does it mean to be \_\_\_\_ to you?
- ii. What words would you use to describe people who are like you racially?
- iii. Would you say where you grew up and SIUC are similar or different? Why?
- iv. Did your family or friends have a conversation about racism when you decided to go to SIUC?
- v. When you first arrived on campus, what was your initial thought about the racial diversity on campus?
- vi. What do you feel about it now?
- vii. Have you, or anyone you know, experienced racism at SIUC? From teachers? Other students?
- viii. Have you said anything to your friends or family about racism at SIUC? If so, what?
- ix. Have you made any friends while at SIUC? Are they primarily the same or different race as you?

## c. Socialization

- i. Do you feel like you act differently when you're with your family or friends as opposed to when you're on campus? How?

- ii. Are there ways that you talk, dress, act back home that are different than when you are going to class? If so, how and why?
- iii. Do you ever feel pressure to act or be different when on campus than when you are by yourself or with close friends? If so, how?
- iv. Do you ever feel like other students or teachers don't value your racial identity? Why?
- v. If they don't value your racial identity then what identity do they value? Why?
- vi. Generally speaking, would you characterize the campus community as inclusive of your racial identity?

d. Civility

- i. What feelings or words come to mind when I say "civility."
- ii. Who taught you about civility growing up?
- iii. Do you think that people can be civil and racist at the same time? Why?
- iv. Do you feel that (above) happens often? Can you describe a time that it has happened?
- v. When you are the only person of your racial background in a group do you have ways of being civil that differ than when you're with people who share your racial identity? Why?
- vi. Have you ever felt that people who are not the same racial background as you expect you to act differently in order to be "civil"?
- vii. When you are around people of your racial background do you have ways of being civil that differ than when you're in mixed-race company? Why?
- viii. Think about how you (might) act differently than people from different racial backgrounds. Are there times when you act in ways that you know they will think are civil? Things that you may not think of as civil, but that they want to hear? Can you tell me about the experience?
- ix. If (above) has ever happened to you then how did you learn to navigate those interactions? Have there been times when you "failed" to perform correctly?

## Appendix G

## ENTHNOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

1. What makes this place meaningful for you?
2. How do you feel right now?
3. What do you do to adjust to this space?
4. What are some cues you pick up on in order to make that adjustment?
5. Do you come into spaces like this alone? In a group? Why?
6. Do you feel like people treat you differently when you're alone as opposed to a group?

## VITA

Graduate School  
Southern Illinois University

C. Kyle Rudick

ckylrudick@gmail.com

Northeastern State University  
Bachelor of Arts in Education, Communication Education, May 2009

West Virginia University  
Masters of Art, Communication Studies, May 2010

Special Honors and Awards:  
Graduate Fellowship Award 2010-2011

Dissertation:  
Race, Socialization, and Civility: Interrogating the Communicative Construction of the White Habitus in Higher Education

Major Professor: Satoshi Toyosaki

Publications:

- Pensoneau-Conway, S. L., Bolen, D. M., Toyosaki, S., Rudick, C. K., & Bolen, E. K. (2014). Self, relationship, and politics: A community autoethnographic inquiry into collaborative writing. *Cultural Studies & Critical Methodologies*, 14, 312-323. doi: 10.1177/1532708614530302
- Rudick, C. K., & Golsan, K. B. (2014). Revisiting the Relational Communication Perspective: Drawing upon Relational Dialectics Theory to map an expanded research agenda for communication and instruction scholarship. *Western Journal of Communication*, 78, 255-273. doi: 10.1080/10570314.2014.905796
- Rudick, C. K. (2012). Online only classes and critical dialogue: Toward a Faustian bargain ideal for virtual education. *Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed Journal*, 1(1), 27-55.
- Rudick, C. K., & Martin, M. M. (2011). Students' perceptions of face threat from instructors' use of behavior alteration techniques. *Texas Speech Communication Journal*, 36(1), 12-23.