RACE IS A PARADOX: HOW STUDENTS
MAKE SENSE OF STRUCTURE AND AGENCY
IN INTER- AND INTRAGROUP DIALOGUE

by

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ABSTRACT

Race operates in paradoxical and inconsistent ways. It is real with no basis in scientific reality; it is both hyper-visible and invisible; it powerfully shapes our lives even as it is carefully avoided and dismissed as unimportant. Thus, learning about race and racism can be cognitively difficult as well as emotionally laden. Empirical research demonstrates intergroup dialogue's positive outcomes for participants. However, while a great deal of research has documented how intergroup dialogue supports students' needs *affectively* (e.g., exploring empathy in dialogue), few studies have explored how dialogue students may struggle to understand the *cognitively* complex nature of race.

To fill this gap, I explore how students make sense of agency and structure as they learn about race and racism through intergroup dialogue. Rather than assigning students to a stagnant position (e.g., a developmental stage or holistic attitude), I explore students' *narratives*. By employing *critical empathy* (Gurin et al. 2014) as a technique for data analysis, I deconstruct papers and interview transcripts of 139 students who participate in inter- and intragroup dialogue courses on race and ethnicity.

Ultimately, six narratives reveal how students make sense of race and racism. Two narratives (we're all the same; everyone is unique) reveal binary thinking and reject the utility of race. Two different narratives (I am not a villain; struggling to see and represent race) convey students' difficulty as they work to apply new realizations about the importance of race. Finally, two narratives (accepting contradiction and unknowability; *both* intention *and* consequence matter) demonstrate students' acceptance of the complicated and inconsistent ways that race and

racism operate. Attending to students' cognitive processes may therefore enable instructors and practitioners to effectively challenge students; in particular, it may be vital to highlight the "both/and" (rather than "either/or") nature of race and racism.

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTIONS
(TO THE AUTHOR, HER APPROACH, AND THE PROJECT)

Throughout my time as an undergraduate student at the University of Michigan, my understanding of myself within the world was profoundly shaped by ideas, theories, and my interactions with peers inside and outside of the classroom. In my first year, I encountered a women's studies class that made me think about my femininity in radically new ways—which, frankly, surprised me, since I could recall challenging sexism at the ripe age of seven.[1]

Following my newfound passion for feminist theory, I subsequently joined the campus' crisis line and outreach program for sexualized violence. The crisis line was made up of incredible, insightful women who came from vastly different backgrounds. My time on the crisis line reinforced my understanding that I wasn't simply a "woman," but a *white woman,* and that I could not disentangle the two: my experience of femininity was always *also* about my whiteness.

In some ways, my story is not unique; for many, college marks a time of intense growth, self-discovery, and learning about the world at large. However, my realizations were also occurring with a particular backdrop: In 2003, I was a junior at the University of Michigan, amidst a heated national debate about Affirmative Action. The University was juggling two court cases (*Grutter v. Bollinger* and *Gratz v. Bollinger*); in both cases, white students had sued the school due to what they called unfair practices. Both students—Jennifer Gratz and Barbara

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[1] My classmate, Joe, told me I wouldn't be able to play the drums, because I was a girl. I showed him; I became the drum *major*. In your face, Joe.

Grutter—had been denied admission to the university. Upon discovering that students of color with lower exam scores had been admitted, Gratz and Grutter both sought legal action, claiming they were victims of illegal discrimination—or, as it was commonly referred to among my peers, "reverse racism" (NPR, "Split Ruling on Affirmative Action," June 23, 2003). Suddenly, race was everywhere: it wasn't just coming up in my sociology courses; it permeated *all* courses; it was the topic for informal conversations with peers or work colleagues.

During this time, I found myself in several difficult conversations in which I strove to advocate for Affirmative Action. I submitted letters to the Editor; I had several informal conversations with friends and family members; I engaged in email debates on political listservs. I remember struggling with the language I used, finding it incredibly difficult to persuade others of my position.

I joined an intergroup dialogue course, offered by the University's Office for Intergroup Relations (IGR).[2] And *there* I learned how to articulate my own viewpoints—but I also recognized how much I could learn by listening to others. I found great joy in disagreeing, in re-examining, in expanding my worldview by listening to others. At some point along the way, I realized that I could spend my professional life thinking about race, and gender, and other identities—and the complex relationship between the social world and our personal lives.

And that's how I decided to go to graduate school.

I had some reservations about pursuing a PhD; as my undergraduate mentor put it, I didn't just want to analyze and report about the social world, I was "one of those people who wanted to make it better too." Therefore, I chose a program in social work and sociology, hoping

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[2] See the next chapter for a more thorough discussion of intergroup dialogue programs (including an overview of the pedagogical design, underpinning theoretical assumptions, and empirical findings).

to bridge my commitment to social theory and social action. As it turns out, there is precisely one program in the country that offers a dual program.

And that's how I decided to stay at the University of Michigan for a few more years.

As a graduate student, I enjoyed maintaining my commitment to social activism; I also found tremendous enjoyment in teaching and learning. I became a consultant for the campus's Center for Research on Teaching and Learning, which exposed me to a new area of empirical and theoretical work around pedagogy, course design, and empirically supported teaching practices.

It is perhaps unsurprising that, given my interest in teaching, I sought out many opportunities to teach sociology and social work classes; I found particular interest in "non-traditional" courses, such as community service learning and intergroup dialogue. Coming back to IGR was fun but presented entirely new challenges. My role as an instructor exposed me to different aspects of intergroup dialogue: navigating a pedagogy that was diffuse in its radical design (e.g., dealing solely with peer facilitators, rather than directly with dialogue participants), logistical issues (e.g., far more white students sign up for dialogues than do students of color, but IGR's curriculum requires numerical balance of identities in the class), and new topics that were rarely addressed ten years ago (e.g., cisgender privilege). Ultimately, I realized that not only had I changed; IGR had *also* changed to accommodate new theories, new findings, and a dynamic student body.

One modern aspect of the program was an *intragroup* dialogue—an all-white dialogue where white students could engage in dialogue about whiteness. Accompanying this dialogue was a research project, which aimed to both evaluate the new intragroup program and also to learn more about whiteness. Given my various interests—scholarship of teaching and learning,

social justice programming, dialogue, and attitude change—I joined the research project. My analysis and reflections on the data ultimately resulted in this dissertation.

Theoretical framework

My assumptions about the nature of reality—and how we know it—shape the questions I ask, the steps I take to answer those questions, and the goals I have set for the project. To this end, I begin by outlining my ontological assumptions in detail. Later in the introduction, I will explain how these assumptions lead to my research question. In the methods section, I will strive to explicitly connect my methodological choices—that is, the specific steps I took—to these four main assumptions: (1) that learning is a continual process, rather than an "end;" (2) that patterns of power shape how individuals understand/see the world; (3) that our interactions do not simply reflect our perceptions of reality; they also *re-create* reality; and that (4) we can't *know* another's subjective experience, but we can learn more about ourselves and the world at large by meaningfully engaging with others in particular ways.

1. **Learning is a continual process, rather than an "end."**

Traditional models of education tend to conceptualize learning as a one-way process, wherein students are empty receptacles who passively receive supposedly factual information (Freire 1970). However, most human beings—and any scientist—would acknowledge that our understanding of the world is ever-growing with new discoveries about it. Consider, for example, the evolution of assumptions about the physical world over time—the world went from being flat to round; from the center of the universe to an orbiting planet. When Galileo challenged the

assumption about the earth's position in the universe, he faced strong opposition, not just because it was a widely held, taken-for-granted "truth;" he also had to deal with the Catholic Church, which felt strongly that the earth *must* remain the center of the universe in order to maintain religious dogma at the time; the church also had considerable power to maintain that "truth."

It is easy to identify a distant historical example about how truth is entrenched in power; it can be more difficult to see how power shapes our assumptions today. My favorite contemporary example of evolving scientific truth comes from Emily Martin's fantastic article *The Egg and the Sperm* (1991). Whenever I teach the Sociology of Sexuality, on the first day of class, I ask students to describe how the egg and the sperm interact when humans reproduce.[3] They describe the sperm as active (swimming, propelling forward, pushing into the egg) and the egg as passive (waiting, floating, yielding to the advancing sperm). I ask students how many of them learned this narrative, either formally or informally. Generally, all students raise their hands. I then describe what Martin shares in her piece: that the egg is far more active, reaching out and pulling in a sperm; the sperm, by contrast, are rather sluggish and aimless. Moreover, as Martin points out, scientists have known this "flipped script" of the aggressive egg since the 1980s. So, I ask students, why do they suppose they learned the script that they did? Students raise a variety of possibilities—newer equipment allows new information; scientists are biased; textbook content remains, by and large, directed by a monopoly; gender roles powerfully dictate

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[3] Actually, I start by showing the opening credits of *Look Who's Talking* (1989), which highlights the personification of the Sperm and the Egg. The credits oscillate between two scenes: a pod of swimming, yelling sperm, who (to a backdrop of the Beach Boys' "I get around") zoom onward into the unknown to find their destination. One yells, "We don't need a map!" The scene then cuts to a floating sphere, gently swaying to a much quieter song ("I Love You So" by the Chantels). After fluctuating between the two scenes, the sperm finally discover the egg ("*This* must be what we're looking for!") and proceed to hammer on the outside until the egg cracks and one lucky sperm wriggles in. It's a good conversation starter.

the script of who does what. Of course, all of these likely contribute to the maintenance of the status quo—in this case, the assumption of the passive egg.

Thus, any understanding of the world must acknowledge two factors: first, that social assumptions powerfully shape our understandings of reality, and second, that what we know is always actually what we know *thus far*. Learning requires not just absorption or belief in what so-called "experts" claim as true, but critical reflection and openness to other possibilities. As John Dewey explains, reflection is "the active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends" (1933:118). In this way, science is like stargazing. We stare at the sky; perhaps we attempt to make a picture from the stars. As we wait longer, more stars emerge; as more stars appear, we must edit the image to accommodate new points in the constellation; we work to make a picture that can best capture what we see, and continually refine the picture as we identify new points. The image that connects all of the stars will therefore look different over time.

Openness, reflection and revision therefore underscore any are crucial components of conscientious learning—both formally (i.e., any scientific endeavor) and informally (i.e., making sense of our daily lives). Paulo Freire highlights this relationship in his definition of *praxis— "reflection and action"* as a cyclical process that enables critical awareness, enabling informed action for meaningful social change.

Given its emphasis on both understanding society and improving it, social workers unsurprisingly emphasize the praxis in both scholarship and practice. Biggs (1999) points out, reflection is not simply a mirror image; it is a process that enables new insights about "what might be"—i.e., an improvement on the original (6). Social work scholars note that reflective

practice enhances professionalism, improves accountability, and leads to better social work

practice and outcomes for clients (Maclean 2010).[4] Arguably, social work has become

synonymous with evidence-based practice; the assumption is that any intervention ought to be

demonstrably, empirically effective. While evidence-based practice is at times conflated with

finding the single "correct" or "best" way to do things, it is fundamentally about continually

finding *better* ways to deliver service and create change (e.g., Weiss 1995; Coley & Scheinberg

2013). Evidence-based practice relies on information-gathering and reflection on that

information to assess the efficacy of any intervening action; put more broadly, it normalizes the

idea that social workers and other professionals benefit by continually reflecting and adapting to

new insights—supporting the notion that learning is continual, not terminal. Thus, social work

practice—like academic research—views growth as an ongoing process.

2. **The world is inherently social, and patterns of power (which exist as social facts, beyond individuals) shape how individuals understand/see the world.**

The notion that individuals are shaped by their society is foundational to both sociology and

social work. In fact, social work theorists and practitioners frequently employ the metaphor of an

ecosystem to highlight that individuals are always also part of something "larger than

themselves," as Allan Johnson puts it in *The Forest and the Trees* (1997). This assumption draws

largely on modernist social theories about the power of society to influence individuals' beliefs,

attitudes, and behaviors as well as standpoint theory.

Durkheim first coined the term "social fact" to explain that some aspects of our world

cannot be explained by individuals alone; instead, we must consider cultural patterns and social

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[4] Maclean (2010) highlights a variety of skills that contribute to critical reflection, including open-mindedness, description and observation, analysis and problem solving, self-awareness, and synthesis and evaluation. These principles of reflective practice shape the steps I take in this project.

structures that can powerfully shape anyone within a society. The study of social facts helps us understand individuals in two major ways: First, they emphasize that we are born into a world in which patterns already exist (i.e., to some extent, this is outside of our control); Second, we can *best* understand an individual when we also consider their multiple contexts (e.g., family, community, region, society). As C. Wright Mills puts it, an individual's biography may be better understood in the context of a society's (or a group's) history.

Thus, social facts are useful because they help us better understand individuals (as Mills points out)—but social facts *also* helps us identify and make sense of how patterns emerge and continue beyond the individual alone. While social reality shapes all of us, important patterns may *only* be visible when we look at groups (rather than individuals alone). Allan Johnson (1997) highlights this distinction as he plays with the metaphor of seeing the "forest for the trees"—as he points out, we cannot understand an entire forest by studying each tree individually; instead, considering the forest *as a whole* unlocks new questions and new information about patterns that we might miss if we only examined one tree at a time. In general, modernist theorists (e.g., Durkheim, Marx, Mills) share a common factor: they view social dynamics as *real*; doing so allows theorists to document the ways that social phenomena can powerfully influence the lives of individuals. As Thomas & Thomas (1928) succinctly put it: A thing is real if it is real in its consequences.

Students in my introductory sociology class often scoff at the notion that they would be shaped by society without realizing it. To address this skepticism, a colleague suggested that I ask students to participate in an online quiz with me about "urinal etiquette" (available at: http://www.albinoblacksheep.com/games/urinal). The website presents the quiz-taker with a variety of scenarios (each question offers a different configuration of people using some of the

six urinals) and grades the taker on whether he or she has selected the "correct" answer. Once students get past their initial embarrassment, they are often surprised at how uniform their responses are—as one male student put it, "even the women knew which one was right!" Moreover, the activity often ignites heated debate about which is the "right" answer, which, in turn, opens a conversation about why such a choice would be connected to "right" and "wrong."

Indeed, the rules and norms conveyed by socialization are so pervasive that they shape individual behavior in predictable ways (Durkheim 1897 ctd. in Lemert 1998). As we interact with others, we imagine how they perceive us, and we adjust our behavior in order to maintain their perceptions of us (i.e., Cooley's "looking glass self" 1902 ctd. in Lemert 1998). Johnson (1997) calls this the "path of least resistance"—we tend to opt for the particular course of action will be met with the fewest obstacles; importantly, the path of least resistance often operates to maintain the status quo. When students admonish or tease another student who voted for the "wrong" urinal, they provide an easy example of how the path of least resistance functions. Sanctions for non-normative behavior vary widely (ranging from embarrassment to isolation to violence). Yet, as Foucault (1979) points out in *Discipline and Punish*, the mere *threat* of sanctions often persuades individuals to monitor their own behavior. According to Foucault, this process mirrors that of the panopticon (a building designed by eighteenth century English philosopher Jeremy Bentham): a single person can sit in the top floor of a tall building with windows in all directions. Because the structure obscures the view from the ground, a single person (e.g., a prison guard) can easily monitor everyone in a surrounding area (e.g., a prison yard). Ultimately, then, the structure allows a single person to control a far larger group. As Foucault points out, however, the real strength of the panopticon lies in its effect on those in its purview. Individuals under surveillance are always exposed to the watcher; thus, they learn to

self-regulate their own behavior. Similarly, individuals gradually adapt to the path of least resistance according to social norms.

As we internalize these messages, they not only shape the way we see ourselves; they *also* shape the way we perceive the world. What we see—and what we fail to notice—is often reflective of our own social realities. By "social realities," I mean our group memberships, the power afforded or denied by those group memberships, and our lived experiences. To elucidate this point, I'll pose a question: Think about the building you are in right now. Could someone easily navigate the space from a wheelchair? Which entrances are available? How wide are the aisles? Which doors would be difficult to open while using a wheelchair?

Now, I'll ask a follow up question: Who can answer this question easily, and who has to pause and think about it? Why?

Standpoint theory argues that any person's perception of reality is inextricably tied to her experiences, which are shaped by her position in an unequal society. Society grants privilege, access, and power to certain groups due not to merit but group membership alone (McIntosh; Johnson 1997, 2008; Harro) Thus, a person's "social location" is not just about groups; it is about his experience of power due to those various groups.

Early proponents of standpoint theory emphasize that those in oppressed groups may be forced to notice more aspects of the world. For example, Hegel ([1807]1967) contrasts the perspective of a slave and his master; a slave must be able to function in both his master's world *and* his own; by contrast, it is relatively easy for a master to ignore the world of his slave; his power affords him the privilege to only think about his own world. Similarly, Marx (1848) suggested that the poor may be "in the best position to truly view society." Because social locations are mutually constituted—that is, because a person's position is always in relation to

another's—power and group status shapes the way we see the world. According to standpoint theorists, our social identities (such as race and gender and class) are not merely "things"—instead, they delineate relationships of power in society, which in turn, shape our experiences and our observations.[5]

Importantly, empirical data confirms that our positions provide different perceptions of reality. A variety of polls in the last ten years (e.g., Gallup Research 2014; The Pew Research center 2009; 2013; Washington Post 1995) highlight a continued gap between how Blacks and Whites view race relations. For example, Blacks remain twice as likely as whites to say that racism is "a big problem" (44 percent versus 22 percent) (Langer & Craighill 2009). Compared to Whites, Blacks rate race relations substantially lower on a variety of dimensions (e.g., general treatment, educational and job opportunities). Furthermore, in the last decades, whites are increasingly more likely to claim that whites suffer discrimination more than do Blacks: According to a longitudinal survey conducted by Norton & Sommers (2011), 11 percent of White respondents rated Anti-White Bias 2000-2009 as the highest possible score (i.e., a ten out of ten), whereas just 2 percent of whites deemed anti-Black bias similarly. Black respondents evaluated Anti-Black Bias higher than their White counterparts and also evaluated Anti-White Bias lower than their White counterparts (Norton & Sommers 2011). From a standpoint perspective, whites are less likely to notice difficulties experienced by people of color; therefore, their privilege may cause White people to overlook aspects of social reality that have to do with race.

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[5] Standpoint theorists therefore assert that members of oppressed groups in society must maintain a bifurcated lens—essentially, an ability to function fluently in multiple settings (sometimes referred to as "code switching" by anthropologists). Put differently, people's exclusion gives them a particular experience; that experience can offer useful insights; in short, because those denied power must inhabit both worlds, they are uniquely poised to enhance what we know about reality. Feminist theorists have long called for the perspective of marginalized groups (including women) as a strategy to problematize current assumptions about reality (Smith; Haraway; Harding; Hill Collins 2000; 2008).

3. **Our interactions do not simply reflect our perceptions of reality; they also *re-create* reality.**

In a way, structuralist theories are empowering; they clarify that an individual's circumstances are not necessarily the result of his/her individual choices/actions alone. Paradoxically, however, they can also be incredibly constraining.

Modernist and structuralist theories have *also* been rightfully criticized for two major reasons: first, they are seen as being problematic in their assumption of sameness—or, as Catherine Belsey puts it, "the structuralist danger of collapsing all difference" (1975:257). Second, because they may ignore important experiential differences, they tend to reinforce existing power dynamics.

For a good case study, consider the race tensions permeating the second-wave feminist movement. While Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* was groundbreaking in its ability to identify patterns that linked women's identities and dissatisfaction, she certainly overlooked important differences among women in terms of class, race and sexuality. As the feminist movement grew, its demands were increasingly defined by white women who strove to create a universal movement that could represent "all" women.

By asserting that "women's" needs were universally defined, Freidan (along with other powerful white women) assumed power over how the feminist movement and its priorities were defined. As the Combahee River Collective (1983) explains in "A Black Feminist Statement," many black women felt ostracized by Second Wave Feminists—as too did American Indian women, lesbians, working class and poor women. The authors point out that although Black women felt that sexual politics were important in their lives, so too were race and class oppression. Moreover, it is difficult to examine these oppressions separately because in their

lives they often experienced all three simultaneously. Finally, the Collective pointed out that they

must negotiate these multiple identities at once: Black women could not separate themselves

from Black men (in the ways that White women did from White men) because Black women had

to *also* fight alongside black men against racism. In this way, women of color felt not just

omitted but at odds with the movement.[6]

To overlook important distinctions is problematic; by overgeneralizing about a pattern of

gender, Freidan (and others) fail to acknowledge structural limitations that shape women's lived

experiences differently (depending on other social identities)—and by rendering these different

experiences (based on race, class, religion, etc.), oppressed groups may find themselves further

disempowered. Thus, differences require critical attention: they show how varied the experience

of "womanhood" can be—but they also hold important implications for social change.[7]

Post-modernists take up this angle as they challenge whether any category can be seen as

essential. For example, Judith Butler (1990), and Noel Ignatiev (1996) adopt principles of social

constructionism (e.g., Berger and Luckman 1966) and symbolic interactionism (e.g., Cooley

1902; Blumer 1969; Meltzer, Petras & Reynolds 1975) to point out that gender (according to

Butler) and race (according to Ignatiev) continue to organize social life *because people behave

as though gender and race are important and real.*

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[6] Who, notably, felt distinct from white middle-upper class housewives because they didn't *need* to ask for the right to work: this was an economic necessity for many women of color.

[7] Even when groups share major identity categories (e.g., Asian lesbians), the meaning of this identity will vary depending on a variety of factors, including context and personal experiences (Scott 1991). Thus, any group is inherently diverse, because all persons are simultaneously part of multiple groups, such as race *and* class *and* gender (Schutz 1967; Young 1990; Hill Collins 2000; Crenshaw 1991). Moreover, individuals within a group will almost certainly hold differing opinions, goals, and values. Katrina Roen (2002) offers a compelling example of this: as she interviews members of the transgender community, she notes that there are actually two distinct groups within the community—those who identify as a man or a woman, but are focused changing their physical bodies to align with their felt gender identity (ultimately upholding the existing gender binary) and those who do not consistently identify with man or woman, and wish to disrupt the gender binary.

In other words, post-structuralists helpfully challenge the notion that reality is simply imposed on social actors; instead, reality is socially constructed and reproduced through a dynamic process in which people participate. Ultimately, according to post-modern theories, social realities and patterns rely on participation in order to endure; thus, inequalities may ultimately be challenged if we alter our participation in those patterns.[8]

Notably, post-structuralists have been criticized for treating social realities as "empty" categories and oversimplifying the process of change. Laura Downs (1992) succinctly summarizes this concern in an article entitled, "If 'Woman' is an empty category, then why am I afraid to walk alone at night?" While her article does not always accurately represent post-structuralist notions about identity and experience, the title certainly captures the real danger in ignoring or downplaying the very real ways that patterns of power shape our lives.

4. **We can't *know* another's subjective experience, but we can learn more about ourselves and the world at large by meaningfully engaging with others.**

As post-structuralists point out, it is nearly impossible to assume that we *know* another person's perspective, experiences, or interpretation of the world. However, this does *not* negate the utility of scientific pursuit. Taken to its most extreme, belief in subjective reality endorses a solipsistic view of the world. On the contrary, I believe that our differing views (which are shaped by powerful dynamics and patterns) both reflect and challenge assumptions about social

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[8] For Butler (1990), productive change comes from parody (to highlight the fabricated nature of supposed truths, like gender); for Ignatiev (1996), progressive change comes from adopting the status of a "race traitor" (i.e., rejecting the privilege associated with whiteness. Ignatiev is, notably, the co-founder and co-editor of the journal *Race Traitor* and the New Abolitionist Society). Both Ignatiev and Butler emphasize the fragility of socially constructed reality and the agency of individuals to challenge that reality.

reality—blending both modernist theories and post-modernist theories. Yet a difficult question remains: how does one pursue a scientific project in a way that accounts for this messy paradox?

Ultimately, we must land on an approach that links epistemology (what we know) to our relationships with others—thereby requiring particular modes of interaction and communication. I explicitly draw on three major theories to embody this bridge: (1) dialogue as a mode of communication, (2) Johari Window, a technique developed by American psychologists Joseph Luft and Harrington Ingham, and (3) critical empathy.

Dialogue is a unique form of communication, allowing individuals to reflect on how their personal experiences relate to social patterns—ultimately enabling critical consciousness (McCormick 1999; Freire 1970; Bohm 1991; Schoem et al 2001; Dessel et al. 2008). As participants consider the connections between their experiences and the social world, they begin to better understand themselves, others and the world at large (Schoem et al 2001; Freire 1970). Dialogue usefully blends my sometimes dissimilar epistemological assumptions: it aligns with interactionist perspectives (as participants create shared meaning to understand reality)[9]; it *also* recognizes the real dynamics of power that shape our lives (as articulated by more modernist approaches); it also allows attention to difference and experience that may diverge from patterns assumed similarity (echoing post-modern theories). Most importantly, dialogue ultimately assumes that productive sharing in a respectful space can lead to meaningful growth over time.

This evolving process is clearly outlined by the Johari Window (Luft & Ingham 1955). Johari Window emphasizes that what we know about each other, the world, and ourselves is intrinsically relational. Moreover, it draws on principles of Goffman (1959) to highlight that social reality is a process of performance that may or may not be authentic; individuals

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[9] Freire, in particular emphasizes the importance of interdependence; as Zúñiga and colleagues say: "The pursuit of full humanity cannot be carried out in isolation or individualism, but only in fellowship and solidarity" (2007: 85).

continually engage in impression management to present themselves strategically to others. Luft and Ingraham describe a quadrant to explain how reality emerges socially—and, how this, determines what we see and what we know.

Figure 1. Johari Window (Luft & Ingham 1955).

		SELF	
		Known	Unknown
OTHER	Known	1	2
	Unknown	3	4

Quadrant 1 represents what is known (or agreed upon) by both the self and the other. For example, most people upon meeting me would correctly assume that I am a white woman, based on visual cues (skin color, secondary sex characteristics, attire). This section is also called the "open arena" quadrant by Charles Handy (2000). Quadrant 2 encompasses things that *others* see or know but that *I* am unaware of. For example, I may not know another's sexual orientation unless she chooses to disclose it. In this way, Quadrant 2 represents our "blind spots"—things that we cannot known until or unless someone shares information with us. Quadrant 3 encompasses my private space—information that I know but keep hidden from others (at least

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initially). While it is relatively easy to see my whiteness, for example, people are unlikely to know about my experiences on the crisis line at the University of Michigan and how it shaped my understanding about the relationship between gender, survivorhood, and race. If I opt to disclose that information (depending on a variety of factors, such as whether I feel comfortable or see the space as appropriate to do so), that information would become shared knowledge, moving from Quadrant 3 to Quadrant 1, because we would both know about it. Quadrant 4 represents the vast unknown—sometimes called "collective ignorance." According to dialogic principles and the Johari Window, this represents our human potential—which may remain unknown to others and us, or may emerge through a process of dialogue and growth. In this way, dialogue is a strategy to shift the composition of a person's Johari Window: As information is shared, what is known to both us and others is expanded; at the same time, our blind spots and what is hidden shrink, ultimately enabling a fuller picture (like the constellation of stars described earlier).

Embracing tension in Sociology & Social Work: Structure & Agency

Both sociology and social work struggle with a fundamental tension: that of structure and agency. In social work, this tension is explicitly demarcated by two areas of study: the macro and the micro. Classical sociological perspectives about social forces highlight the discipline's core assumptions as structuralist; however, more contemporary critical theories demonstrate the flaws of structuralist assumptions and emphasize the importance of individual agency in effecting social change. These ideas are complex, interlocking, and contradictory; they also foreground how instructors and students think about and understand race.

Theories of structuralism usefully demonstrate the powerful ways that social institutions shape people's behaviors and opportunities—often in ways that are invisible. A keystone of social theory is exploration of the *patterns* in social life, whether due to unforeseen forces (e.g., Durkheim), power disparities (e.g., Marx), the influence of historical patterns today (e.g., Mills 1959), or group membership (e.g., Du Bois 1903; Addams 1913; Freidan 1963). Sociologists would generally agree that identifying and dissecting these patterns provides a more complete view of reality, because the experiences of individuals do necessarily happen spontaneously; instead, individuals' experiences reflect history, powerful messages from culture, and policies of social institutions. Or, as Mills (1959) puts it, the sociological imagination is what enables us to "grasp history and biography and relations between the two" (3).

By examining how patterns reflect group membership, sociologists and social work scholars have exposed invisible social processes and provided important insights about power and inequality in society. Jane Addams, an early pioneer of social work, demonstrates this tension in her reflection on work with Hull House. Hull House served as a community resource to immigrants, providing education, housing, medical care, and language and skills training. Addams & Stark noted that these needs were fundamentally connected to ethnic/group status—in other words, the disadvantages and needs experienced by immigrants were fundamentally created at the social level. Addams noted that the Hull House's role was not simply to provide a community solution—which it was, offering childcare, housing, and events—but Addams also argued that Hull House was necessarily part of a broader movement: to effect change. The "three R's" of the settlement house movement were residence, research and reform, and Addams argued that they were interlocking: Change required "close cooperation with neighborhood people, scientific study of the causes of poverty and dependence, communication about these

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facts to the public, and persistent pressure for legislative and social reform" (1892 ctd. in Wade 1967). Informed intervention thus requires attention to both process and outcomes—as well as both structure and agency—for true social justice.

Research Question

Ultimately, the assumptions I have described—that learning is a process, rather than an end; that both structure and agency influence our lives; that we can learn more about each other and the world through shared interaction—converge to underscore my research question:

<u>How do students make sense of structure and agency as they learn about race and racism through a critical dialogic curriculum?</u>

Because I view structure and agency as a *tension*, I aim to understand how students grapple with this tension as they learn through dialogue's unique pedagogical approach. My research questions ultimately reflect my interest in a *process evaluation* of intergroup dialogue's critical-dialogic model (Nagda & Maxwell 2011; Sorensen, Nagda, Gurin & Maxwell 2009)—as well as my assumptions about praxis and the process of learning through reflection. Moreover, my research questions reflect my experiences and various roles within the program. Ultimately, I hope that the project's findings can inform those interested in pedagogy as well as those conducting intervention research, as I see intergroup dialogue as bridging both of these areas. Broadly, I aim to conclude with helpful insights and practical applications for instructors who include content on race and racism.

Considering my own identities

Given my attention to transparency and dimensions of power, I want to reflect on my own personal identities and how they shape my approach to the project. As a white woman, I found myself both excited and nervous to embark on a project about race. My initial reluctance to engage in this work resided in my curiosity about whether white people ought to remain the focus of race studies in intergroup dialogue (given that empirical data suggests that whites benefit most from dialogue), as well as whether I had the authority to analyze and make sense of the experiences of students of color, as my own whiteness undoubtedly shapes my own perspective. However, three important realizations have encouraged me to embrace this project: (1) it complements my already-established scholarly interest in attitude change; (2) it expands my professional capacity to challenge students—particularly those with privilege—through a critical curriculum; (3) it challenges me to grow as an ally to people of color.

First, as I have reflected on my scholarly pursuits thus far, I realized a prominent theme is my interest in attitudes and attitude change. As a scholar, I am often intrigued by how arguments are framed, what makes people support or challenge the status quo, the relationship between individual attitude change and behavioral change, and how attitudes relate to policy change. I have conducted studies on how people feel about survivors of rape, how and why heterosexual allies work for justice for the TBLG community, and how framing of abortion influenced policy over time.

My approach to each of these studies was not fueled by a desire to ignore survivors or TBLG persons or women; it was to better understand how individuals in the dominant group make sense of power and inequality, and what motivates them to reify or challenge that inequality. My desire to study those with power ultimately stems from my desire to effect

positive social change. Thus, upon consideration, a project designed to explore how students make sense of race and racism fits into the scope of my scholarship quite nicely.

Secondly, I welcome the opportunity to enhance my professional skills. I want to foster a curriculum that challenges students to critically examine their own social identities and experiences, to connect and these identities and experiences to social patterns of privilege and oppression, and to develop action plans to tackle inequalities. An integral part of this curriculum is understanding how students develop and grow.

Moreover, in my time as an instructor, I have learned that challenging white students to grapple with their white privilege is incredibly hard. (It is *also* often difficult to challenge men to consider male privilege, Christians to consider Christian privilege, and so on.) I want to be an excellent educator; in particular, I want to be an educator who can challenge white students to think about their privilege in a productive way. And I assume that I will emerge from this project better prepared to challenge these students as they develop and grow.

Finally, as a white person, I believe I have both power and a responsibility to challenge racism. For this reason, I identify as an ally to people of color. This allyhood shapes my personal and professional goals: I strive use my white privilege in productive ways (e.g., by challenging students to consider their privilege).

IGD has incredible potential to instruct students about the reality of social problems, their relationship to those problems, and how they might challenge them. Yet a responsible IGD curriculum must also be informed about how to most effectively challenge students. Further, it must do this in a way that accommodates inconsistency and multiple meanings of race and ethnicity and also that accommodates very real power inequalities.

How to read this dissertation

Contemporary news highlights the continued tension of race in our society, underscoring the need for effective interventions that address race and racism. This book emerges from my own positive experiences with inter- and intragroup dialogue as both an intervention and a pedagogical approach. To this end, I see learning and social change as inextricably linked. As I explore students' own reported experiences in the program, my interests and understandings are certainly shaped by my own background experiences to the program. Ultimately, this book is a production of my sometimes deep frustrations, my unyielding optimism for change, and my commitment as a fundamentally important strategy for change.

To this end, I aim not to offer *certainty,* but to offer insight, with the hope that it will enhance future experiences for participants and facilitators, students and teachers alike.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

The Complex & Paradoxical Nature of Race, Racism & White Privilege

Like structure and agency, race seems to embody a tension in social work and

sociological literature. Race is complex, to some extent, inherently paradoxical: it has real

consequences for people, despite having no consistent or empirical basis. Race identity may be

internally felt or externally ascribed; yet these identities may clash. Moreover, race can shape our

lives in invisible or hidden ways; it may seem to matter in some contexts but not others. Given

the paradoxical nature of race, it is certainly understandable that students may cognitively

struggle to make sense of race and how racism operates in society.

Race is a socially ascribed classification of an individual within a group based on social

criteria rather than genetic characteristics (Omi & Winant 1994; Crenshaw 1991; Simpson 2008).

These "social criteria" have changed throughout history, reflecting shifting political realities.

Consider, for example, the historical one-drop rule in the U.S. (where one drop of black blood

legally defined a person as black) compared to Haiti (where any history of whiteness makes a

person white); contemporary contestation over how much Native American heritage is "enough"

to claim "true" Native American identity; and the changing definition of whiteness in the U.S.

over time (gradually incorporating various European ethnicities, such as Irish and Italian) (Zinn

[1980]2003; Omi & Winant 1994; Kolchin 1999; Nagel1997; Guglielmo & Salerno 2003). In

other words, race is a *social* construct, rather than a biological or natural division of humankind (Jackson 1987 ctd. in Mahoney 1994).

Thus, race has been challenged, contested and rearticulated throughout history (Omi & Winant 1994; Winant 1998; Eichstedt 2001). Despite its constructed nature, race has been the basis for very real differential treatment: For people of color, continued oppression, physical abuse, denied access to material resources, legal mistreatment; for white people, privilege, representation in media and government, access to material resources, and legal protection. As Chesler (1995) puts it, "[w]e live in a society that contains, maintains, and reproduces major differences in life opportunities for people of different racial and ethnic groups" (p.38). Paradoxically, then, race is both permanent and variable (Omi & Winant 1994; Giroux 1997); it is critical to both disrupt the notion that race is an essential, rigid truth *and* to resist the temptation to view race as "as a mere illusion" (Omi & Winant 1994:54). Thus, we make meaning of race through its inequality—that is, contemporary understandings of race cannot exist outside our history of *racism* (Feagin 2004; Lewis 2004; Bonilla-Silva 2006). In other words, difference is not inherently the problem; inequality associated with those differences *is* the problem (Johnson 2006).

Clearly, race is complicated, nuanced and inconsistent. Complicating race even more is that it is both individual and collective; it can signify a personal sense of identity, a standpoint through which a person views the world, a category ascribed by others, discursive practices, culture, group norms, and ideological manifestations (Giroux 1997; Hill Collins 2000; Perry 2001, 2002; Lewis 2004). In this way, "race" encompasses a great deal. Race operates on a variety of levels; thus, to truly make sense of race, it is critical to employ both an individual *and* a structural lens.

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Unfortunately, racism is often equated with *problematic people*, or individual prejudicial behaviors. Eichstedt (2001) reports that many incoming first year college students define "racism" as some variation of prejudice—that is, individuals holding negative attitudes or acting on those attitudes. Whites who recognize that there are "racists out there" are unlikely to see themselves as complicit (Bonilla-Silva & Forman 2000:72), instead seeing racism as something a second party does to a third party (Frankenberg 1993). As Mahoney (1994-1995) points out, many middle-class white U.S. citizens see racism as "something that working class and poor whites (particularly Southerners) do to Blacks and other people" (1667). Similarly, Chesler (1995) notes, racism is typically viewed as a "lower class phenomenon, and as being synonymous with prejudice and discriminatory actions of individuals" (38). This ultimately allows many white people to frame the problem as *outside* of them.

Yet racism is more than overt acts of discrimination or bias based on race; racism also identifies a system (or overarching pattern in society) that historically and currently advantages one group and disadvantages other groups *simply due to racial identity* rather than merit or effort (Simpson 2008:141; see also McIntosh 1989; Bell 1997; Harro 1997; Johnson 1997, 2006). Ultimately, then, racism is an institutionalized system of dominance (Chesler 1995; Rose 1996; Bell 1997). The term "racism" may be used to convey how people feel and behave, but these enactments actually reflect how racism is woven into the fabric of our society (Johnson 2006:104). Because racism is embedded in society, we are *all* exposed to racism through socialization—meaning that we all internalize racist messages, whether we hold privileged or oppressed identities, and whether we knowingly choose to enact those messages or not (Chesler 1995; Rose 1996; Harro 1997; Goodman 2001; Johnson 2006)—a phenomenon various scholars

have called unconscious or implicit racism.[10] Thus racism is complicated and nuanced, overt and subtle, conscious and unconscious.

Racism has three major components: (1) It is a national consciousness—that is, an attitude/belief shared by the dominant group in society (Rose 1996). (2) It is reinforced through institutions (Chesler 1995; Rose 1996)—e.g., the media, schools, legal systems, health care and medicine—and socialization (Harro 1997). (3) It is maintained through an imbalance of social and economic power (Rose 1996; Bell 1997; Johnson 1997, 2006), and through various mechanisms that naturalize inequality and maintain the invisibility of white privilege (Bush 2004; Charbeneau 2009).[11]

Racism is not just about establishing the inferiority of people of color; it is also about protecting White privilege (Wise 2010). "White privilege" refers to those unearned advantages received by whites, taken-for-granted as neutral, average and universal (McIntosh 1989, Johnson 2006). Both McIntosh (1989) and Johnson (2006:25-32) offer excellent lists of examples of privilege in everyday life. McIntosh's original piece focuses exclusively on white privilege; Johnson also discusses examples of male privilege, heterosexual privilege, and privilege from able-bodied status.[12]

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[10] For examples of racism enacted unknowingly and unconsciously, see Klugel 1990 and Dovido 2001, as well as reports on implicit association tests (e.g., Greenwald, McGhee & Schwartz 1998; Karpinski & Hilton 2001; Dovidio, Kawakami & Gaertner 2002).

[11] Bush (2004) identifies nine mechanisms that reproduce patterns and support maintenance of white privilege: (1) Naturalization and mystification of inequality, (2) Naturalization of whiteness and invisibility of race-dominance, hiding privilege, (3) Rigid regulation of discourse; ideologies that obfuscate inequality, (4) Techniques that transmit and regulate values and relationships, (5) Racialized narratives that posit whites as better than people of color, (6) Beliefs in equality and awareness of inequality without commitment to actualize ideals, (7) Segregation and limited interracial interaction, (8) Norms of individualism and competition and (9) Stigmatization and marginalization of resistance to inequality.

[12] Notably, earlier writers also addressed the advantages of whites, including DuBois (1935), Ellison (1952) and Terry (1970).

White privilege has subsequently been explored in depth in a variety of areas. What follows is a list of examples of studies that indicate *systemic* privilege of white people. Note that this list is not meant to be exhaustive—a complete and detailed list of white privilege is beyond the scope of this literature review. Yet these empirical studies demonstrate the multifaceted and omnipresent nature of white privilege.

I would also like to note that most of these studies seek to highlight the oppression of people of color. Yet, importantly, this oppression *is relative to* the privilege of white people. Thus, following the example of McIntosh and Johnson, however, I try to reframe these empirical findings in order to emphasize the privileges associated with whiteness in just a few areas:

The criminal justice system (e.g., Sabol, Couture & Harrison 2007; Chew & Kelly 2009; Alexander 2012; Stevenson 2012), in which Whites are less likely to be arrested; if arrested, they are less likely to be charged; and if they are charged, they disproportionately receive lighter sentencing. For example, Black men are twenty to fifty times more likely to be imprisoned on drug charges than Whites—even though Whites and Blacks use and sell illegal drugs at similar rates (Stevenson 2012). More sobering, prosecutors are more likely to seek a death sentence when the race of the victim is white and are less likely to seek a death sentence when the victim is African-American (Paternoster et al. 2003). Furthermore, African-American defendants receive the death penalty at three times the rate of white defendants in cases where the victims are white (Donahue 2011).

Health disparities (e.g., Nelson 2002; Collins Jr., David, Handler, Wall, & Andes 2004), from which Whites face fewer obstacles to accessing health care and have better health outcomes than people of color. For example, Collins and colleagues (2001; 2004) have conducted empirical studies on maternal outcomes; they conclude that experiences of racial discrimination,

accumulated over the life of the mother, account in part for differential birth outcomes, even

when controlling for education and class. Additional research indicates that Whites tend to live

in communities with fewer environmental hazards (Downey & Hawkins 2008), such as lower

incidence of lead poisoning (Meyer, Pivetz, Dignam, Homa, Schoonover & Brody 2003),

decreased proximity to toxic waste (Pastor & Sadd 2001), and better air quality (Morello-Frosch

& Jesdale 2006). White communities also tend to have better access to healthy foods and

supermarkets, ultimately resulting in better health outcomes (Treuhaft & Karpyn 2010).[13]

Education (e.g., Epps 1995; Orfield 2001; Harper & Hurtado 2007). From an early age,

white students often reap the lingering benefits of geographical segregation: areas dominated by

whites tend to house schools with better access to resources and offer better college readiness.

Even today, whites attend the most segregated schools—and the more segregated schools are in

an area, the more unequal they tend to be (Orfield 2001). Further, White students are more likely

to graduate from high school: the dropout rate for Whites in 2009 was 5.2%, compared to 9.3%

of their Black peers and 17.6% of their Hispanic/Latino peers (U.S. Department of Education

2011). White students are more likely to be "tracked" into advanced courses and college

preparatory work compared to students of color (Oakes, Muir & Joseph 2000). And, after

college, Whites, unlike students of color, are less likely to encounter race-based obstacles in

post-secondary education, such as racial discrimination or an unwelcoming campus climate

(Harper & Hurtado 2007). Moreover, White students are often unaware of discrimination or

hostility on campus (Rankin & Reason 2005).

These examples I list above emphasize how whites *as a group* benefit from their race (or

perceived race) as compared to people of color. Yet, as McIntosh and Johnson (among others)

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[13] Treuhaft & Karpyn (2010) offer a terrific literature review on access to healthy foods.

point out, these advantages also shape the daily experiences—and consciousness—of white individuals, whether they recognize it or not. Johnson and McIntosh offer a variety of examples (not being followed in a store, being able to assume that they will not be challenged or asked what they are doing in public, assuming that their success will not come as a surprise to others based on their race). Furthermore, both Johnson and McIntosh emphasize that Whites have been taught to not recognize white privilege; this, in turn, contributes to its invisibility—and to whites' tendency to see it as "natural." McIntosh (1988) explains, "I think whites are carefully taught not to recognize white privilege, as males are taught not to recognize male privilege…. My schooling gave me no training in seeing myself as an oppressor, as an unfairly advantaged person, or as a participant in a damaged culture" (NP). For McIntosh, exploring those benefits of white privilege helps her recognize the invisible advantages she overlooks every day.

In this way, white privilege—like other forms of privilege—affords "the luxury of obliviousness" (Johnson 2006:22); people normally do not feel or notice the privilege they have (McIntosh 1988; hooks 1996; Giroux 1997; Johnson 1997, 2006; Goodman 2001). As Johnson explains, "I don't *feel* privileged in that moment. I just feel that I did a good job, and I enjoy the rewards that are supposed to go with it. The existence of privilege doesn't mean I *didn't* do a good job or that I don't deserve credit for it. What it does mean is that I'm also getting something that other people are denied, people who are like me in every respect except for the social categories they belong to" (21-22). Paradoxically, white privilege connotes both advantage and obliviousness to that advantage (as explained by the limited perspective described by standpoint theorists).

On the other hand, several scholars have persuasively argued that, over the last few decades, whiteness has been wrenched back into the limelight—and even aggressively embraced

by the right (Giroux 1997). Conservatives have consistently invoked racialized language to define whiteness by negatively labeling minority races (e.g., "welfare moms," "violent youth," "thugs") and labeling whites as victimized (e.g., "reverse racism," Obama's "deep-seated hatred of whites").

Thus, whiteness, in addition to being a race category, "also stands for the dominant, transparent norm that defines what attributes of race should be counted, who should be counted, how to count them, and who gets to do the counting" (Mahoney 1994-1995:1659). Or, as Tim Wise (2005) puts it, to be born white is to be born belonging; not only do Whites "inherit certain advantages from the past;" they also "continue to reap the benefits of ongoing racial privilege" (xi).

Whiteness studies

While race studies comprise a long and rich history, the focus on whiteness is relatively new. Various scholars have called for enhanced attention to whiteness—including its manifestation in individual lives, the ways it is constructed, understood, and challenged, and its influence on historical and contemporary society. These calls have resulted in an emerging area called "whiteness studies." Whiteness studies builds on early work by DuBois, Ellison, Baldwin and Terry and has infiltrated a variety of disciplines and tackled many different topics (e.g., Hardiman 1982, 2001; Roediger 1991; Morrison 1992; Frankenberg 1993; Nakayama & Krizek 1995; Giroux 1997; Winant 1997; Eichstedt 2001; Lewis 2004; Ford, forthcoming).

Motivation to study whiteness reflects four broad goals: (1) deconstructing whiteness as a category challenges its position as a taken-for-granted norm; (2) studying whiteness offers us a better understanding of society; (3) studying whiteness helps us better understand how white

people understand themselves (thereby allowing us to support white students as they learn and develop); (4) studying whiteness offers new possibilities for *how* whiteness is understood and enacted—and may allow us to conceptualize a *positive* white identity.[14]

 Studying whiteness offers us a better understanding/awareness of society. Whiteness is an integral component of race relations and racial politics in contemporary U.S. society; thus, a full understanding of society necessitates an explanation of how whiteness operates and influences society. We know, for example, that whiteness is directly tied to privilege and power; thus, studying whiteness allows us to explore "how whiteness as a cultural practice promotes race-based hierarchy," as well as "how white racial identity structures struggle over cultural and political resources" and "how rights and responsibilities are defined, confirmed, or contested" (Giroux 1997:297). In short, to overlook whiteness is to overlook a significant and influential element of society.

 Moreover, we are likely to learn much by examining *whitenesses*—the ways that whiteness are constituted in multiple ways according to various intersecting identities (Chesler 2006).[15] This approach offers even more potential to deconstruct whiteness and white privilege—framing it as not invariable but complicated, ever changing and operating in various

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[14] I want to clearly identify my *own* motivation as I employ a framework of whiteness. My desire to study whiteness comes from my experiences as a white instructor working with intergroup dialogue. I have observed firsthand the difficulty of coaching white students, encouraging them to acknowledge their whiteness, and grappling with their white privilege. I have also worked with facilitators who have struggled to challenge themselves and their white students to see the consequences of whiteness. These different roles and experiences (personal confrontations, acting in a facilitator capacity, supervising facilitators and working on curriculum design) have shaped my personal identity and my desire to push other white people to work for positive change. I recognize that oppressed race groups are underrepresented in society, and I hope that my project is not read as a continuation of this underrepresentation. Instead, I hope that my efforts facilitate a better understanding of whiteness and the ways that white people can challenge injustice. I further reflect on my role as a white person investigating whiteness in the methods section.

[15] This approach echoes Connell's *Masculinities* (1995), which suggests that we can best understand male privilege by approaching it as varying in nature—that is, multi-faceted and shifting according to class, race, and sexuality—as well as other postmodern identity theorists who challenge identity as static and unifying. (Some good examples include Butler 1990; Young 1994; Waters 2001; Perry 2002.)

ways.[16] Indeed, a variety of qualitative research suggests that whiteness is hardly uniform—I will address this below as I discuss theories of individual growth and development.

Deconstructing whiteness challenges its position as the taken-for-granted norm. As I discussed previously, part of what defines whiteness is its status as unquestioned, taken-for-granted, and normative. It offers "the luxury of obliviousness" (Johnson 2006:22). This is made possible by whiteness as the unmarked category (Brekhus 1998). Ironically, many studies inadvertently reinforce this message by investigating whites' attitudes about *other* racial groups, rather than focusing on whites' own racialness (Lewis 2004). This contributes to the notion that to be white is to be without race. Whiteness studies, as a discipline, seeks to ameliorate this problem by addressing whiteness—that is, by "making the center visible" (Nakayama & Krizek 1995). In this way, whiteness studies is a political project, striving to illuminate power. As Mahoney writes, "Because whiteness is the transparent and dominant norm, part of any transformative project necessarily involves exposing white privilege to white people" (Mahoney 1994-1995:1659).

Exposing whiteness does more than make it visible; it also enables us to challenge its power. It is not enough to merely observe, we must also ask questions about *how* and *why* whiteness operates as it does. For example, Pamela Perry (2001) asks us *what* is reproduced by denying that there is a white culture. In other words, whiteness studies seeks to not just identify, but challenge power imbalance and inequality. When "dominant ideologies go unchallenged, harmony is preserved, and dissent is silenced" (hooks 1996, Moon 1999 ctd. Simpson 2008:152). Thus, whiteness studies is ultimately a "project of revealing power." (Mahoney 1994-

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[16] I do not mean to suggest that one identity would detract from white privilege; instead, I assert that white privilege is better understood by considering its differing appearance according to gender, class, age, sexual orientation, religion, and other intersecting identities.

1995:1679). By revealing this power, whiteness becomes open to analysis, evaluation,

challenge—and change (Andersen 2003).

Studying whiteness allows us to better understand white individuals. A critical approach

to studying whites does more than name the privileges that accompany whiteness; it also allows

us to investigate how whiteness and white race identity are enacted and understood (Chesler

2006; McDermott & Samson 2005). Whiteness is, simply put, a crucial form of self-identity

(Hardiman 1982; Perry 2001, 2004). Whiteness studies allow us to investigate how whites

narrate and represent themselves, capturing the "shifting, unstable" nature of whiteness (Giroux

1997) as well as the ways that whiteness is felt, embodied, and expressed.

Finally, *studying whiteness offers new possibilities for how whiteness is understood and*

enacted—and hope for a reconstructed, positive white identity. Deconstructing whiteness allows

us to reconfigure and make new meaning out of whiteness.[17] Given its links to hegemony and

oppression, it is understandable that many white students feel ashamed to align themselves with

white identity. Students have learned that the "good whites" are colorblind, and the only white

people who invoke their whiteness are Neo-Nazis and other supremacists. In this way, white

people are socialized to avoid race: whiteness becomes equated with socially constructed

ignorance.

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[17] In asserting the possibility for a new reconstructed whiteness, I position myself in opposition to those in the
abolitionist camp (e.g., Ignantiev, Roediger), who claim that "the key to solving the social problems of our age is to
abolish the white race…. Treason to whiteness is loyalty to humanity" ("RaceTraitor" 1993). These theorists were
not calling for racial conflict—but they were suggesting that whites renounce their whiteness and its privilege. This
stance has been criticized by various theorists (e.g., Giroux 1997, Hardiman 2001), who point out that evading
whiteness is not pragmatic; moreover, an abolitionist approach fails to explain what white youth ought to do with
their identity once they have denounced their whiteness. Finally, an abolitionist approach problematically suggests
that race is "so flimsy that it can be repudiated by a mere act of political will" (Winant 1997:48). Instead, I align
myself with an effort to redefine and reconstruct a white identity that is pro-social justice.

Yet in describing the possibilities for a "new white consciousness," Terry (1970) writes, "What is at stake for America today is not what black people want and do, but what white people stand for and do" (15). Thus, we must consider how whiteness and white racial consciousness could be rearticulated in a way that promotes positive change. A positive white identity would facilitate enhanced awareness of institutionalized racism and a decrease in explanations that blame victims for their own oppression (Tatum 1992).

In order to produce these critically thinking students who might embrace this "new white consciousness," we must develop a *critical pedagogy of whiteness.* A pedagogy of whiteness strives to critically examine whiteness through curriculum and course design, engaging students in an examination of the social, political, historical, and psychological aspects of race and racism while locating whiteness as a site of power and privilege (Giroux 1997; Kincheloe 1999; Hytten & Adkins 2001). Kincheloe (1999) asserts that a critical pedagogy of whiteness as an integral part of a critical multicultural education; within a multicultural context, a pedagogy of whiteness offers potential to enhance awareness and understanding of and among white students.

In some ways, constructing a pedagogy of whiteness is fundamentally a political project. "Educators and other cultural workers need to fashion pedagogical practices that take a detour through race in order to address how whiteness might be renegotiated as a productive force within a politics of difference linked to a radical democratic project" (Giroux 1991:297). Constructing a pedagogy of whiteness "is a counterhegemonic act," because it enables us to reconfigure "whiteness in anti-racist, antihomophobic and antisexist ways" (Rodriguez 1998 qtd. in Kolchin 2005).

In another way, a pedagogy of whiteness aims to equip our students with a more complete understanding of themselves and the world. White students must understand and

grapple with their whiteness in order to understand *who they are* (Giroux 1997). Ultimately, this provides white students with the opportunity to rearticulate whiteness in new and positive ways. "White youth need a critical and productive way to construct a sense of identity, agency, and race across a range of contexts and public spheres" (Giroux 1997:293).

Further, white students must position their whiteness within a framework of cultural citizenship in an ever-shrinking pluralistic and connected world. Moreover, it does this without relying entirely on people of color to teach them how to do this. White people *are* a part of a diverse society; they must have skills to understand what their whiteness signifies and how to work across conflict and difference (Foley 1996). Diversity works best when *all* people engage in it. Students who are able to understand themselves and their relationships to others can better engage in alliance building and activism for social change. In this way, a pedagogy of whiteness offers an important opportunity:

> "By rearticulating whiteness as more than a form of domination, white students can construct narratives of whiteness that both challenge, and, hopefully, provide a basis for transforming the dominant relationship between racial identity and citizenship" (Giroux 1997: 299-300).

An effective pedagogy of whiteness must support white students as they work to make sense of racism in society. Currently, White students have few resources for questioning and rearticulating whiteness; it is the job of a critical pedagogy to provide resources and curriculum that will equip students to address these topics. Moreover, drawing attention to white privilege can elicit both fear and anger that come from having to rethink one's identity and destabilizing "truths," such as equality and commonality (Thompson & Disch 1992; Chesler 1995; Rose 1996; Giroux 1997). One suggestion has been to focus on *whiteness*, rather than white racism (1997).

As Kincheloe (1999) observes, whiteness studies seems sometimes better able to explain white privilege than whiteness itself (p.1). Yet focusing on only white privilege may overlook

other aspects of whiteness; it may also push students into resistant and defensive stances. Fears that white students have include facing the fact that some of what they have is unearned; feeling that they have been defined as racist, simply because they are white; that there is uneven distribution of rights and wealth throughout society, and that they will have to been seen by people of color—which will ultimately force them to confront their own internalized racism, biases, etc. (Jensen 2005; Wise 2009). (Recall, for example, Gallagher's findings about resistant students.) On the other hand, a theoretical framework of whiteness(es) can push us "beyond framing whiteness as *either* good or bad, racially innocent *or* intractably racist" (Giroux 1997:312). By moving beyond such a constrained framework, a critical pedagogy of whiteness will equip white youth (and students of color) with a critical lens, vocabulary, and "a social imaginary through which they can see themselves as actors in creating an oppositional space to fight for equality and justice" (Giroux 1997:296).

In short, programs and curricula must allow students to overcome resistance, destabilize their assumptions about race, and provide space to re-imagine a more socially just world. White students also need to be provided with opportunities to explore and deal with racism on a variety of levels (personal, interpersonal, institutional) and to collaborate with people of color in efforts to dismantle or challenge discrimination and racist practices (Chesler 1995). This effort can create a sense of *community* across differences—which reminds *all* students of their global citizenship (1995). All students need to feel they have a personal stake in their racial identity—a pedagogy of whiteness and praxis ultimately provides them with the political agency to challenge problematic systems within a diverse democracy (Giroux 1997:297). Giroux goes on to say:

> Students must be able to air their views on whiteness and race, regardless of how messy or politically incorrect such positions might be…. I am suggests that students

be offered a space for dialogue and critique in which such positions can be engaged, challenged, and re-articulated through an ongoing analysis of the material realities and social relations of racism (p.312).

Open and honest discourse about race and racism that engages both hearts and minds is a critical component of pushing forward our understanding of whiteness (Chesler 1995). For this reason, intergroup dialogue may be uniquely situated to employ and investigate a critical pedagogy of whiteness.

Understanding Whiteness: Models of White Identity and White Racial Consciousness

Whiteness studies are not limited to broad cultural patterns; in fact, as many sociologists point out, broad sociological patterns can be better understood by attending to individuals (cite). To this end, a variety of existing models seek to explain white racial identity; additionally, research has investigated how and why whites' attitudes shift over time (models of "white racial consciousness"), and how white activists view their position. Offering a comprehensive report of these studies is beyond the scope of this paper; however, I will provide a condensed overview of the aspects that seem most compelling to my proposed dissertation.

Models that conceptualize identity development and change in attitude both seek to understand how and why white people may change over time. However, these approaches rarely interact with one another: identity development models tend to emphasize psychology, while understandings of racial consciousness tend to be rooted in attitude change and are more frequently used by sociologists. Both of these approaches may offer insight as to how white students change throughout the dialogue experience.

The best-known models that explain white identity development come from Hardiman (1982, updated in 1992 & 2001) and Helms (1984, updated in 1995). While Hardiman's remains

entirely theoretical, Helms' model—which was developed through interviews and is based on Black identity development—has been empirically investigated (Rowe, Bennett & Atkinson 1994; Hardiman 2001). Hardiman (2001) states that her model is more about confronting personal understanding of race—in particular, that it is about understanding and describing white *activists,* rather than all white people.[18] Helms' model, on the other hand, attempts to explain how whites, like all people, go through a process of developing a racial consciousness.

Ponterotto's model (1988), based on observations of White graduate students, expands Helms' model to accommodate interaction with all race groups (rather than just Blacks). Despite this attempt, Ponterotto's model, like Helms', focuses simply on Whites' development of attitudes *about others*, rather than investigating Whiteness in and of itself (Saldaña 2011). Finally, these three models of White racial identity development have been synthesized into a single, comprehensive model by Sabnani, Ponterotto, and Borodovksy (1991). To compare these models and those that follow, see Figure 2.

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[18] Hardiman suggests the model can be used by practitioners seeking training and awareness of whiteness with regard to conflict resolution, diversity trainings, and multicultural educators.

Figure 2. Models of White Identity Development & White Racial Consciousness.

Hardiman (1982, 1994)	Helms (1984, 1995)	Sabnani, Ponterotto, & Borodovksy (1991)	Rowe, Bennett & Atkinson (1994)	
1. No social consciousness of race/naiveté - does not understand racial differences	Contact - others have race; focuses on individual differences; everyone really is the same	1. lack of awareness as social being	Unachieved: little to no exploration of—or commitment to—racial matters	Avoidant - have not explored racial issues; ignore, deny, or minimize racial issues
2. Acceptance - accepts or internalizes racism; sense of self as racially superior-- often unconscious	Disintegration - acknowledges that prejudice/discrimination exist; sees self as majority but not oppressor because doesn't perpetrate ; feels guilt	2. interaction with members of other cultures		Dependent - narrow and limited understanding of racial issues that are heavily influenced by others.
3. Resistance - questions the dominant paradigm about race	Reintegration - focuses on self as majority member, own group issues and needs; negative towards minority experience	3. breakdown of former knowledge regarding racial matters and conflict		Dissonant - conflicted between racial attitudes and contradictory experiences that call into question their belief system; wavering in their racial attitudes
4. Redefinition - begins to clarify own self-interest in working against racism; begins to take responsibility for whiteness	Immersion/ Emersion - accept minority members as friends if they are similar; sees systemic prejudice but does not actively combat it	4. pro-minority stance	Achieved: at least some exploration of—and commitment to—racial issues	Dominantive - believe in the superiority of Whites; may act out racist attitudes passively or directly.
5. Internalization - integrates increased consciousness & awareness about race and racism into all aspects of life	Autonomy - seeks intercultural experience & awareness; values diversity; actively addresses systemic inequality	5. pro-white & antiminority stance		Conflictive - individuals do not support obvious racism but still value a Eurocentric worldview over alternate worldviews
				Integrative - hold positive racial attitudes; relate to a variety of racial and ethnic issues, are rational and pragmatic in orientation
		6. internalization		Reactive - strong prominority attitudes; may be unaware of personal responsibility in maintaining or challenging a racist status quo

While it has received some empirical support, Helms' model has been criticized for a few

reasons. First, it is based on models of Black identity, which limits its ability to fully address

privilege in white identity; this basis also limits its scope to race in a way that makes it difficult to account for intersecting identities, in which whiteness and white privilege may be understood and felt differently (Chesler et al. 2003). Second, it focuses exclusively on relationships between blacks and whites, overlooking other race groups and problematically framing race as binary— though Ponterotto's work directly addresses this issue. Third, all of these models focus on how Whites react to minorities, rather than how Whites make sense of their whiteness—which, to reiterate, may unintentionally reinscribe White as the raceless norm. Fourth, these models have been criticized for being too linear; in response to this, Helms revised her model in 1995 and reframed the "stages" as "statuses" to emphasize one's ability to move back and forth or skip over particular steps (Hardiman 2001; Saldaña 2011).

Models of White Racial Consciousness have been proposed as an alternative to White Racial Identity models. White Racial Consciousness grounds itself in observations of how whites understand their racial identity; WRC models aim to be descriptive, whereas White identity models tend to be prescriptive (Leach, Behrens and LaFleur 2002; Saldaña 2011). Ideally, this approach enables better assessment, and more accurate prediction of future behavior (Block and Carter 1996 ctd. in Saldaña 2011).

A variety of scholars have explored White Racial Consciousness, including Ruth Frankenberg (1993), Rowe, Bennett and Atkinson (1994), Pamela Perry (2001, 2002), Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2003), Tyrone Forman (with Bonilla-Silva 2000), and McKinney (2005). Each of these models is unique, but they share some common elements. Most of these writers point out that some whites do not think about their whiteness; or, if they do, they see whiteness as "culturally empty" (Frankenberg 1993, Rowe Bennett & Atkinson 1994, Perry 2001, 2002)—a concept which I will discuss in more depth in the next section.

Among those who *do* think about race, whites may see their race as a liability—either because it makes them vulnerable to accusations of racism (McKinney 2005) or because it actually disadvantages them—particularly in the face of affirmative action (Bonilla-Silva & Forman 2000, Chesler et al 2003, McKinney 2005). Some white persons deny structural racism, and believe instead that people of color "play the race card" (Wise 2006) or use racism as an excuse (Bush 2004). Whites may also believe that racism and discrimination are behind us, no longer occurring in society (Bonilla-Silva & Forman 2000; Bonilla-Silva 2003; Johnson 2006), or feel apathetic about racism (Forman 2004). Still others acknowledge whiteness as linked to privilege (O'Brien 2001; Thompson 2001; Bush 2004; Johnson 2006).

Unsurprisingly, White Racial Consciousness overlaps substantially with research on Whites' attitudes, which have been categorized in a variety of ways, including old fashioned (or overt) racist attitudes (Gaertner & Dovidio 1986), more nuanced symbolic racist attitudes (Sears 1988; Dovidio, Kawakami & Gaertner 2002), individualistic or self-interested racist attitudes, colorblind racist attitudes (Bonilla-Silva & Forman 2000; Chesler et al. 2003; Bonilla-Silva 2006), or liberationist/antiracist attitudes (Bonilla-Silva & Forman 2000; O'Brien 2001; Chesler et al. 2003; McKinney 2005).

The White Racial Consciousness model has been criticized as overlapping substantially and/or actually fitting into stage models of development (Block and Carter 1996 ctd. in Saldaña 2011). However, it has also been praised for its ability to be studied; unlike developmental models, which are incredibly difficult to study because they occur over a lifespan, attitudinal "types" afford more possibility of empirical investigation (Saldaña 2011). On the other hand, limiting studies to Whites' attitudes about out-groups brings us back to a recurring dilemma: the lack of theory about how Whites understand their whiteness. Arguably, these concepts likely

overlap in some way. Attitudes and views of white people logically reflect a particular understanding of the world—and therefore parallel growth and development of white individuals.

One pitfall of both attitudinal models and stage development is that they tend to reflect the researcher's ideal (i.e., which attitude is "good" or which stage demonstrates elevated growth and development); by contrast, we might learn more about how white students arrive at their assumptions by documenting and deconstructing *narratives*. This focuses on the process students undertake rather than the *ends* (i.e., a particular attitude or developmental stage). From a dialogic standpoint—as well as a teaching standpoint—this offers tremendous potential to better understand how students think—including their underlying assumptions and their reasoning process.

Moreover, while stage development emphasizes the importance of one's *own* identity, narratives about race easily bridge one's personal understandings *and* attitudes. This, in turn, opens the possibility of comparing students' reasoning across races. In other words, a narrative analysis enables a focus on multiple race groups to explore how white students and students of color may differ in their understandings and cognitive processes about race and racism, specifically.

A variety of empirical studies have found that White people cannot define what it means to be white. Whites generally do not knowingly share a common sense of identity; in effect, "White" has been equated with "culturelessness." Ruth Frankenberg's (1993) interviews with white women illustrate this phenomenon, as women bemoan how "boring" and "plain" they are, comparing themselves to (white) Wonder bread, and wishing that they were something "more exotic." Jester (1992) reports that British youth "do not feel that they have an ethnicity, or if they

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do, that it's not one they feel too good about" (p.107 qtd. in Giroux 1997:296). These findings suggest that people define their whiteness in relation to what it is *not*—echoing academic models White Identity Development.

Moreover, when asked to describe whiteness, Whites have a difficult time answering the question (Frankenberg 1993; Perry 2001, 2002). As I have argued above, the inability to describe whiteness, white culture, and white experience both reflects and reproduces patterns of inequality. Ultimately, the capacity to ignore one's race (if it has no seeming impact) has two paradoxical effects. First, it may lead Whites to see race as *outside* of them; that to have race is to be a person of color. When respondents complain that they are "boring," or find themselves unable to describe whiteness, they are actually reflecting its role as dominant and normative. Thinking and behaving as if only people of color have a race "masks" whiteness—and frames race as something that only disadvantages, overlooking the fact that race *also* advantages (Bush 2004).

A second, and perhaps contradictory effect, is that ignoring race may lead Whites to dismissing the importance of race altogether. According to the American Mosaic Project Survey (2001), 72% of people of color surveyed said that their racial identity was very important; only 37% of white participants said their racial identity was very important (reported in Croll 2007). Just fifty percent of Whites describe racism against Blacks as "a widespread problem in the U.S. today," compared to sixty percent of Hispanics surveyed and seventy-eight percent of Blacks surveyed (Gallup 2008). Furthermore, Blacks consistently report that discrimination is a "major" factor in explaining racial disparities in education (64% agree), income (71% agree), life expectancy (57% agree) and prison rates (80% agree). By contrast, White respondents were far less likely to evaluate discrimination as a "major" factor in education levels (39%), income

(42%), life expectancy (31%), and prison rates (51%). White respondents were also far more likely to view discrimination as not at all a factor compared to both Black respondents and Hispanic respondents.

Moreover, young white people are often encouraged to embrace a liberal rhetoric and to ignore racial differences (Chesler et al. 2003). Chesler et al. (2003) interviewed college students about their experiences with race prior college; one student reported, "I was told [by my high school teacher] there was nothing to talk about" (p.223). In this way, invisibility, coupled with "a well-intentioned, middle class, liberal desire to get beyond race" advocates for colorblindness (Williams 1995 ctd. in Eichstadt 2001). Frankenberg (1993) points out that many of the women she interviews engage in "color evasiveness," because they fear that to admit seeing color is "to be caught 'being prejudiced'"—which suggests that race is bad in and of itself (p.145). This can put whites in a dilemma: to see race is to be inherently racist; thus, the best course of action is to avoid seeing race altogether.

Because it renders white privilege invisible, colorblindness also ushers in a rhetoric of reverse racism or reverse discrimination. In an ethnographic study, Gallagher (1996) found that many white students did not see themselves as privileged by their race; instead, these students talked about the unfair advantage that minorities received in the job market and in school (paralleling *Gratz v. Bollinger* and *Grutter v. Bollinger*). Gallagher's participants went on to say that they were uncomfortable in courses that dealt critically with privilege (e.g., multiculturalism, feminism, queer studies, ethnic studies). In part, these students were afraid that instructors would hold them personally accountable for historical inequality; but ultimately, like Frankenberg's interviewees, these students read any class that addressed racism as anti-white. With a lens of

colorblindness, then, whites frequently define themselves as *victims* in the context of race

(Chesler et al. 2003).[19]

Conversely, white anti-racism activists emphasize the need to claim their white identities

(Eichstadt 2001). Nearly all white activists interviewed by Eichstadt asserted that they couldn't

just claim to be "merely individuals"—instead, they discussed the importance of acknowledging

their whiteness and the advantages that come with it (2001). "For whites to minimize the

importance of whiteness to their identity and life experiences is often seen as an attempt to

sidestep responsibility for ending racial oppression" (2001:448). In another study, Saldaña

(2011) found that, as racial consciousness increased throughout intergroup dialogue

participation, students' expressed colorblindness decreased slightly. This suggests that white

people can, and do, change in their understandings of race, whiteness, and power.

Moreover, these findings indicate that much is to be gained from a project that explores

how and why individuals promote, challenge, or make sense of particular narratives about race,

because this approach would not simply identify results, but processes that explain how people

arrive at the assumptions they do.

Learning about Race through Narrative Analysis

A few particularly prominent race studies have uncovered compelling patterns by

exploring narratives. Simply put, narratives are stories about events, lives, or patterns, which can

access and unlock a variety of perspectives on human experience (Riessman 1993; Wiess 1994;

Lofland, Snow, Anderson & Lofland 2006). In other words, narratives are the are ways that we

convey meaning about how we see ourselves and how we relate to the others and the world

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[19] David Horowitz, for example, writes, "Black studies celebrates blackness, Chicano studies celebrates Chicanos, women's studies celebrates women, and white studies attacks white people as evil" (ctd in Fears 2003).

(2006). For example, in *Racism without Racists,* Bonilla-Silva (2003) rightfully identifies the "strange enigma" of race in contemporary United States. In particular, he identifies how racial inequality and white privilege maintain, despite changes in attitudes of white people since the civil rights era. In other words, Bonilla-Silva points out that while attitudes have changed, behavioral patterns have not (e.g., most white people say they would welcome a person of color to dinner, but few whites have actually done so). As Bonilla-Silva points out, contemporary whites seemingly hold attitudes of goodwill; thus, he asks, how does inequality continue? To answer explore the difficult nature of contemporary racism, Bonilla-Silva engages in a narrative analysis of colorblindness.

"Colorblindness" (or color evasiveness, as Frankenberg calls it, or color avoidance, as Chesler has called it) has become such common rhetoric among whites that it has been named "the new racism" (Doane 2003; Bonilla-Silva 2006). As a strategy, whites claiming colorblindness can maintain a commitment to abstract liberalism and equality by "overlooking" race and emphasizing everyone's humanness (Doane 2003; Chesler et al. 2003). Unfortunately, colorblindness also allows whites to minimalize racism and to deny responsibility for racism (Doane 2003; Bonilla-Silva 2006), because colorblindness suggests that skin color and racial identities are not salient markers of lived experiences (Young 2000; Simpson 2008). When Whites employ or claim colorblindness, they "deny and devalue the lived experiences of people of color"—ultimately providing "no space for those perspectives and experiences to meaningfully inform a collective understanding of our world" (Simpson 2008:142). Or, put another way, colorblindness masks white privilege—as well its capacity to influence individual

behavior, institutional practices, and policy formation (Chubbuck 2004; Saldaña 2011).[20] In this way, according to Frankenberg (1993), color evasion is ultimately *power* evasion.

Bonilla-Silva's analysis, because it draws on narratives, helps unearth precisely *how* whites assert and maintain commitment to colorblindness. In particular, he finds that white people promote colorblind racism by relying on four dominant frameworks: (1) *abstract liberalism* (which combines individualism, universalism and egalitarianism: all people are equal and have equal opportunity for advancement); (2) *naturalization of racism* (dismissing patterns as simply "the way things are," leaving no room for optimism and ignoring the active role people play in maintaining racism), (3) *cultural racism* (problems are rooted in groups themselves, victim blaming), and (4) *minimization of racism* (e.g., arguing that racism isn't that bad, or that it is a historical, rather than contemporary, problem).

Bonilla-Silva's findings helpfully clarify that a narrative analysis offers different kinds of insights than do psychological studies or survey approaches to studying race. Instead, narratives offer potential for deconstruction—which paves the way for transformative educational interventions.

While Bonilla-Silva's exploration of colorblindness sheds light on whites' approaches to colorblindness, I believe there is opportunity to unearth more about not just what people say, but *how and why they support those assertions*. Thus, in this study, I hope to draw on the strengths of Bonilla-Silva's approach (exploring narratives) while attempting to add layers of deconstruction that attend to learning processes experienced by students. To do so, I turn to an

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[20] A phenomenon related to colorblindness is for whites to cling tightly to an ethnic identity (rather than claiming whiteness), or discount whiteness due to some oppressed identity (e.g., gender, sexual orientation). Both strategies distract from white privilege and reflect a desire to align with an oppressed category. It is imperative that educators and theorists acknowledge diversity and intersecting identities without allowing whiteness—and its power—to disappear. (For additional resources on white ethnic identities, see Waters 1996, Hall 1996, Perry 2002).

existing, empirically-supported program that aims to enhance students' understandings of race and racism: Intergroup Dialogues.

Pedagogical approaches to Race and Racism in College and University Courses

In the last thirty years, colleges have expanded course content about race. In fact, many schools require students to take at least some credit-based course that addresses race and ethnicity, in order to better prepare graduates to work in a diverse and—thanks to globalization—increasingly shrinking world. A variety of studies have documented that students react differently and in complex ways to course content that addresses inequalities (e.g., Rankin & Reason 2005; Anderson & Krathwohl 2001; Chesler 1997; Bloom 1956). For this reason, it is crucial to consider the pedagogical format and theoretical design of courses, as successful design may yield better outcomes—including cognitive aspects, such as comprehension and retention of course concepts *as well as* long-term behavioral change based on those understandings (e.g., civic engagement and support for antiracist practices).

Intergroup Dialogue is an increasingly popular program on college campuses; this is likely because they offer a unique pedagogical and theoretical design that incorporates a variety of "best practices" from SOTL literature (e.g., student-centered learning, assessment techniques and strategies, open ended questions that address a variety of knowledge levels, and encouraging peer-to-peer interaction). Moreover, IGD has received substantial empirical support for its effectiveness (including cognitive growth, positive attitude change, and reported intended behavioral change, which I will outline below).

Most recently, the theoretical underpinning of IGD has been articulated in the *critical-dialogic model* (Nagda & Maxwell 2011, Sorenson et al 2009, Gurin et al 2014). My research

question deals directly with particular cognitive components of the critical-dialogic model—specifically, I explore how students logically reason through information provided by course material (both readings and interactions with others during dialogues). Ultimately, I aim to enhance the critical-dialogic model by providing more information about how students make sense of material and integrate new information with their existing assumptions. This fills a gap in the literature, as cognitive explorations of the critical-dialogic model are currently limited to: cognitive outcomes (specifically attitude change and structural attribution) and communication processes throughout the dialogue.

History of Intergroup Dialogue Programs and contemporary applications

Programs to improve intergroup relations emerged in a particular context: After WWII, social researchers began to investigate which factors contributed to positive intergroup contact (Stephan & Stephan 2001). These researchers focused heavily on race relations, specifically between Blacks and Whites (2001). Gordon Allport's (1954) groundbreaking book, *The Nature of Prejudice,* was one of the first to explore how to combat prejudice. Allport assumed that the problem of prejudice was rooted in the flawed cognitive processing of prejudiced people (Allport 1954; Stephan & Stephan 2001). Thus, prejudice became defined as an *individual* problem. Allport (1954) proposed that the best way to undo prejudice was through intergroup contact, suggesting that contact with outgroup members increases familiarity and decreases ignorance (paralleling the mere exposure hypothesis; Zajonc 1968). Contact also provides "concrete information about a person, allowing us to replace stereotypes based on ignorance with assessments that are grounded in experience" (Stephan and Stephan 2001).

However, Allport argued that contact must adhere to certain conditions in order to actually challenge misinformation about a group. Among these conditions, Allport said that contact must be ongoing and intimate, rather than superficial or casual, because people both tend to look for examples that confirm their ideas *and* tend to dismiss examples that contradict their preconceived notions as "exceptions" (1954). Thus, casual contacts often reinforce prejudice; "true acquaintanceship," according to Allport, will lessen prejudice. Following Allport, researchers have updated his conditions to ensure that contact leads to positive outcomes: equal status between/among group members (Cook 1978; Pettigrew 1998), social or authority sanction of cooperation (i.e., equal status as normative) (Cook 1978; Pettigrew 1998), perceived similarity (Amir 1976), common language (Amir 1976), voluntary contact (Amir 1976), cooperation and mutual interdependence (Cook 1978; Pettigrew 1998), common goals (Pettigrew 1998), formation of superordinate identity (Cook 1978; Pettigrew 1998), friendship potential (Pettigrew 1997), and persons/behavior that disconfirm stereotypes (Cook 1978).

While researchers continued to explore the question of prejudice throughout the 1960s, most programmatic interventions originated later, in the 1970s, as civil rights debates exploded all over the country (Stephan & Stephan 2001). Increased awareness and attention to social inequalities ushered in an array of new educational interventions; in particular, diversity trainings and multicultural education emerged as innovative approaches to address racial tension and race-based inequality (Stephan & Stephan 2001; Banks 1993). More recently, "social justice education" has emerged on the scene. While its content and goals overlap heavily with multicultural education, its roots in critical pedagogies (feminist writings, race-based studies,

and, more recently, queer and disability studies)[21] and liberatory education (see Freire 1970)[22,]

have been contrasted with early multicultural education efforts—which have been characterized

as emphasizing harmony and cross-cultural understanding, rather centering on inequality and

power in society. There have also been some claims that multicultural education is heavily

didactic (Stephen & Stephen 2001), while social justice education—because of its roots in

Freire—strives to avoid "banking" pedagogies, and is ultimately *both* a process *and* a goal

(Adams 1997; Bell 1997; emphasis mine). Drawing heavily on Freire's pedagogy of the

oppressed, intergroup dialogue is a particular form of social justice education, one that embraces

a *dialogical-interactive approach to learning* (Zúñiga et al 2007). Dialogue requires a particular

kind of critical thinking, which generates *further* critical reflection and growth. As a

communicative process, dialogue allows individuals to reflect on their social experiences and

realities, enabling critical consciousness. "The pursuit of full humanity cannot be carried out in

isolation or individualism, but only in fellowship and solidarity" (85).

Thus, IGD is not just a technique, but also a *process* (Zúñiga et al. 2007; Schoem et al.

2001; Bell 1997; Freire 1970). In contrast to banking education, dialogic education asks

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[21] Feminism's influence on social justice education can been seen in a variety of ways: acknowledging the failure of traditional classrooms to engage with women's experiences and socialization (e.g., Gilligan 1982), stressing the importance of eroding the asymmetry of power and authority in the classroom in order to empower students (Spelman 1985 ctd in Adams 1997; Boler 1999), and creating a safe climate through attention and encouragement of emotions in the classroom (e.g., Boler 1999; Adams 1997). Social justice education recognizes its "affectively charged" nature, and views emotion as an integral component of education for action (Adams 1997).

[22] Drawing on both feminists and liberatory education, social justice education places emphasis on self-reflection and consciousness-raising (Adams 1997; Boler 1999; Zúñiga et al. 2007). Both feminist scholars and liberatory education assert that seeing the link between personal experience and social power and patterns is critical to achieving critical consciousness. This "critical consciousness" enables oppressed persons to understand that oppressive forces are not natural; instead, they are the result of historical and socially constructed forces that can be challenged (Boler 1999; Freire 1970). Social justice education asks students to "find their voice," overcoming the internalized oppression, *and* to realize and recognize their own roles in systems of power and oppression (Freire 1970; Adams 1997). This critical consciousness requires personal awareness, honest and open sharing of experiences, and that "those who authentically commit themselves to the people… re-examine themselves constantly" (Freire 1970:60). Thus, Freire's pedagogical proposal centers specifically on dialogic learning, seeing dialogue as a way to understand the self, and the self-in-the-world.

facilitators to ask questions, what Freire calls "problem-posing." The goal of problem-posing

education is to *create*. It realizes that people are always still growing and learning, and offers

continual opportunities for both teacher/facilitator and student to learn. Students, as they are

increasingly posed with problems relating to themselves in the world and with the world, will

feel increasingly challenged and obliged to respond to that challenge (Freire 1970). In a sense,

critical thinking begets critical thinking. Through its problem-posing approach, dialogue

"promotes active, generative, and transformative connections and explorations among

participants and between participants and facilitators" (Zúñiga et al 2007:3-4)—which assumes

that IGD participants will feel obligated to make the world a more socially just place. This

student-centered approach to learning is assumed to both empower and educate as students are

able to influence and shape their own learning, becoming co-investigators as they learn from

others' experiences, as well as their own (Adams 1997).

In this way, intergroup dialogue reflects principles of *pedagogy of praxis,* a dialectical

form of education. Many theorists, such as John Dewey, Paulo Freire and Maxine Greene, have

argued that the role of education is to not simply inform, but to reinvent and to inspire positive

change (Gadotti 1996). With its roots in liberationist and feminist theory, and its emphasis on

student-centered learning, IGD offers a unique opportunity to explore new possibilities for old

problems. Praxis necessarily invokes intellect, reflection, and action for change—thereby

reflecting the goals of IGD. Thus, IGD highlights the hopefulness of a pedagogy of praxis: It

aims to engage not just intellect, but affect—and not just people, but their actions and their

consciousness (Gadotti 1996).

A pedagogy of praxis also offers unique opportunities to push intergroup dialogue

forward as an intervention. As I have noted, multicultural programs are sometimes criticized for

their emphasis on information-sharing. Often, these programs expose students to new information and new perspectives with the goal of creating both attitudinal and behavioral change (Stephan & Stephan 2001). Yet their primary demonstrated outcome is often *awareness*. Information is just *one* component of attitudes; a great deal of attitudinal research demonstrates that information alone does not necessarily yield behavior change—nor do attitudes necessarily predict behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein 2005). For this reason, I suggest that an effective critical pedagogy is best paired with a pedagogy of praxis. *Together, these pedagogies equip students with the capacity to question, to recognize systems of power, to reflect on their own positionality, and to do something about it.*

Despite its roots in dialogic practice, intergroup dialogue differs from other forms of dialogue in a few important ways. First, dialogue often seeks commonality among group members, whether in experience or in goals. Conversely, IGD intentionally centers on *conflict* (Schoem et al. 2001; Zúñiga et al. 2007) in order to avoid the pitfalls of less-critical multicultural training (i.e., "celebrating diversity" while failing to attend to real-world tensions). Second, like critical multicultural education, IGD focuses explicitly on *power* among groups (Schoem et al. 2001; Zúñiga et al. 2007), which may or may not emerge in other dialogue settings. In other words, IGD asks its participants to consider their social identities, *and* the very real consequences of these identities—hopefully equipping them to effect some positive change.

There are recognized academic intergroup dialogue programs all over the country, including the University of Michigan, University of Washington School of Social Work, University of Maryland, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Occidental College, University of Massachusetts-Amherst, Syracuse University and Arizona State University (Dessel, Rogge & Garlington 2006). Nearly all approaches to dialogue in higher education—at

least, those that have been written about—have been influenced or modeled on a four-stage intergroup dialogue model developed by Zúñiga, Nagda and Sevig in 1988 at Michigan (Nagda et al 2001:120). UM's own IGD program, while it has evolved, *also* still relies on the four-stage design, though it has been modified to fit a semester calendar (Thompson, Brett and Behling 2001:104).[23]

The four-stage design outlines the development process of intergroup dialogues (Zúñiga et al 2007). This model is specifically designed for work with a college-aged population (i.e., emerging adults). Briefly, the four stages are forming and building relationships, exploring commonalities and differences of experience, discussing "hot topics," and building alliances for social action. These stages are upheld by principles as outlined in the critical-dialogic model, which I will describe the subsequent section.

Critical-dialogic model for intergroup dialogue

Traditionally, dialogue (broadly) emphasizes the importance of inquiry and reflection to enhance understanding and build relationships (Bohm et al. 1991; Schoem et al. 2001). On the other hand, unlike traditional multicultural education programs, IGD does not merely aim to build positive feelings; instead, IGD views dissonance and conflict as potentially constructive and productive (Chesler & Zúñiga 1991; Gurin et al. 1999; Stephan & Stephan 2001; Nagda & Zúñiga 2003; Zúñiga et al. 2007; Dessel et al. 2006; Dessel 2009).

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[23] At some point, as schools' programs expand and draw from one another—and as dialogue scholars move from one school to another—it becomes difficult to track *where* certain innovations originated. For example, the program at Washington University (which is implemented within the Social Work curriculum, specifically) utilizes a four-pronged "resource assessment profile," which is also now used in UM's program with undergraduate dialogue participants. The resource assessment asks students to track their own development and area for growth in four areas: passion (about social justice and dialogue), personal awareness (of own identities, areas for improvement, etc.), skills (encouraging and facilitating participation from all group members); and knowledge (principles and processes of IGD, dialogic pedagogy, knowledge of intergroup issues). This assessment is adapted from the PASK assessment, originating at UM.

Embracing conflict can be a difficult process for participants. It often evokes strong

emotions, which can be difficult to manage. To ensure that disagreement unfolds in productive

ways, IGD draws on dialogic principles as "rules for engagement," (Franklin 1996; Zúñiga 1998;

Spencer 2009).[24] Ultimately, IGD aims to allow participants to engage in issues of conflict in a

structured environment, which provides a "brave space" for students to take risks and confront

uncomfortable topics—which can ultimately build intergroup understanding and erode prejudice,

negative feelings and violence (Hubbard 1997; Arao & Clemens 2013). IGD is "intense, difficult

work; only occasionally is it a 'feel good' experience" (Schoem et al. 2001:12). However, IGD

views conflict as a crucial way to address issues of social justice and to build community: Only

in acknowledging and addressing differences and conflict will participants begin to see common

goals, common needs, and ultimately, possibilities for shared work—these, in turn, can spark

participants' desire to work for positive social change and improved relationships (Dessel &

Rogge 2008; Schoem et al. 2001; Zúñiga et al. 2007).

Thus, a primary challenge for IGD practitioners is to meaningfully integrate dialogic

principles and critical inquiry. *Dialogic principles* inherent in intergroup dialogue aim to build

substantial relationships between and among groups for effective communication (Gurin et al

2014). Specifically, this entails engaging honestly and openly with the others through empathetic

and intentional listening and personal sharing (Schoem et al 2001; Kim & Kim 2008; Nagda &

Maxwell 2011; Spencer 2009).

By contrast, *critical inquiry* aims to guide participants to make connections between

individuals and groups as well as between groups and systems of inequality (Freire 1970; Gurin

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[24] This is another notable departure from more traditional models of dialogue, which sometimes emphasize its lack of structure as a strength. For example, there are "no firm rules" for dialogue, according to Bohm et al. (1991), "because its essence is learning" (NP). While the creative and democratic possibilities of dialogue are strength, IGD adheres to particular rules for interaction (as outlined in this section) to create a productive learning space.

et al 2014). Ultimately, the aim is to identify how "power, privilege and group-based inequalities structure individual and group life" (Nagda and Maxwell 2011:5).

The bridging of these seemingly distinct goals (critical reflection and building understanding and acceptance) is best captured in the critical dialogic process model (variously outlined by Nadia 2006; Sorensen, Nagda, Gurin & Maxwell 2009; Nagda & Maxwell 2011; Gurin et al 2014). This model aims to explain how pedagogical principles (content, structured interaction and facilitated leadership) enable particular communication processes (dialogic communication and critical analysis and reflection) and particular psychological process (openness, attention to identities and positive views of difference)—all of which ultimately result in enhanced intergroup understanding and intergroup collaboration. (See Sorensen et al.'s model, presented in Figure 3.) Overall, the model broadly hypothesizes that a combination of affective components and cognitive components yields particular outcomes for students; my research questions aim to better understand the *cognitive components* of the critical-dialogic model (which I will explain in more detail at the end of the chapter).

Figure 3. Critical-dialogic theoretical model of intergroup dialogue (as presented by Sorensen et al. 2009:18).
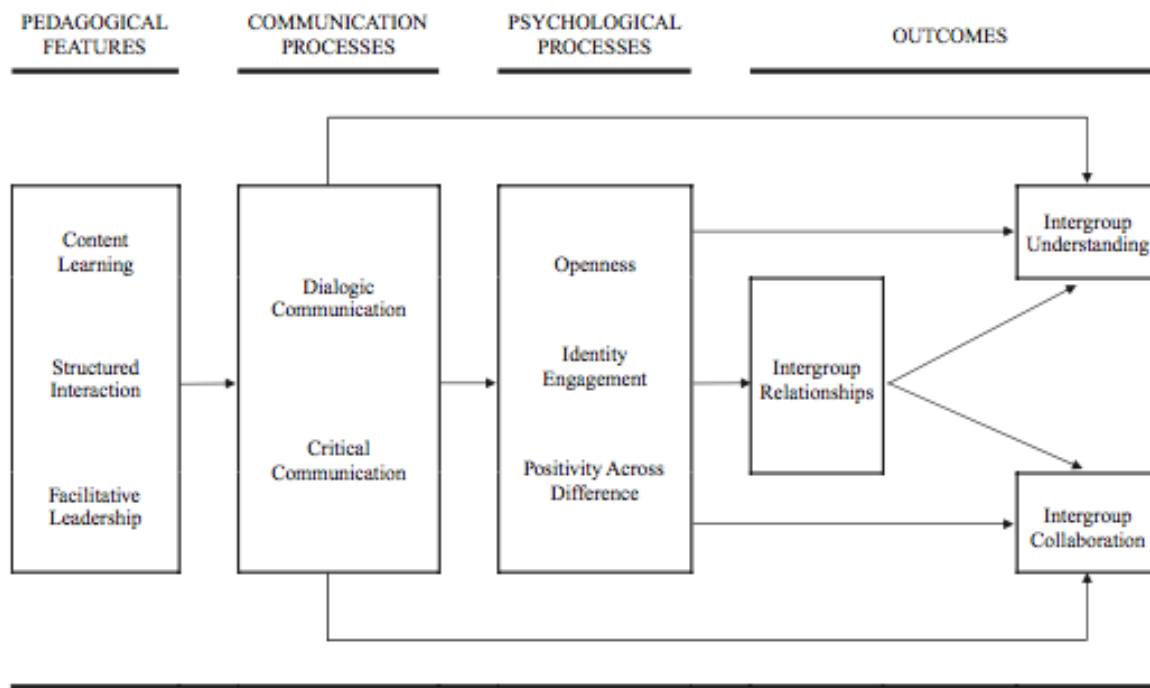
Particular principles uphold intergroup dialogue's work to bridge dialogue and critical reflection. First, dialogue practitioners emphasize that dialogue is a *process*, not an event (Schoem et al. 2001; Nagda and Maxwell 2011). It takes time to work through stages of growth, change, conflict, friendship, and anger, and new levels of understanding and insight (Adams, Bell and Griffin 1997). Furthermore, grasping the depth of meaning, the nuance of experience, and forging true connections require extended discussion (Schoem et al. 2001:6). Because it is an ongoing process, dialogue requires participants' commitment to listen, challenge, reflect and continue to talk with one another over weeks, months or years. Dialogue is a *sustained activity* (Sherman et al 1998), and is more likely to be successful when participants commit to ongoing, regular meetings (Schoem et al. 2001). The length of dialogues vary widely (Stephan & Stephan 2001; Schoem et al 2001); however, long-term dialogues are ideal because they "allow

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participants to build more trusting relationships, provide participants with more time for reflection and processing between sessions, permit more time to process complex issues… and teach that change takes dedication and long-term commitment" (Schoem et al 2001:8). IGD's reliance on sustained commitment ultimately "bridges differences and moves participants to deeper and more meaningful levels of engagement" (Zúñiga et al 2007:3).

The process-focus of dialogue underscores important goals of dialogue—specifically, "relationship-building across groups and thoughtful engagement about difficult issues" (Schoem et al 2001:7). Dialogue expects participants to engage in deep conversations across groups, to consider multiple perspectives, and to engage in critical self-reflection (Dalton 1995; Hubbard 1997; Schoem et al. 2001; Dessel et al. 2008). Dialogue is more focused and purposeful than discussion; it is willing to delve into difficult or taboo subjects, unlike discussion. And, unlike debate, the purpose is not to establish winners or losers; it is not about being right or wrong; instead, it is to foster understanding about other groups, about society, and about the self.

Again, because trust builds slowly over time, it is critical for participants to commit to a long-term process. "People realize they can confront tough issues and know the conversation will continue and move forward the following week with the group intact" (Schoem et al 2001:8). As trust in the process grows, the group will be able to engage in more direct and difficult conversations (Schoem and Stevenson 1990).

A key strategy for building relationships and trust is careful and active listening (Nagda 2006; Guarasci and Cornwell 1997). Listening is crucial to effective dialogue because listeners will only have an "eye-opening" experience if they can truly *hear* fellow participants (Spencer 2009; Schoem et al. 2001; Schoem 1993). Acknowledging the importance of listening, coupled with structured activities that practice and reinforce active listening skills ensures that dialogue

participants will begin to really hear and understand others' experiences and perspectives (Schoem et al 2001), which will, in turn, foster relationships among participants—allowing participants to continually delve deeper and learn more about one another.

To engender effective listening practices, dialogue space must be open to multiple voices and experiences. Moreover, dialogue asks its participants to suspend judgment while listening (Bohm et al. 1991; Huang-Nissan 1999). For this reason, *empathy* is a critical component of active listening. Yet empathy must be complicated through the lens of structural inequality. Students must learn that to hear the experiences of another is insightful but is not the same as experiencing something personally; instead, students must be guided through emotional empathy while acknowledging differences of power that determine what we can *know* through experience (Boler 1999); in other words, empathy benefits from *continual critical reflection* (Gurin et al 2014).

Effective dialogue occurs in an atmosphere of trust and confidentiality (Schoem et al 2001; Yeakley 1998; Zúñiga et al. 2007; Dessel 2009; B). Because dialogue relies on relationship-building, and because participants are sharing personal and sometimes painful experiences, it is critical that what is said in the dialogue will not be shared with others outside of the dialogue. The goal is to create a space in which people feel safe sharing with one another. This often requires consideration of the space itself (where the dialogue will be held and how the room will be physically set up); the size of the group (12-18 participants is encouraged; small numbers facilitate intimacy); and the makeup of the group itself (equal numbers of each social group present) (Zúñiga et al 2007; Schoem et al 2001; Zúñiga et al 1995). All of these factors "increase the opportunity to build more trusting relationships, encourage more engaged interaction, provide safety and confidentiality, and make better use of limited time" (Nagda,

Zúñiga, & Sevig 1995) by striving to *equalize power* in the dialogue space. Additionally,

dialogue should take place face-to-face, because it allows participants to listen carefully, engage

with one another fully, and is more likely to create and maintain intimacy and openness in the

group (Zúñiga et al 1995; Schoem et al 2001).

Howard Goldstein (1983) once asked social workers to consider "starting where the client

is." Echoing the importance of client-centered practice in social work, dialogue asks that

participants and facilitators acknowledge individuals' different backgrounds and varying

experiences. IGD realizes that these differences shape how we see the world. Thus, in order to

engage in deep, meaningful conversations, participants must (a) acknowledge that each begins

the process in a unique place and (b) trust that each participant will commit to openness, honesty

and listening, and respect one another's differences. This, in turn, enhances trust and meaningful

sharing among participants.

Traditionally, IGD brings together two or more groups of people with issues of conflict

or potential for conflict (Zúñiga & Chesler 1995). For example, dialogues that might occur

include: Blacks & Whites, Hispanics and Native Americans, Christians, Muslims, Hindus and

Jews, women and men, multiracial/multiethnic people, or gays, lesbians, and heterosexuals

(Zúñiga & Chesler 1995). Sometimes dialogues bring together subgroups within a larger identity

(e.g., Mexicans, Puerto Ricans and Cuban Americans or Asian Pacific Americans of multiple

ethnic backgrounds) (1995).[25]

Because of its origins in addressing race and ethnic- based inequalities, scholarship on

IGD tends to focus heavily on race and ethnicity. Race inequality is a problem that continues to

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[25] Schoem et al (2001) note that "multigroup dialogues result in outcomes just as valuable as more topically focused dialogues… but may take longer to accomplish their goals" (11).

plague our society in explicit and nuanced ways. However, dialogue may offer exciting opportunities to focus on other forms of inequality, as well (e.g., heterosexism, sexism, ableism).[26] Ultimately, dialogue asks participants to consider their group memberships in order to situate and better understand their personal experiences and perspectives (Schoem et al 2001; Dessel 2001; Dessel, Rogge and Garlington 2008; Zúñiga et al 2007; Nagda and Zúñiga 2003). In keeping with Freirian and feminist tradition, dialogue uses conversation to bridge individual and collective consciousness. "A distinctive feature of IGD" is that its participants try to see and understand themselves as members of their identity groups, rather than as isolated individuals (Schoem et al 2001:11). IGD considers personal experiences to be grounded in (or related to) social identity groups; these groups are an important part of individuals themselves. In short, attention to social groups is integral to the dialogic process.

In addition to acknowledging group memberships, IGD asks participants to consider the role of social structures, power, privilege and oppression in personal experiences (again, echoing consciousness-raising strategies among second wave feminists and Freire's call for *conscientization*). As Schoem et al (2001) note, a dialogue that focuses exclusively on the individual ignores social forces and the structural conditions of power in society; on the other hand, a dialogue that ignores participants' individual identities and unique experiences denies "the unique character of people's lives" and risks overgeneralization and misunderstanding. Thus, it is important for all participants to acknowledge his/her/their social group identities and how these group memberships influence their understandings of the self, other social groups, and society generally. Dialogue must therefore integrate individual, group, and societal issues and

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[26] Currently, dialogues *do* focus on these other topics; however, there is no theory addressing how dialogue ought to engage with multiple intersecting identities. This issue must be addressed in order to ensure effective dialogue practice in *all* areas of identity.

identities (Gurin et al. 2014; Nagda and Maxwell 2011; Dessel et al 2008; Schoem et al 2001); and, in turn, participants' experience should blend the intellectual, political, conceptual, relational, and intrapsychic (Sorensen et al. 2009; Schoem et al 2001). Dialogue must recognize and address *all* aspects of participants' lives in order to effect personal growth and change (Schoem et al 2001).

Intergroup dialogues are difficult complex processes, requiring the careful attention of skilled facilitators (Nagda and Maxwell 2011; Dessel 2009; Rodenborg & Bosch 2009; Zúñiga et al 2007; Schoem et al 2001; Nagda et al 1995; Nagda, Zúñiga and Sevig 1995). Facilitators can and should come from all different groups and backgrounds (Zúñiga et al. 2007; Schoem et al. 2001). Facilitators must undergo in-depth training; the importance of training cannot be underestimated (Adams, Bell and Griffin 1997). Facilitators must be trained in interpersonal skills, groupwork skills, and information about the topic of dialogue (e.g., history of a particular group).

Facilitators are expected to monitor the conversation, ask probing questions, and ultimately "help participants recognize each other as human beings with unique personal, cultural and social identities" (Rodenborg & Bosch 2009:79). Moreover, facilitators are expected to monitor time and group dynamics, balance sharing with theory and information, and to help participants link personal experiences to patterns and systems of inequality, privilege, and oppression (Lechuga, Clerc & Howell 2009).

Dialogue facilitators must be skilled in group process and be familiar with group work concepts from social work literature, such as stages of group development, participant contracting, and have basic generalist group work practitioner skills (Rodenborg & Bosch 2009). Facilitators must also have high degree of self-awareness (Schoem et al 2001). Most popular

models of dialogue recommend co-facilitators from different social groups, to create a power

balance in the dialogue, and to make all participants feel safer in the classroom (Dessel et al.

2006; Zúñiga et al. 2007).

Outcomes of Intergroup Dialogue

Intergroup Dialogues are an increasingly common programmatic approach for colleges

and universities to educate college students about complex sociological patterns, their position

and citizenship in a diverse society and world, and communication skills across differences.

Classroom diversity and diversity experiences are positively correlated with learning outcomes

for both white students and students of color (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado & Gurin 2002). Table 1

summarizes studies that document IGD's outcomes for students.

Table 1. Updated summary of empirical research on IGD programs within higher education settings. (Based on original table in Dessel & Rogge 2008).

Authors	Design & Methods (sample)	Findings
Alimo, Kelly and Clark (2002)	Qualitative Case Study (8 undergraduate students enrolled in IGD program)	• Participants demonstrated increased self-awareness and critical understanding of inequalities in the larger society. • Behavioral outcomes included improved communication skills across differences, decreased prejudice and a commitment to speak up when an injustice is committed. • Participants expressed appreciation for the opportunity to interact with others; cite lack of this as a flaw of traditional classroom
Chesler and Zuniga (1991)	Qualitative participant observation; case study (25 undergraduate students)	• Working with conflict allowed an individual and experiential component with a link to general sociological concepts. • Students reported increased awareness of conflict-management and dialogue as a creative approach to solving conflict. • All students reported the exercise and in-class discussions as positive experiences.
Clark (2005)	Focus groups investigating pilot dialogue class (10 participants)	• "Students routinely report that their intergroup dialogue experience was the single most important, meaningful and useful educational experience they have ever had." • IGD helps participants better understand the higher education system in the U.S. • Students report an increased awareness of self and society at large. • Increased confidence - participants felt this class allowed them to think about their own opinions; reported feeling better talking outside of class because they were able to talk in class.

Ford (2012)	Analysis of 29 student papers	• 28/29 students identified ways they were positively changed through dialogue participation • Students were highly resistant to all-white intragroup dialogue, but by semester end, papers demonstrated improved personal and theoretical understandings of whiteness, white privilege and white identity (including sociohistorical context) • Students in intergroup dialogue also reported substantial growth, but focused more on race relations (generally) rather than whiteness (specifically). • Students in both groups reported increased personal accountability for challenging racism
Gurin, Dey, Hurtado and Gurin (2002)	Pretest/Posttest Quantitative survey; longitudinal (1,582 students at Midwest school + 11,383 national research sample)	• Diversity experiences were positively correlated with learning outcomes. • Informal interactional diversity was related to intellectual engagement and academic skills for students of all races. • Classroom diversity was statistically significant and positive for White students and Latino/a students. • Informal interactional diversity was significantly related to both citizenship engagement and racial/cultural engagement for all students. • Participation in multicultural events and intergroup dialogues only had a significant effect on perspective-taking among African American students. Diversity experiences explained 1.5-12.6 percent of variance in educational outcomes for the national sample and 1.9-13.8 percent of variance in educational outcomes for the single-university sample. (Strong evidence that curriculum not sufficient.)

Gurin, Nagda and Lopez (2004)	Pretest/Posttest Quantitative Survey with matched control group; longitudinal (122 undergraduate students; 1,640 undergraduate students)	• Participation in intergroup dialogue program was associated with democratic sentiments (perspective-taking [$p<.05$], perceived commonality of other groups [$p<.05$]). • Participants demonstrated an enjoyment in learning about experiences of other groups ($p<.01$) and reported an increase in thinking about group memberships of self and others ($p<.01$). • Participants demonstrated an increased interest in politics (compared to control group), and expected to participate in community activities more than their peers.
Gurin, Nagda and Zuniga (2013)	Random assignment (IGD vs. control group [traditional course with content on race & ethnicity]) Mixed methods: Longitudinal surveys; Content analysis of student papers and videotaped sessions; interviews with students. (N=1450)	Compared to members of the control group, intergroup dialogue participants: • gained more insight about how other group members perceive the world • became more aware of structural patterns of inequality • reported increased motivation to work across differences • placed a greater value on diversity and collaborative action
Gurin, Peng, Lopez & Nagda (1999)	Pretest/Posttest Quantitative Survey with matched group; Longitudinal (174 undergraduate students)	• Program participation results in positive intergroup perceptions and attitudes for both white students and students of color • Program participation increases salience of race identity for all participants ($p<.001$). • White students and men who participated subscribe less to a dominant perspective (compared to control group). • Students of color who participated in the program have more positive views of conflict. • White students who participated in the program are more likely to support multicultural policies ($p<.05$), are more likely to perceive commonality with students of color; and have more positive interactions with members of minority groups ($p<.10$). • Four-year follow showed no long-term effects of program for white students; however, students of color perceived increased positive relationships with white students four years later, and perceptions of greater commonality with white students.

Hurtado (2005)	longitudinal; pre-test, multiple, and posttest paper and web-based quantitative surveys (4,403 undergraduate students)	☐ Participants demonstrated enhanced ability to engage in perspective-taking
		☐ Participants adopted pluralistic views of greater attributional complexity
		☐ Participants developed analytical problem-solving skills, leadership, and cultural awareness
		☐ Did not report for students of color
Khuri (2004)	Pre-experimental observation; self-administered qualitative survey; focus group (15 undergraduate students)	• Participants are better able to understand and interact with others who are different.
		• Participants recognize multiple perspectives.
		• Participants can clarify own beliefs and identities.
Miller and Donner (2000)	Quantitative survey (N=58 masters students);	• almost 100% agreed or strongly agreed that racial dialogue was helpful
	Qualitative survey (open-ended questions) (N=58 masters students + 22 doctoral students, faculty and staff)	• 100% agreed or strongly agreed that racial dialogues are one important way to address racism
		• 72.8% of students of color and 97.6% of white students came away with increased hope that people from different racial backgrounds would listen to one another
		• 54.6% of people of color and 100% of whites thought that people from different racial backgrounds could learn from each other
Nagda, Gurin and Lopez (2003)	Pretest/Posttest Survey (203 undergraduate students in an intro IGD class)	• Participants self-reported a good understanding of concepts and principles in dialogue and a deepened interest in the subject matter.
		• Participants demonstrated increased socio-historical thinking ($p<.01$) and structural attributions ($p<.001$).
		• Participants also engaged in less victim-blaming when reading a vignette ($p<.05$) and recommended collective action components to solve the victim of the vignette ($p<.001$) or structural/systemic change to solve the problem ($p<.001$)

		• Participants also saw dialogue's role in constructive conflict resolution.
		• Active learning, but not content-based learning, increased students' commitment to several types of action.
		• Students who were involved in both content-based learning and active learning also reported at the end of the course that they had learned most about understanding other people.
Nagda, Kim and Truelove (2004)	Pretest/Posttest quantitative survey (N=175 BASW students)	• Students significantly rated encounter experiences (dialogue) as more important than lectures and readings (p<.001).
		• Overall, the course had more impact on white students than on students of color.
		• Positive and significant impact on intergroup learning and importance of promoting diversity; marginally significant increases in confidence in promoting diversity.
		• Focusing on learning about difference had an overall significant impact on increasing students' motivation for intergroup learning, their assessment of the importance of prejudice reduction and promoting diversity and their confidence in doing so.
		• Possible ceiling effect (all social work students)
Nagda, Spearmon, Holley, Harding, Balassone, Moise-Swanson, and deMello (1999)	Focus groups, Surveys, In-depth interviews, observation (N=50 BASW students)	IGD positively associated with: • Learning about experiences and perspectives of people from other social groups • valuing new viewpoints • understanding the impact of social group membership on their identity • increased awareness of social inequalities • learning about the difference between dialogue and debate

Nagda and Zuniga (2003)	Pre- and post-test quantitative survey (N=42 undergraduate students)	- Overall program effect was non-significant (p=.132), possibly due to ceiling effect. - Program participation led to increased salience of racial identity (more effect seen in students of color) (p<.001). - Students of color viewed conflict more positively than white students (p=.019). - Dialogic learning process significantly correlated with perspective taking (r=.338, p=.029) and marginally correlated with importance of racial identity (r=.277, p=.075). - Students of color valued the dialogic learning process more than white students (p=.038). - The more the students valued the dialogic learning process, the more pronounced their change (positive change in outcomes).
Trevino (2001)	Pre- and post-test quantitative survey (undergraduate students; sample size not provided)	Participation in IGD improved cognitive, affective, and behavioral outcome scores (measures not included)
Vasques Scalera (1999)	Survey questionnaires mailed (28); Qualitative in-depth interviews (19); Content analysis of papers (N=30 former facilitators for IGD program)	- Facilitators report enhanced thinking about—and awareness of—"where people are coming from" (including critical compassion; recognition of students' struggle with issues) - Reported enhanced understanding of structural issues (e.g., dominance, oppression), and how they impact group interaction; how history and experience shape the way we interpret things - Recognition of commonality among struggles "Skill" showed the highest improvement on questionnaire (particularly in communication & leadership) - Enhanced "comfort" (i.e., moving past guilt and anger) & commitment - IGD as a "transformative learning process"—the personal, emotional, and experiential aspects of the learning process were central to facilitators' multicultural transformations in IGD

Yeakley (2001)	Qualitative, open-ended, in-depth interviews; grounded theory (N=12 undergraduate students [control group] + N=14 undergraduate students [enrolled in IGD course])	• The more intimate the personal sharing, the closer the intergroup connection established through contact; thus, "if intergroup understanding is the goal, then the process of sharing personal experiences is necessary" • Negative change associated with pain/resentment from negative interactions with outgroup members • Support factors necessary for positive change: trust, comfort, honesty, and investment (they create quality communication, which enables intimate personal sharing) • Time lapse: students in IGD didn't recognize their change until months, up to a year after participation

A literature review on reveals that it provides unique positive outcomes for participants, which can be summarized into four major themes.

   First, dialogue is a transformative educational experience. Clark (2005) writes, "Students routinely report that their intergroup dialogue experience was the single most important, meaningful, and useful educational experience they have ever had" (51). Participants often report that the unique interactive approach makes learning through dialogue more interesting, meaningful and powerful than readings or lectures (Yeakley 1998; Nagda, Gurin & Lopez 2003; Nadia, Kim & Truelove 2004). Furthermore, graduates of IGD programs see dialogue as an important way to address racism (Miller and Donner 2000). Dialogue's unique approach to learning is seen as valuable by students. Furthermore, students who embrace dialogue process get more out of it. In a study by Nagda & Zúñiga (2003), the more students valued the dialogic learning process, the more pronounced their learning outcomes and attitude change. Similarly, Vasques Scalera (1999) reports that the personal, emotional and experiential

aspects of the learning process were central to facilitators' multicultural transformation in IGD.[27]

In short, she says that dialogue is a transformative learning process *because* of its unique interactive and reflective approach.

   Second, intergroup dialogue yields positive cognitive outcomes for students. Given its roots in psychological research, it is unsurprising that dialogue research focuses heavily on cognitive outcomes. Those cognitive outcomes include enhanced complex and critical thinking (Gurin, Peng, Lopez & Nagda 1999; Lopez, Gurin & Nagda 1998 Vasques Scalera 1999), a critical understanding of society at large (Alimo, Kelly and Clark 2002), and an increased awareness of societal prejudice (Chesler & Zúñiga 1991; Nagda et al 2003). IGD has also resulted in better understanding of oppression (Halabi 2000 ctd in Dessel & Rogge 2008; Nagda et al 2004), a deeper understanding of socio-political history and the influence of structures in people's lived experiences (Nagda et al 2003; Vasques Scalera 1999), and an ability to recognize multiple perspectives simultaneously (Khuri 2004). Additionally, participants demonstrate an increased likelihood to see systemic causes for inequality, rather than blaming the victim (Nagda et al 2003). Finally, participants' enhanced self-awareness has been reported in qualitative research *and* demonstrated in quantitative studies using matched pairs (Alimo et al. 2002; Chesler & Zúñiga 1991; Gurin et al. 2001; Gurin et al. 1999; Nagda et al. 1999; Nagda & Zúñiga 2003), including awareness of their own identities and the impact of social group membership on their personal experiences and self-understanding. Most recently, the positive cognitive growth of students was established through a rigorous national study comparing students in dialogues to

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[27] Though Vasques Scalera's study sampled facilitators, rather than participants, I include it here because her findings suggest the transformative power of IGD. Facilitators themselves are arguably participating, too—and apparently with positive results.

control groups (Gurin et al 2014), further supporting the power of dialogues to *cause* growth (rather than simply *correlating* dialogues with positive growth).

Third, intergroup dialogue is linked to long-term positive affective change. Studies indicate that even four years after participation a dialogue, participants are more likely to endorse democratic sentiments when compared to those who did not participate in a dialogue (Gurin et al. 2004; Gurin et al. 2002; Gurin et al. 1999). Research finds that participants are better to engage in perspective-taking following IGD (Hurtado 2005; Khuri 2004; Nagda & Zúñiga 2003; Gurin et al 2002), implying that intergroup dialogue enhances participants' capacity (and perhaps, willingness) to empathize with others. Vasques Scalera (1999) also points out that students learn from other people's feelings, and learn the importance of sharing their own feelings. Many students reported that they learned by hearing the raw emotions (anger, frustration, and tears) of other participants; these experiences deeply impacted students and pushed them to consider the viewpoints of others. Students also realize the power they have in sharing their own experiences and feelings (Vasques Scalera 1999). Together, these demonstrate tremendous emotional growth among participants (1999).

Fourth, dialogue participants report stronger interpersonal and communication skills. Participants have reported improved communication skills (Alimo et al. 2002), an enhanced ability to challenge stereotypes (Alimo, Kelly and Clark 2002; Nagda et al 2004), increased confidence and intent to intervene (Alimo et al. 2002; Clark 2005), and a better ability to address or resolve conflict (Chesler & Zúñiga 1991). Participation has also been linked to increased leadership and problem-solving skills (Hurtado 2005) and increased likelihood to continue learning about other groups (Nagda et al 2004). In Vasques Scalera's dissertation, the survey item "skill" saw the highest quantitative improvement, particularly in the areas of

communication and leadership. Finally, IGD students have reported increased commitment to civic engagement (Gurin et al 2002), increased support of multicultural policies (Gurin et al. 1999), and commitment to social action (Vasques Scalera 1999; Nagda et al. 2003). Notably, all of these behavioral outcomes are about *intent*, rather than actual measured action. While logistics make it more difficult to employ longitudinal studies, our knowledge about IGD's behavioral outcomes remains empirically unexplored.

Thus, participating in IGD changes how participants and facilitators see themselves, how they see others, *and* how they see the world at large. Students report enhanced self-awareness (Alimo, Kelly and Clark 2002), a better understanding how social identities and history shape personal and others' experiences (e.g., Chesler & Zuniga 1991; Gurin et al. 1999, Vasques Scalera 1999; Nagda and Zúñiga 2003, Clark 2005), and a more nuanced understanding of structural issues, social inequalities, and power in society (Nagda et al 1999; Vasques Scalera 1999; Alimo et al. 2002; Clark 2005).

One troubling finding in the data is that, in some studies, students from dominant groups (white students, heterosexual students, male students) seem to have more positive results from dialogue than do students of color (Yeakley 2001). In a study by Gurin et al. (1999), white students who participated in the program reported more commonality with students of color, and were more likely to have positive interactions with members of minority groups, compared to white peers who did not participate in the program. This pattern did *not* occur among students of color—indicating that they did not perceive the same commonality, nor did they have increased positive interactions with white persons. Additionally, in post-survey study, just half of students of color felt that groups could learn from one another, compared to *all* white students who felt this way (Miller and Donner 2000). These findings suggest that white students may rely on

students of color to educate them about race—thus reifying white as "cultureless" and "raceless," problematically reinscribing its normative invisibility. Additionally, it means that students of color may bear the burden of educating white students, which arguably detracts from the supposed equal status of participants in the room (Gallaway 2013). As Gallaway (2013) points out, imbalance of power in the room can lead students of color to feel both apathetic and frustrated; however, dialogic practices may help address and overcome these challenges (e.g., naming the problem and framing it in the larger context of group patterns).

However, there are contradictory results: in other studies, students of color demonstrated enhanced ability to engage in perspective-taking, compared to white students (Gurin et al. 2002); rated their learning higher than white students (Nagda et al 2006); and rated dialogues more valuable than did white students (Nagda et al. 2004; Nagda & Zúñiga 2003). Thus, the different experiences of oppressed and privileged persons in the dialogue setting are not completely understood. In order to ensure that dialogue's practices are socially just, rather than reinforcing inequality, we must better understand the ways that white students and students of color experience dialogue.

Lingering questions about the critical-dialogic model

The unique approach of IGD blends content, theory, and personal experiences. During dialogue, students and facilitators work to integrate information and facts from outside sources, theory from readings, and students' perspectives and experiences. Because IGD brings together such a small number of students, it may be easy to dismiss a student's experience as an "exception;" however, readings about patterns of inequality (and social and historical experience) will offer additional insight and may corroborate students' experiences of inequality,

discrimination and bigotry. Thus, the unique blend of intellectual and affective information in IGD offers a particularly powerful learning opportunity.

A great deal of research has demonstrated various positive outcomes that come from intergroup dialogue participation (as outlined above). However, in some ways we know relatively less about *how* students change throughout the dialogue process—that is, the nuance of how dialogue experiences reshape participants' views of themselves and the world. While certain aspects of the critical-dialogic model have well described, other elements warrant more attention. Most descriptions of the critical-dialogic model describe three components: content, structured interaction, and affective/psychological processes.

Communication processes have been well described by Biren (Ratnesh) Nagda (2006): (1) appreciating difference, (2) engaging the self, (3) critical reflection and (4) alliance building. (These communication processes are thoroughly discussed in the preceding section.) A variety of scholars have highlighted the role of skilled facilitators in directing participants' communication in productive ways (e.g., Nagda and Maxwell 2011; Yeakley 2011; Dessel 2009; Schoem et al. 2001; Vasquez Scalera 1999; Chesler and Zuñiga 1991).

Similarly, several *affective and psychological dimensions* of the critical-dialogic model have been thoroughly explored. For example, we know that positive interactions across difference decrease anxiety and facilitate intergroup understanding (see, for example, work by Sorensen et al 2009; Khuri 2004; Yeakley 2001; Moaz 2000; Pettigrew 1998; Allport 1954). Further, the importance of empathy in perspective-taking and building relationships has been clearly linked to attitude change and reported growth (Hurtado 2005; Gurin et al. 2003; Gurin et al. 1999; Vasques Scalera 1999). Other studies have demonstrated that students' growth is linked

to their own identity engagement (e.g., Gurin 2002), feeling supported in the process (e.g., Yeakley 2001), and their own investment in the process (Nagda & Zuñiga 2003).

On Resistance

The majority of dialogue research seems to indicate that its attention to affect is a strength of the IGD design. In part, this aligns with research, which suggests that learning about race and racism elicits complex emotional reactions among students. These reactions—coupled with the expected role of conflict in IGD—mean that attention to affect is a critical component of effective pedagogical design.

Indeed, a tremendous amount of literature has explored the ways that students may be unable to engage seriously with the material due to affective and emotional reactions to the course material (Goodman 2001). As Allen Johnson (2006) puts it: "No one likes to see themselves connected to someone else's misery, no matter how remote the link. Usually, their first response is to find a way to get themselves off the hook" (p.108). Resistance can take many forms, such as: denying or minimizing others' experiences, blaming the victim, focusing on intent rather than consequences, or objecting that "I'm one of the good ones!" (Goodman 2001; Johnson 2006). Resistance may *also* emerge for students from oppressed groups, who are reluctant to see themselves as victims of systemic injustice (Adams et al. 1997).

In short, resistance is seen as commonplace process of learning about complex and emotionally difficult topics like racism. Academic and informal work on resistance has offered tremendous insights to facilitators who are challenging students to think critically about injustice. Moreover, students engaging in dialogue benefit from reflecting on resistance as well. In fact, students in IGD are assigned readings on resistance and discuss it within the dialogue class.

Importantly, however, resistance can only explain *some* of students' difficulty grappling with course material. Thus, we know a great deal about certain cognitive processes (such as resistance) that influence students in the critical-dialogic model, but little attention has focused *beyond resistance* on how students make sense of course materials. Moreover, intergroup dialogue curricula tends to rely on long-established content without necessarily critically exploring how it is received by students. This dissertation attempts learn more about cognitive processes beyond resistance that students undergo as they learn about race and racism within the critical-dialogic model. Thus, I focus on *how students logically reason through* new information and integrate that new information with their former assumptions and beliefs. In particular, I look at how students make sense of *structure, agency,* and *inconsistency* as they engage in intergroup and intragroup dialogue.

CHAPTER THREE
METHODS

Research Design and Project Overview

This study qualitatively explores data collected over four semesters (January 2010 to December 2011). As explained in the preceding chapter, IGR offers intergroup dialogues each semester on a variety of topics, including race, gender, SES, etc. This project was designed to explore dialogues focusing on race—i.e., the Race and Ethnicity intergroup dialogue (which I will abbreviate R&E) and the White Race Identity Dialogue (hereafter WRID). The project was initially designed with two major goals: program evaluation and open-ended query.

I joined the research team to explore how students make sense of important, complicated, and often contradicting messages they receive about agency and structure in dialogue courses focusing on race and ethnicity. Ultimately, this information will enable important comparative work (thereby addressing some of the questions listed above). For the dissertation, however, the scope is limited to *a narrative analysis* of how students reason through complex and contradictory information about race and racism. For this reason, I will refrain from making comparisons at this time; following this dissertation, I will draw on these results to build a comparative study. Thus, by exploring narratives of individual students, this dissertation offers important insights about how individual students learn within the critical-dialogic model—but it also lays groundwork for subsequent comparative work.

For four semesters, students who were enrolled in IGR dialogue courses focusing on race and ethnicity were invited to participate in the study; except for one student who opted out, all students agreed to participate in the study.[28] Specifically, one WRID course is offered per semester; multiple R&E courses are offered per semester. For the period of Winter 2010 – Fall 2011, all students enrolled in a WRID dialogue between were invited to participate in this project; two R&E courses per semester were also invited to participate.[29]

Sample, Measures & Data

One hundred and thirty nine students participated in the study, overall; demographics are broken down by class type and provided in Table 2. It's important to note that the program documented demographics somewhat inconsistently from semester to semester. For example, some semesters included more detail about categories (e.g., in Fall 2010, students' sexual orientation was coded in a binary way [queer or straight]; by contrast, for the following two semesters, students' sexual orientation was coded as heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, or questioning.) I have simplified categories in order to document all available demographic information in a way that captures the information provided.

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[28] The student who opted to not participate was a white male in the race and ethnicity dialogue. No explanation for his decision was provided (and none was required). He completed all requirements to successfully complete the course.

[29] For three out of four semesters, the program offered two R&E dialogues (therefore students from both classes were invited to participate); for Winter 2010, three R&E dialogue courses were offered, and two of the three were invited to participate in the study.

Table 2. Students included in analysis by count (percentage). (N=139)

		R&E [N=97]	WRID [N=42]	TOTAL SAMPLE [N=139]
RACE				
White		**45 (.46)**	**42 (1.0)**	**87 (.63)**
Students of color		**52 (.54)**	**0 (0)**	**52 (.37)**
	Black	22 (.23)	0	22 (.16)
	Asian	12 (.12)	0	12 (.09)
	Multiracial	6 (.06)	0	6 (.04)
	Latino/a or Hispanic	6 (.06)	0	6 (.04)
	Middle Eastern or Arabic	6 (.06)	0	6 (.04)
GENDER				
	Men	34 (.35)	18 (.43)	52 (.37)
	Women	63 (.65)	24 (.57)	87 (.63)
RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION				
	Christianity – Catholic	11 (.11)	6 (.14)	17 (.12)
	Christianity – Protestant/Non-denom	38 (.27)	14 (.33)	52 (.37)
	Hindu	2 (.02)	0 (0)	13 (.09)
	Judaism	17 (.18)	11 (.26)	17 (.12)
	Islam	16 (.16)	0 (0)	16 (.12)
	Atheist/None	7 (.07)	9 (.21)	16 (.12)
	Other religion/Unsure/Not answered	15 (.15)	2 (.05)	17 (.12)
SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS				
	Upper-Middle/Upper	51 (.53)	34 (.81)	85 (.61)
	Lower-Middle/Working	25 (.26)	8 (.19)	33 (.24)
	Poor	4 (.04)	0 (0)	4 (.03)
	Not answered	6 (.06)	0 (0)	6 (.04)
SEXUAL ORIENTATION				
	Heterosexual	89 (.92)	36 (.86)	125 (.90)
	Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual	6 (.06)	5 (.12)	11 (.8)
	Not answered	1 (.01)	0 (0)	1 (.01)

By agreeing to participate, students granted access to the following: demographic data, an initial paper they submitted at the beginning of the semester, a final reflective paper they submitted at the end of the semester, and participation in a semi-structured exit interview with a trained research assistant. The variation in methods contributes to the richness of the dataset,

overall. Importantly, while 139 students participated in some way, not every student submitted all three data points (pre-paper, post-paper, and exit interview).[30]

Papers

All students in the UC/Psych/Soc 122 dialogue course are required to complete a Preliminary paper (a pre- measure) at the beginning of the semester and a reflective/integrative paper at the end of the semester (post-measure). The paper assigned after the first day of the dialogue is ungraded and is primarily used by peer facilitators to guide the class.[31] The assignment prompts students to consider their racial and ethnic identities, experiences that may have shaped these identities, and asks them to identify their hopes and fears for the course.

The Final paper repeats many of the questions raised in the preliminary paper (enabling explicit comparison to assess growth and change); however, it also adds some questions asking students to reflect on their experiences in the dialogue, how their views have changed, and about their plans for future behavior/action. Unlike the initial papers, final papers receive a grade; but the papers are assessed by trained GSIs (graduate students instructors), rather than peer facilitators.[32]

For the research project, members of the research team came to each class and explained the scope of the research project, its goals, and asked students if they would be willing to

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[30] One hundred four students completed at least one pre-test measure (that is, the beginning-of-semester paper) and at least one post-test measure (i.e., the end-of-semester paper or the interview). Change over time can only be documented with a matched pre- and post- measure. However, because I was interested primarily in *emergent themes*, I included all students, not just those who had a pre- and post- measure. In particular, this allowed me to include several students who may have joined the class late and did not submit a pre-paper, but had completed both a final paper and an exit interview.

[31] Literature in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning provides clear empirical support for initial papers such as these, because they provide instructors (or in this case, facilitators) with information about students' initial assumptions and familiarity with the topic.

[32] Because the course design relies heavily on trust and relationship building, bringing an outsider to grade maintains ethical boundaries of roles (facilitator and participant).

participate. If they agreed to participate, students submitted a second copy of each paper to the research team using a unique identifier (the last four digits of a partner/parents' telephone number) to ensure anonymity for this research project.

For the purposes of the research project, minor changes were made to the paper prompts. (Paper prompts are available as Appendix A & B.) Briefly, the papers ask students to reflect on their social identities, their experiences in—and key lessons from—dialogue, and their future behavior.[33]

Interviews

A trained team of research assistants also conducted exit interviews with all students who consented to this research project. Topics in the interview include racial identity awareness, their experiences in the dialogue, and reflections on growth over the semester. (Interview guide is attached as Appendix C.)

These questions delve into sensitive topics, because they address personal experiences with race, which can create tension, embarrassment, or fearfulness. Tourangeau and Smith (1996) define a question as sensitive if "it raises concerns about disapproval or other consequences for reporting truthfully" (p.276). Racial attitudes are a common area of sensitivity in the U.S.; thus, unsurprisingly, the (perceived) race of the interviewer influences the opinions and attitudes shared by respondents (e.g., Hatchett & Schuman 1975; Campbell 1981; Anderson, Silver and Abramson 1988). For this reason, many studies match the race of the interviewer and the respondent to decrease measurement error that comes from highly sensitive data (LeBaron, Cobb & Boland-Perez 2007). Accordingly, we matched race for interviews—i.e., white students

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[33] Note: The Research Team is completely separate from the grading process and does not discuss paper content with any facilitator or GSI grader.

who participated in the study were interviewed by white people, and students of color who participated in the study were interviewed by people of color. Some interviews were transcribed by members of the research team; others were sent to a professional transcription company.[34]

Because I joined the research team in Fall 2011, most of the interviews had already been conducted; moreover, trained undergraduate research assistants were eager to conduct interviews. Thus, I only conducted three of the interviews; consequently, the vast majority of the interview data, to me, was secondary, which felt like a limitation at times—for example, when reading a transcript, if I saw a confusing phrase, I was unable to ask a follow up question.

Overwhelmingly, students agreed to participate in the study—to some extent, we strove to make it easy to do so (most of the work involved was already required for course credit; the research simply added an extra reader). One person (a white male in an R&E dialogue) formally opted to not participate in the study. The response rate also shows a learning curve among the research team: Earlier semesters in 2010 had a substantial attrition rate (32 interviews were collected from 36 students in Winter 2010 [i.e., 89% of students]; 24 interviews were collected from 32 students in Fall 2010 [i.e., 75% of students]). By contrast, the final semester of data collection (Fall 2011) had a 100% response rate. This largely reflects the research team's improved outreach and follow up with students.

Analysis

Within the Research Team, various groups were developed to examine different topics in coding (e.g., racial identity, awareness of oppression or social inequality). The research team

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[34] Each undergraduate research assistant was asked to transcribe one interview, with the goal of exposing them to the research process. No students volunteered to transcribe additional interviews; thus, we sent the rest out to a professional.

analyzed both sets of papers (Preliminary and Final), as well as interview transcripts according to identified themes related to students' views of their racial group membership, students' understandings of racism and inequality, students' reported experiences in dialogue, lessons that students report learning in dialogue and students' intentions for future behavior. A list of codes to date is included in Appendix D.

Transcripts and papers were coded first in Word by individual research team members, then compared for interrater reliability. Once reliability was deemed satisfactory, themes were further analyzed using NVivo (Version 10). Following the recommendations of Dessel & Rogge (2008), this project carefully documents research instruments and maintains transcripts available to multiple coders as well as tracking changes in coding over time.

The composition of the coding groups varied by semester (as people entered and left the project); however, for all semesters, coding groups were consciously constructed to include *both* white coders and coders of color. This construction maps onto the design of IGD itself: by including coders of differing racial backgrounds, we hoped to draw on multiple experiences and perspectives—which elicited internal differences in coding, sparking an important conversation about how and why interpretation may differ. These conversations sometimes lead to new coding plans; they nearly always resulted in enhanced reliability within the coding team. Overall, the "team-coding" approach allowed the team to continually evaluate the coding process by including multiple perspectives—ultimately strengthening the validity of the larger project.

Synthesizing methods for coding & analysis: Grounded Theory to Explore Narratives

For my project, I was primarily interested in not what students know, but in understanding how students reach their assumptions about race and racism in society.

Furthermore, the aim of my project was not to assess outcomes (which *would* require a pre- and post-test assessment), but to generate theory (*a la* grounded theory). For all of these reasons, I felt no need to constrain my data to only students who completed all three data points; instead, I included all documents available as I searched for themes, coded, and looked for saturation.

The goal of grounded theory is not representation but theory generation. Because the goal is not necessarily *generalization*, there is no consistent or clear call for a precise sample size (though some researchers offer suggestions, e.g., Creswell 1998; Strauss & Corbin 1998) Grounded theorists emphasize the importance of selecting participants who can contribute to an evolving theory and who have the relevant experience of interest (Strauss & Corbin 1998). Thus, I ultimately included all students who participated, regardless of all students who were involved in the study were considered "fair game" for my sample, regardless of whether they submitted all three data points.

Understandably, some proponents of grounded theory question whether a researcher can or should process large amounts of data from many respondents. However, my goal was not to categorize students, but to make sense of students' *narratives* about race.

Narratives are one important way that scholars can explore people's attitudes and beliefs (Riessman 2008). In particular, narrative analysis has been linked with critical forms of inquiry, including feminist research methods (e.g., Frankenberg 1993), cultural studies (e.g., Behar 1996) and queer theory (e.g., Pfeffer 2009). Furthermore, narrative inquiry has provided tremendous insights about "racial storylines"—that is, the way that individuals make sense of race in their own lives and in society. (See, for example, Perry 2002; Bonilla-Silva 2003).

For example, one racial storyline might be a white student who is frustrated that she was denied admission to college, because—in its uncritical allegiance to diversity—the school

instead admitted students of minority races with lower test scores. (This storyline reflects the prosecution's argument in US Supreme Court cases Gratz v. Bollinger and Grutter v. Bollinger, both of which took place in 2003.) Through this storyline, the student has conveyed what she assumes the best criteria for admission (test scores); she also assumes that the school's ideology has skewed its practices in way that are unfair; if they were fair, she would have been admitted to the school. Tacitly, this storyline also presents sharp binaries: it is *either* she *or* a student of color who will take the spot; admission is *either* based on merit *or* on personal characteristics.

Regardless of whether or not this story is accurate, it is *instructive*. By attending to the components of the narrative, we can better make sense of how students reach conclusions. Often storylines hold tacit assumptions about social processes, social interactions, and social structures. Racial storylines, in particular, are embedded in how individuals present and represent themselves and other people; they are often used to support one's assertions about the world. Importantly, these stories do not exist in a vacuum—instead, they generally reflect norms, hegemony (cf Gramsci) and dominant discourses. Storylines thus shed light on what individuals have internalized—as well as how they recreate patterns of inequality. By identifying and exploring patterns of racial storylines, we can better understand precisely *how* they function to recreate patterns of inequality. Storylines, thus, acknowledge both the individual participant *and* the powerful socializing role of society and institutions (acknowledged in modernism/ structuralism).

Moreover, narrative analysis attends to the way reality is socially constructed, rejecting a positivistic notion of "truth." Because my goal (broadly) is to understand how students make sense of a complicated issue, I turned to storylines, or narratives, in my analysis. In other words, rather than attempting to locate students in particular developmental stages, I wish to emphasize

the dynamic nature of discourse about race. Narratives thus prove an excellent way to address my research question; moreover, they accommodate the tensions laid out in the introduction (structure and agency; modernist theories and post-modern theories).

Analysis of students' papers revealed *patterns* in narratives about race. Because students often contradict themselves, attention to narratives allows us to better understand and explore how students may hold multiple, seemingly discordant ideas about race and racism. This is somewhat unsurprising, given the complicated and paradoxical nature of race (as outlined in the literature review). Thus, exploration and deconstruction of those narratives opens new insights and questions about how students *cognitively* make sense of race and racism within a critical-dialogic model.

Narratives are upheld by assumptions that operate as scaffolding. Thus, I focus on *how* and *why* students arrive at particular narratives about race and racism based on their assumptions about structure and agency. In other words, I examine what students assume to be true or morally correct in order to uncover how and why students assert particular beliefs about race and racism.

In particular, one team code focused on students' understanding (or lack of understanding) about the structural nature of racism. Ultimately, research assistants developed a scale to measure how strongly students endorsed structural explanations for race and racism (ranging from 1-8, where a "1" rejected any structural components of racism and an "8" demonstrated a student's heightened awareness of and commitment to challenging structural racism).[35] Thus, the scale provided a clear measure of a student's development and understanding about structural aspects of race and racism.[36]

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[35] The scale used by the research team builds on an earlier scale developed by Claire Sabourin (2012).

[36] Although I do have some concerns that it blurs cognitive understanding and attitudes.

I, in turn, was able to use the coding conducted by the research team to easily identify excerpts that dealt with my particular topic of interest (structure and agency). The work of the research team helped establish a homogenous sample for my project—that, is, a selection of participants who share a phenomenon of interest (Glaser & Strauss 1967).

However, as I have explained above, I was *less* interested in measuring a student's development (e.g., a "6" on the 8-point scale) and *more* interested in how students explained their views or assumptions about structure and agency. In other words, I was *primarily* focused on identifying patterns across students' assumptions about race and racism, not organizing their understandings hierarchically on a scale. To be clear, certain students *do* seem to have a stronger grasp on structural explanations than others: Some of the statements identified by the research team endorsed structuralism; others rejected it; many narratives seemed to do both.

Thus, I combed through the coded portions that had been isolated by the research team; I re-organized these excerpts to cluster them by content (e.g., reevaluating one's view of affirmative action, colorblindness as an ideal) rather than scale alone (e.g., 1, 2, etc.). I dove into coding with gusto, but I found myself feeling stuck. My coding memos seemed to all revolve around white students' resistance. Resistance was practically jumping off the page at me: I saw white students dismissing their race identity because it was "less important" than other identities in their lives (e.g., gender, growing up in a working class family, religion). I saw white students who claimed that race wasn't really important in anyone's lives, anymore; class was a better measure of inequality; by tackling poverty, racism would be eroded into oblivion. I saw white students argue that racism was sad, but it wasn't really their problem. And that what we viewed as racism was truly just a byproduct of human nature—birds of a feather flock together, etc. Or that racism would only be cured when we all finally agreed that race didn't matter.

I was pleased with my ability to identify students' processes as they learned about their own whiteness; the topic felt valuable; however, I *also* knew my "discoveries" had all been discussed elsewhere. The phenomenon wherein students tend to focus more on their oppressed identities has been discussed by a variety of authors, most notably Beverly Tatum, Diane Goodman, and Allen Johnson. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva has documented the connections between naturalization of race/racism, individualism and claims to colorblindness. In short, I felt like I was easily finding patterns that were clearly elucidated by others, but I grew anxious that I would be unable to find anything original.

So I met with my advisor, and showed him coding memos about resistance. My advisor—in an incredibly supportive way—told me that I was being too hard on the students, and that I needed to give them credit for the hard work they were doing. He recommended going back through the transcripts and re-coding with this lens.

I was completely stunned. I conceded that students did contradict themselves in papers and in the transcripts; they often offered thoughtful reflections about their own identities and the challenges of understanding racism; they spoke frankly about their uncertainty. But perhaps most importantly: I was struggling to identify and analyze what students said, because they were inconsistent. As I put it in a meeting, students were "contradicting themselves all over the place." My advisor smiled and said: "Embrace the contradiction."

And so I returned to the data. I looked for something new. I struggled. I sought out other scholars and resources to explain what the hell I was supposed to do. I realized that I hated qualitative methods, because they were messy. I re-coded using Charmaz's deconstructive approach of identifying the verb—i.e., coding what students were *doing*, rather than simply labeling passages descriptively. I wrote memo after memo and still felt dissatisfied.

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I had initially opted to use grounded theory because I valued its inductive approach; I

hoped it could honor students' voices and experiences. Instead, I felt uncomfortable with the

expectation that my analysis somehow might speak over their experiences. And that's when I

had two important insights: First, I needed to use empathy, as my advisor implied in that early

meeting. And secondly, I had been framing the coding process as a one-way conversation: I was

supposed to be an expert who was identifying at least one truth. This was the crux of my

discomfort, because it countered all of my intuition as a teacher: I couldn't *have* an ongoing

conversation with a student; I was simply supposed to document what I saw and reflect on it,

without leaving a student room to challenge, counter, or add information. As a dialogue

practitioner, a social worker, and an instructor, I see value in understanding where a client (or

colleague or student) is coming from. Indeed, finding a common starting point becomes the basis

for meaningful change.

Thinking about my approach to teaching opened a new insight: As an instructor, I strive

to balance challenge and support—a concept I adapted from dialogue practice; why not use that

same approach to coding? It was impossible to have a conversation with students (because their

papers are fixed in time); however, I could strive to *both* empathize with participants *and also*

employ a critical lens drawing on my scholarly training.

Applying Critical Empathy as a Tool for Data Analysis

Qualitative research offers tremendous possibility for rich and nuanced data, but it also

produces difficult questions about the relationship between researcher and data, such as empathy

and positionality. Empathy has been both heralded and criticized in qualitative methodology;

however, while empathy is often seen as a useful component of *data collection*, far less has been

written about empathy as a tool in *data analysis*. A new concept in dialogue research, called

critical empathy, may offer innovative ways to engage productively with empathy throughout the

research process.

A variety of studies demonstrate positive potential outcomes that come from empathizing

with participants: it can enhance trust, provide a more accurate picture of reality for participants,

and avoid the pitfalls of our own assumptions (e.g., Behar 1996). This may be particularly

crucial when the research investigates a notoriously difficult or unlikeable group—what Susan

Harding (1991) calls "the repugnant cultural other" (e.g., hate groups). Whatever a researcher's

intentions, her positionality and biases shape her investigation; thus, empathy may also enhance

a researcher's ability to understand his participants, which may yield more accurate information.

Conversely, empathy may pose a dilemma: it may dismiss important power differences

between researcher and participant if researchers presume to fully understand a participant's

experience (Boler 1997; Bondi 2003). Furthermore, identifying too strongly with participants

may also inhibit a researcher's ability to fully see what's going on, as emotional connection may

shape a researcher's interpretation of data consciously or unconsciously; this, in turn, results in

"stifled research" and "unethical practices" (Watson 2009). Empathy thus has great potential for

qualitative methods, but (a) it must be harnessed in a way that enables, rather than inhibits,

useful and careful analysis and (b) we must consider empathy's contribution to qualitative

methods beyond data collection alone.

Traditional empathy allows us to relate to others, primarily by finding emotional

alignment (e.g., a shared sense of anger) or by engaging in perspective taking (to cognitively

imagine another's perspective. Critical empathy (Gurin, Nagda & *Zúñiga* 2014) goes beyond

traditional approaches to empathy by asking us to not only relate to another person, but to

simultaneously consider an individual's position within systems of power and privilege. In dialogue practice, critical empathy seeks common understanding while also acknowledging important differences that shape our lives and perspectives. Rather than fighting with a tension between agency and structure, *it normalizes and works within that reality*, allowing for paradox and contradiction.

Employing critical empathy as an analytic tool thus invites duality: the researcher must grapple with data from two different positions and with two distinct goals. She must both attend to participants' emotions and experiences *while also considering* how social context may shape those experiences. In this way, critical empathy is reflexive, but it also facilitates a unique method to analyze data about social reality. Specifically, rather than fighting with the tension as a researcher to look at *either* agency *or* structure, critical empathy normalizes and works within that reality, allowing for paradox and contradiction. Moreover, critical empathy embodies dialogic principles (e.g., careful listening, suspending judgment) as well as social work values (e.g., LARA, meeting the client where she is). The process of integrating grounded theory and critical empathy are diagramed in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Integrating Grounded Theory & Critical Empathy for Qualitative Data Analysis.

(1) Using **grounded theory**, I sought to understand *how* students make sense of race and racism while participating in an intergroup dialogue.

Grounded theory
- *Inductive & a posteriori*: important themes & concepts should emerge from the data itself
- Steps:
    Code text (seeking "action verbs") & theorize
      → Memo & theorize
        → Integrate, refine, write up theory
(Glaser & Strauss 1967; Strauss & Corbin 1990; Charmaz 2002)

(2) I realized that I was **struggling to merge two distinct methodological goals**: to *empathize with participants while also maintaining a critical lens*—i.e., honoring my own perspective (as an instructor, social theorist, practitioner and researcher)—with the ultimate goal of producing innovative theory.

(3) Empathy in qualitative research has been both heralded and criticized; to push beyond this dichotomy, I applied **critical empathy** to my coding process.

Empathy in Qualitative Methods
- Shapes relationship between researcher & participant: recognizes subjectivity and humanity of both parties
- Ideal for unearthing marginalized voices
- May enhance validity but diminish reliability
- Difficult when researcher strongly disagrees with participants (e.g., hate groups)
(Acker, Barry & Esseveld 1991; Harding 1991; Behar 1996; Staples 2001)

Critical Empathy
- Emerges from *critical-dialogic framework* for intergroup dialogue
- Perspective taking while contextualizing/recognizing power inequalities that result in different lived experiences
(Boler 1999; Maxwell, Nagda & Thompson 2011; Gurin, Nagda & Zuniga 2014)

(4) Using a critical empathetic lens focused my attention on not just *what* students said, but *why* they said it, and how I was *reacting* to their statements. Ultimately, this yielded new insights—propelling me beyond description to **theory generation.**

In the interest of clarity, I would like to outline the specific steps I took to code using critical empathy. First, I went back to students' papers with a legal pad. This time, I drew a line down the middle and wrote "critical" on the left and "empathetic" on the right. In the left column, I documented my insights that linked students' ideas to existing theories (e.g., resistance; abstract liberalism); I questioned whether and how they could make the claims they did. In the right column, I noted students' emotions (e.g., frustration, confusion), and challenged myself to explain how their claims made sense. A visual depiction of this process an excerpt is provided in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Coding with Critical Empathy – What does it look like in practice?

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE?

	CRITICAL	EMPATHETIC
In personal terms, what it means to be white is the same as what it means to be tall; it is an identity that carries advantages as well as disadvantages in life that each respective individual deals with. In the same way that genetics granted me blue eyes and two hands and feet, I was born with white skin. It is a simple fact of life for both myself and everyone else on this planet. I do not dwell upon the fact that I was born with blue eyes and I do not dwell upon the fact that I was born with white skin.	Denies white privilege (emphasizes both advantages *and* disadvantages) Emphasizing individualism; abstract liberalism Downplaying the meaning/importance of race because rooted in biological "fact" Universalizing/ generalizing across experience Dismisses issue of race altogether (also – "dwell" suggests that people who pay attention to race are stuck, not moving forward)	Equalizing experience: every [race] identity has both negatives and positives; committed to *equality* Not just "doesn't feel guilty" but *actively deflecting guilt*—not responsible for whiteness; markers of race are beyond control (links to morality) Seeks connection to others via experience, rather than similar characteristics *Confident* about the moral righteousness of his position

As I moved along, I realized that forcing myself to employ this bifurcated lens allowed me to identify more dynamic processes, which, in turn, helped me accept students' contradictory thoughts; it helped me see their thoughtful and complex reflections and appreciate their uncertainty. This ultimately allowed me to focus on *narratives* in my analysis.

Emergent Themes as Tension

Employing a combined approach of grounded theory and critical empathy to understand narratives allowed particular themes to emerge as most prevalent in how students made sense of (or struggled with) notions of structure and agency in understanding race and racism.

Specifically, deconstructing students' narratives about structure and agency highlighted three tensions in the data: (1) the group and the individual; (2) certainty and uncertainty; (3) power and powerlessness. Attending to these three tensions conveys the cognitive difficulties that students grapple with as they make sense of the complexities inherent in understanding the how race operates in complex and—at times—contradictory ways.

I identified these tensions in the data in different ways; sometimes an excerpt was coded because of its explicit content; other times, the code was embedded in a tacit assumption that supported a narrative. Here are some examples of content (organized by the related code):

(1) Excerpts coded as dealing with the group and individual:

- "Everyone is unique."

- "If anything, I have been discriminated against as a white person."

- "My race is important to me, because it helps me understand the history of my family and where I come from."

(2) Excerpts coded as dealing with certainty and uncertainty:

- "I just don't know."

- "It doesn't really make sense."

- "This is how I have always seen the world."

(3) Excerpts coded as dealing with power and powerlessness:

- "I am not a victim."

- "It made me realize that I have experienced oppression."

- "Upon reflection, I have benefited from privilege."

- "It is hard to feel optimistic about changing things."

Importantly, I also identified themes by my unique approach to data analysis. For example, certainty was easier to identify when I found myself jotting "But how do you know that this is true?" as a reaction in the "critical" column.

Narratives, scaffolding and underlying assumptions—and the way they relate to one another—are clearly laid out in the following chapter.

Summary

Grounded theory provides flexibility to carefully and thoroughly explore and make sense of both expected and unexpected themes, as well as relationships between themes. It also fits the agenda of a project that aims to uncover unexplored dynamics of an existing model and the nuanced ways that students process dynamics of power and privilege.

The initial appeal of grounded theory was its capacity for inductive reasoning; however, I found it very difficult to work independently of other theories; instead, I found myself simply identifying the patterns they had already described. While my initial findings seemed to only

validate other scholars' work, using critical empathy as a coding method pushed me beyond initial findings to new insights about how students struggle to learn about race and racism.

The goals of this IGR research project neatly aligned with my own goals to explore the dynamic and nuanced ways that students make sense of race and racism. After looking at transcripts and papers broadly, I focused more precisely on coded excerpts that addressed structure and agency (N=104). Once I began to build a theoretical structure to explain how students made sense of structure and agency, I expanded back out to the full sample (N=139) and adopted practices of constant comparison (Dye, Schatz, Rosenberg & Coleman 2000; Glaser & Strauss), looking for examples to "disprove" the developed theory, and ensuring that sub-categories (in this case, scaffolding) uphold and explain broader themes (narratives).

In keeping with grounded theory, my coding was both open-ended and iterative: I coded data, then engaged in memoing; I clustered ideas; I sought feedback from my advisors; I re-coded in a new way (relying on a process that reflected my own approach to teaching and dialogue); I wrote new memos and coded more. Eventually, from memoing, I identified new ideas; I clustered those ideas (by comparing incidents and organizing them into patterns); then tried to make sense of the data. I refined the categories as I went back to the data; attempted to integrate new ideas with the data.

As I explained in the introduction, I cannot remove myself from my identities or my experiences. However, I can draw on them and create opportunities for careful reflection. Thus, for me, critical empathy as a tool for data analysis operated as a system of checks-and-balances, encouraging reflective coding and examining the data from multiple angles.

A note on ambiguous language….

Any research project requires careful attention to precise word choice—for example, the wording of a survey question shapes how a participant understands and responds to it (Kelley, Clark, Brown & Sitzia 2003; van Sonderen, Sanderson & Coyne 2013). However, qualitative research raises important questions about the relationship between message and meaning; moreover, interpreting what participants may *mean* could be even more difficult when the topic is a sensitive one.

In this project, I rely on students' descriptions (written and verbally) of how they understand race and racism. As I embarked on data analysis, however, I frequently wondered whether I could accurately determine what students *meant* from what they *said* or *wrote*. Vague, abstract writing is not uncommon in students' writing. (Having spent many sleepless nights over the years grading students' papers, I can attest to this.) On the other hand, it is important to consider the reason for students' ambiguity.

When a student misuses the term "oppression," for example, it forces me (as The Researcher) to determine whether this reflects recklessness (of, say, scrambling to finish a paper last-minute), confusion (about the definition of the term) or an intentional challenge to the curriculum (for example, saying that white people are in fact oppressed). Similarly, I must grapple with students' use of quotation marks that suggest some disingenuousness (e.g., "I was placed in the 'advantaged' group") and with what I consider peculiar or imprecise phrasing (e.g., "I have only had a couple of diverse experiences" or "it was racial"). Thus, a frustration I have continually experienced—and, arguably, a limitation of this study—is my inability to ask clarifying and/or follow up questions to students (e.g., "What do you mean by that?") This was true of both the papers submitted by students *and* the interview transcripts (because the vast majority of interviews were conducted by other members of the research team, as described

above). Thus, analyzing data presented difficult questions—namely, (1) What do students say, (2) what do students mean, and (3) why do students not always say exactly what they mean?

Lucid, clear writing is a skill that any writer hones over time. Yet it is useful to consider that ambiguous writing, or imprecise language, may not *simply* reflect students' lack of writing skill; rather, ambiguous language may reflect the discomfort and difficulty that many U.S. inhabitants experience when they attempt to talk openly about race and racism (particularly white inhabitants). Moreover, this discomfort is often rooted in uncertainty, as dominant discourse rarely provides clear or consistent messages about how to productively and appropriately talk about race and racism. Many writers (both academic and popular) have documented a clear shift as racial discourse has grown increasingly obscure, coded, and euphemistic. The last few years alone, for example, have produced Bonilla-Silva's (2008) detailed analysis of colorblindness as a racial ideology, Ta-Nesi Coates' (2012) poignant exploration of Obama's contested blackness, Michelle Alexander's (2012) documentation of how the criminal justice system claims race-neutrality but simultaneously promotes and reproduces racial inequalities, and Ian Haney Lopez's (2014) review of how politicians' coded language seemingly sidesteps race but nonetheless promotes the interests of white Americans and subordinates Americans of minority races.

Thus, coded language about race is apparently more normative than ever. Any project that seeks to understand race through discourse must therefore grapple with ambiguity. Ambiguity may be rooted in fear; it may be rooted in confusion; it may reveal a strategy used by students to mitigate the risk they associate with communicating about race. I have begun to wonder whether it's useful to distinguish between *less* intentional ambiguity and *more* intentional ambiguity. On the other hand, whatever an individual's motivation is, speaking

euphemistically (rather than plainly) about race promotes continued confusion and maintains white privilege on a *structural* level.

Moreover, regardless of what causes students' ambiguity, my challenge here is the same: to accurately represent what students describe in their papers, to honestly report on my own confusion or concern, and to carefully reflect on how I dissect and interpret students' thoughts by considering both their small decisions (e.g., a particular term) and the larger context (e.g., how a particular sentiment aligns with or contradicts other ideas presented by a student).

In short: I did my best.

CHAPTER FOUR
RESULTS

As outlined in my methods section, I was able to identify key tensions that highlight the ways that students struggle with paradoxes about race. The *six narratives* that I will describe and deconstruct are as follows:

(1) We are all the same

(2) Everyone is unique

(3) Struggling to see and represent race "correctly"

(4) I am not/do not feel like a victim/villain

(5) Accepting unknowability and contradiction

(6) Both intention and consequence are important

In my analysis, I attempt to extract the tacit assumptions in students' reasoning and also document the paths students take to reach their conclusions. I refer to these paths as "scaffolding" (because they use assumptions to uphold a narrative). Paying attention to scaffolding became an important component of my project, because it highlighted the incredibly different ways that students reach similar conclusions. Each narrative draws on particular scaffolding and engages in key tensions described in the previous chapter (individual and group, power and powerlessness, certainty and uncertainty). These six narratives by no means comprise an exhaustive list; however, they do appear in students' papers and interviews, and, upon

analysis, these narratives offer compelling insights about how students work to understand the complex and seemingly paradoxical nature of race.

Upon analysis, these six narratives reveal particular assumptions; moreover, attending to students' cognitive reasoning within each narrative reveals how students build on assumptions to reach important conclusions or "meta-narratives." The *three meta-narratives* I reflect on here are:

(1) Race doesn't matter

(2) Race shouldn't matter, but it does

(3) Race matters and affects us in complicated and inconsistent ways

This chapter is organized by meta-narratives; that is, I present narratives in clusters: first, narratives that promote the notion that race does not matter; second, narratives that assume that race shouldn't matter, but it does; and third, narratives that claim that race matters, though it is complicated. The way narratives uphold meta-narratives can be easily viewed in Table 3.

These narratives come from all three data points (pre-papers, post-papers and interviews). After I have described these narratives, I will offer analysis about *how* students use these narratives (with attention to tacit assumptions and how these narratives convey larger messages about power and society). See Table 3 for a clear depiction of narratives, their corresponding scaffolding and assumptions, and their implications for understanding the tension between group/individual and power/powerlessness.[37]

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[37] Note: While I offer context to help unpack and analyze students' claims, I do not aim to draw broad comparisons among groups of students. In other words, I may describe students' identities or an experience that they portray in their own papers or in the interview, but I do so *only* to explain a particular excerpt, not to make claims about groups (e.g., white students compared to students of color; intragroup dialogue compared to intergroup dialogue). As explained in my Methods chapter, I will take steps to examine these comparisons following this dissertation.

Table 3. Summary of results, according to narrative.

EMERGENT NARRATIVE		BELIEFS	META-NARRATIVE	COGNITIVE SCAFFOLDING/ REASONING	RELATION TO INDIVDIUAL/ GROUP TENSION	ATTITUDE ABOUT STRUCTURE/ AGENCY
1	We're all the same (DNA, common humanity)	Seeing race is a form of discrimination	**Race does not matter**	BINARY - Either individuals or groups are most important - Either one is responsible for racism, or one is not	REJECTING (Individual > Group)	- Individuals are powerful & agentic - Racism is power exercised by one person *over* another person based on group identity
2	Everyone is unique	Overgeneralizing leads to misattribution				
3	Struggling to see and represent race "correctly"	Enacting stereotypes requires attention to difference	**Race *shouldn't* matter, but it *does***	HYBRID/ IN-BETWEEN - Awareness of groups but confusion about how to apply that knowledge - Patterns matter, but they are not always accurate	STRUGGLING (Uncertainty about how to balance attention to individual and group)	- Uncertainty about how to personally behave - Skepticism about whether structure is consistently powerful and/or accurate
4	I am not a villain/victim	Static categories cannot fully capture my experience				
5	Accepting contradiction & Unknowability	I can't always see how race affects me	**Race matters and affects us in dynamic and complicated ways**	COMPLEX/ INTEGRATIVE - Privilege and oppression are real & dynamic but not always visible - Race is not binary, but privilege and oppression are	ACCEPTING (Both individual and group are important)	- Acceptance of structural patterns (i.e., control is not the same as power) - Reflection; work to understand own identity and experiences
		Unique individual experience is not incompatible with structural racism				
6	Both intention and consequence are important	I can't know the motivations or interpretations of others				

Meta-Narrative #1: Race Does Not Matter

Students arrive at the conclusion that "race doesn't matter" by relying on two primary narratives: first, some students assert that we are all the same (emphasizing our shared, common humanity over differences); second, some students claim that each individual is unique (emphasizing the need to ignore race in lieu of individual characteristics). As students apply these narratives, they enact binary assumptions (e.g., *either* the group *or* the individual is most important; *either* I am responsible for racism, *or* I am not; *either* a person has power, *or* one does not). These binary assumptions serve to scaffold students' reasoning: Some students convey a fear of overgeneralizing; others focus on the right of an individual to self-identify his/her own race; still others fear that seeing race is, in itself, discriminatory. While these students enact different justifications for their reasoning, these two narratives share two common features: First, they rely on dualistic or binary assumptions, and second, they converge in *rejecting the utility of a group-level analysis*—which, in turn, means that race cannot matter. The decision to elevate the individual as most important and the group as unimportant has important consequences for how students make sense of structure and agency. First, hyperfocus on the individual frames the individual as fully agentic and erases any structural or institutional components of racism. Moreover, this views racism solely as *individual* behavior (i.e., conflating discrimination and racism)—which allows students who convey these narratives to view racism (and sometimes race) as something *outside* of them—something that will be solved when problematic individuals learn to ignore race and instead focus on individuals.

"Because we are all the same, race does not matter."

One narrative focuses on the similarity of all persons, across races. Students promoting a narrative of sameness tend to emphasize the importance of *humanity* and *commonality*, and frequently feature phrases like "people are people" and "underneath it all, we're all the same." This message generally downplays factors that mark difference (including race) and are often linked explicitly to assumptions of morality. This narrative is espoused by both white students *and* students of color.

For example, Lynn[38], an Asian woman, maintains the unimportance of race in her exit interview: "I most certainly do not think racial/ethnic identity [is] one of the most important aspects of my life…. I had a best friend that is Indian when I was little and I do not even think about her race because I do not realize the difference between us. We are all the same it is just that the term 'Malay' or 'Indian' that distinguishes us. Not more than that." (Asian woman, R&E Winter 2010, end-of-semester paper). Similarly, Peter, a white man, writes, "We, that is, humans, have so much in common between races, yet we focus almost solely on the outward appearance rather than recognizing that if you were to plant DNA strands from every race on earth side by side and compare them they would be, for scientific purposes, identical. This shows that race is not much more than a figment of our imagination, so to speak. Focusing so much on something that biologically is miniscule makes me question the priorities of people who spend their time focusing on it." (White man, R&E, Fall 2011, end-of-semester paper).

Both Lynn and Peter rightfully point out the socially constructed nature of race. Lynn rejects the capacity of race to offer descriptive insights outright, asserting that there is *no difference* other than the label itself. By contrast, Peter downplays the importance of difference;

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[38] All names have been changed.

he suggests that differences may exist (e.g., in appearance) but that they are insignificant—or as he puts it, "miniscule"—when compared to the breadth of evidence about our fundamental similarity (e.g., identical DNA). For Peter and Lynn, race delineates differences between people (or groups of people), but these differences are meaningless and therefore unimportant. Both Lynn and Peter, despite their differing race and gender identities, reject the utility of race because of the fundamental sameness that all people share.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, this particular narrative frequently coincides with belief in colorblindness. A white woman, Alicia, writes in her pre-paper, "My parents raised me very well… Although I was not exposed to very much diversity race-wise, I never saw color or race as an issue. I truly thought everyone was equal. Judgment in my household was viewed as very wrong. I tried to never judge a book by its cover and to look past the appearance of somebody, even if they looked 'different' than I did. This opinion will never change" (R&E dialogue, Fall 2010, white woman, beginning-of-semester paper). In this passage, Alicia suggests that moral behavior is "looking past" difference to see the ways that we are alike. Tacitly, she assumes that equality is *only* possible with total disregard for difference. In short, the key is to *ignore* race differences.

Like Alicia, several students assert in the initial paper that colorblindness is the appropriate way to navigate the social world. By contrast, far fewer students (approximately one to three per semester) maintain steadfast claims of colorblindness in their reflection papers and interviews. Sonia, an Indian woman, states repeatedly in her paper and in her interview that she physically doesn't see color:

I (interviewer): So how does your …racial identification shape your own personal beliefs?

R (respondent): Um, that's a hard question to answer. 'Cause I'm one of those people, like, I actually, growing up in India, like, everyone looks pretty much the same… Um, so when I came here, I didn't really understand the concept of race. It's a hard thing for me to explain. Um, like, my parents and I didn't really talk about it a lot, and then I wasn't really introduced to the idea of race until, like, middle school where we started learning about the Civil Rights Movement and things like that. And so, for me, like, race isn't a very important thing. It is and it isn't, just because it exists, but I don't, like, I don't necessarily believe in it, um, so it's hard for me to, like, answer that question, just because I'm one of those people that, like, I'm invisible. Like, race is invisible to me. Like skin color—everyone looks the same to me. Um, I'm one of those people, like, I can't, I don't really judge people based on race. That's something I, like, I haven't grown up doing, so I can't, like, bring myself to do that. Um, so it's really different when I tell people that. Like, I told people that in class and they're like, really, cause race exists, and I'm like, no, no, no, race is a social construct. This can be anything. And so, yeah, it's actually really hard for me to answer that question because, I don't know, race is, really can be anything. Um, so I guess, for me, how does it shape my personal beliefs? I don't know. Everyone is the same, you know, like, it doesn't matter your skin color. You, not everyone is equal, but everyone d-, h-, like, deserves an equal chance to be treated equally. That's like my belief. (Indian woman, R&E, Fall 2011, exit interview)

Sonia's upbringing differs sharply from Alicia's. Unlike Alicia, who grew up in a rural, all-white town, Sonia migrated from India to the United States at a young age. Nonetheless, both reach a similar conclusion—that, deep down, "everyone is the same," and so one's skin color does not matter. Moreover, both students present their stance as universal (i.e., they assert that this is true for everyone, not just them). However, unlike Alicia, Sonia explicitly links her belief in colorblindness to the socially constructed nature of race. She assumes that *because race is socially constructed, it is not real*. Sonia (echoing many critics of modernism) argues that because it is socially constructed, race is fragile and inconsistent, rather than concrete and informative. According to Sonia, race could mean "anything"—which negates its utility; if race can mean *anything*, it carries no weight and actually means *nothing*—reprising Peter's assertion that race is a "figment of the imagination." Both posture the claim that because race is not a "factual" reality, it is not a functional reality. Thus, the narrative of sameness invokes difficult questions about whether race is useful or informative.

For students who emphasize similarity, the information provided by race is (at best) useless and (at worst) harmful. Both Alicia and Sonia suggest that attention to race difference is problematic, because everyone ought to be treated equally. In this way, both Sonia and Alicia convey an underlying assumption that fair and equal are the same—that people can only expect to receive *fair* treatment if they are seen as identical; by extension, we must dismiss, ignore, or transcend racial difference. In other words, the overall similarity of people trumps the relevance of race differences. For example, while Alicia has carefully trained herself to *look past* differences, Sonia claims that she is *physically incapable* of judgment because everyone's skin color "looks the same" to her (i.e., "colorblindness"). Like Lynn, Peter, and Alicia, Sonia has concluded—with confidence—that race can *only* be unimportant, rejecting that race may *at times be important*.

While many students link the unimportance of race to fairness, others explicitly invoke issues of morality. For these students, attention to race differences is a matter of *right and wrong*. When prompted to describe what lessons he learned about race growing up, Brad, a white man, writes:

> When I was growing up I was taught equality in my household in absolutely every aspect. I was taught that being white does not make me any better then any other person in this world. I most likely was taught equality in a slightly different way then most people and I think my parent's technique in approaching equality was very useful and beneficial…. Through reading the bible with my parents I was able to see how Jesus spoke and treated people and this was my insight that all people are created equal and we must treat others equal no matter what race they are. Furthermore, I am struggling answering the next [paper prompt] because to me this feels like it is asking me to explain if my family told me that being white has certain standards in terms of having an attitude that should be superior to other races as well as having a standard of getting a good education just because of our race. My family instilled in me that our behavior should not be different just because we are white. I cannot remember a single time when I was growing up where I ever heard my parents talk about being white and they especially never

said we are fortunate because we are white. It was never a topic of discussion and in reality I was never taught to have a certain attitude towards my race.

… I would not be embarrassed to tell someone that I am white, but at the same time if someone were to ask me what race I am, I would most likely feel awkward telling them because I would wonder what the significance of them knowing is and I would wonder why it matters if I am white, black, or any other race. (White man, R&E, Fall 2011, end-of-semester paper)

Brad emphasizes that the primary lessons he learned about race came from his parents and religious belief, and both centered on *equality*: people ought to be treated the same because "all people are created equal." Like Alicia and Sonia, Brad fails to distinguish between difference and difference in *power* (a distinction helpfully outlined by Johnson 2008); unlike Alicia and Sonia, however, Brad describes the unimportance of race as part of a deep-seated moral code: it is *wrong* to prioritize race above our common shared bond as equal human beings. In other words, all three are unable to conceptualize race without also invoking difficult or uncomfortable questions about the *value* of a person ("being white does not *make me any better* than any other person in this world" [emphasis mine]). This reasoning conveys three important assumptions: first, that moral behavior demands equality; second, that equality is evidenced by sameness; third, that any attention to race detracts from that equality (and is therefore arguably immoral).

Within this narrative of sameness, students see and accept that race is linked to *inequality*; however, they struggle to see how race—because it is linked to difference and inequality—can yield any helpful or positive information. Brad's reaction, in particular, reveals this struggle. Brad wants to describe how his family emphasizes equality. However, race is connected to inequality, which positions his race in a particular way: whiteness is advantaged compared to minority races. Thus, Brad seems to *interpret* the relatively neutral prompt in a very particular way—if his parents *had* talked about whiteness, it would *only* have been to convey that

white people are better than others. In other words, Brad's defensive reaction is ultimately shaped by his *cognitive assumption* that precludes other possible answers—that whiteness could hold some positive anti-racist meaning, for example. Instead, he supports a narrative of sameness by implying that his parents' silence about whiteness was morally correct behavior in the context of "equal treatment." Silence about race connotes the *unimportance* of race. In some ways, this conveys yet another tacit assumption—that if race were important, Brad's parents would be talking about it.

Later, Brad adds, "Growing up, I was taught to work hard and compete in athletics and academics not because I am white, but because my parents taught me hard work will pay off. Not once did they ever make the correlation of being white means I have a standard to live up to in terms of having a good future." In the interview, he adds: "[R]ace just never was an issue in my family. I was never, I was brought up to respect all people just how you were and it wasn't 'respect white people, respect black people, respect black people.' [*sic*] It was 'respect everyone'. So I guess I just never really, like, took the time to realize that it is, like, an issue. Because it wasn't like, because I wasn't doing it, so why would it have mattered. So." Again, Brad sees the strength of his parents' approach in their emphasis on values without linking values to race. The message is, again and again, that *race does not matter*.

Lance, another white male student, describes a similar message from formal schooling:

> As a result, race was always a somewhat academic term to me; generally if it was brought up at all it was in the context of the Civil Rights movement, segregation, or (in later grades) slavery. For a long time, I assumed that 'having a race' was a code for 'being black,' and that race was essentially a historical distinction which Martin Luther King [Jr.], who in terms of greatness was second only to Jesus, had eliminated in the 1960's. Describing someone in racial terms (i.e., saying they were black, or Asian, or white) therefore, seemed like it was in and of itself a mildly offensive act, an anachronistic throwback to a time in which it actually *mattered* what race you were (because, as our teachers assured us, nothing could be further from the truth). (White man, R&E, Fall 2010, end-of-semester paper)

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Lance highlights the slippery link between message and meaning; in school, because the lessons explicitly about race focused on black history, he internalized a message that "having a race" meant being black.[39] Furthermore, Lance demonstrates that the morality of sameness is *also* rooted in dominant discourses surrounding our nation's history. Within this framework, attention to racial differences explains the unfortunate and immoral components of our collective national past and how we grew beyond those unhappy times (having apparently eliminated racism in the 1960s). Accordingly, Lance internalized that enlightened behavior, moral behavior, is to not notice differences; in fact, merely seeing or naming race is detrimental and resurrects an outdated practice. Both Lance and Brad suggest that they have learned messages about race from various sources (e.g., parents, school)—specifically, that one is supposed to downplay or distance himself from race, and that attention to race connotes immorality. Ignoring race thereby signals our progress as a nation; we ignore race because we have learned from the mistakes of our past—we now know, in Lance's words, that it doesn't matter what race you are. Ultimately, this allows students to reason that ignoring differences prevents inequality—which focuses entirely on individual behavior and ignores structural patterns of inequality.

Lance, Brad, Sonia, Alicia, Peter and Lynn all convey the narrative *because we are all the same, race does not matter*. All six link the narrative to personal experiences. Most students who espouse this narrative of "sameness" explicitly attribute the narrative to early messages from major socializing agents (family, school, religious institutions). Thus, in adhering to this narrative, students may simply feel they are "following the rules" as laid out by major influential

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[39] This "coded" message echoes the challenges described in the "Ambiguous Language" section of the Methods chapter. Here, a student uses a term and assumes that the listener will either correctly infer the intended meaning, or that the meaning

figures; perhaps this is why the narrative is often laden with assumptions of universality and morality.

Importantly, all of these students draw on an assumption of sameness *as well as binary reasoning*: we are *either* the same *or* different, and because we are fundamentally the same—as one student puts it, "we are all in the *human* race"—then differences like race cannot matter.

2. *"Because everyone is unique, race does not matter."*

While some students sidestep the complexities of race by assuming a narrative of sameness, others do so by promoting *uniqueness*. Various scholars (e.g., Bonilla-Silva 2008, Proudman 2006, Takaki 2008; Johnson 2005) have documented the link between individualism and white privilege; it is therefore not surprising that most of the students who advocate an individualist lens are, in fact, white. On the other hand, students of color who endorse individualism express frustration with inaccurate stereotypes and generalizations thrust upon them by others.

Many students—both white students and students of color—state that individual characteristics provide *more important information* than race can. This assertion tends to be accompanied by one or both of the following assumptions: First, that race is equated with skin color and is analogous to other physical characteristics (e.g., height, eye color)—thereby suggesting that race can only be as important as those characteristics; second, that race is out of the control of the individual, which makes it worthless compared to what an individual *chooses* to do (e.g., behaviors, attitudes)—which echoes Bonilla-Silva's findings on abstract liberalism.

Though his paper contains narratives supporting sameness (as described in the previous section), Peter actually *begins* his first paper by suggesting that race is unimportant for a different reason—that it is eclipsed by our unique biographies and experiences:

> Walking along, people bustling by, no one takes the split second to smile while passing or even make eye contact for more than necessary. With every person, I see different experiences, different lives lived in the manner life has lead them to. Then I stop, right there in the side walk and ask myself, who am I to these people? Who am I to those that pass me on the street? Who am I?…To the people on that street that day, I was nothing more than just another white guy, but I know that I am the sum of my experiences and experience has taught me that there is so much more than just skin deep. (White man, R&E, Fall 2011, beginning-of-semester paper)

Similarly, when another student in Peter's class, Michael, is interviewed about the meaning of his identities, he dismisses the utility of race.

> I: So to start, since we're talking to people who went through the race and ethnicity dialogue, can you tell me how did you identify yourself in terms of race and gender for the class?
>
> R: White, Jewish, male.
>
> I: And what does that mean to you?
>
> R: It means, like, I'm pretty much part of the majority except for the fact that I'm Jewish. A little different. But really that's all it means to me. It's nothing more than, like, my, um, it's nothing more than like, a tag line to me, really.
>
> I: Okay. And what do you mean it's a tag line?
>
> R: It's just like, an identifier. It's not really, it has nothing to do with, like, my personality or anything outside of that. (White man, R&E, Fall 2011, exit interview)

While Michael recognizes that his identities place him in a majority, he explicitly contrasts the unimportance of race with the importance of personality—and, in doing so, implicitly conveys that personality is either more informative or more important than race. In other words, Michael does not refute that race is real; however, he suggests that it is unhelpful as an empty label and far less important than other characteristics.

By emphasizing "personality," Michael is hinting that individual's personal characteristics are more important than race. Similarly, many students see individualism as a path to equality. In this way, students are not simply expressing a belief; they are articulating belief in a particular *strategy* for change. Naomi, a white Jewish woman in the WRID dialogue, advocates that an individual lens ought to take priority over attention to race groups in her beginning-of-the-term paper in order to eradicate "race problems."

> "Nobody can be held accountable for what they are, only for who they are. This both conscious and subconscious realization has continued to be the lens through which I view racial issues. To dwell upon the biological variations that each one of us is endowed with on a basis of complete randomness seems rather silly…. If an individual realizes that other people can only be held accountable based on merit and character, and that all other identifications are both superficial and complete random biology, race issues cease to exist." (White woman, WRID, Fall 2010, beginning-of-semester paper)

For Naomi, social identities like race fail to offer useful insight because no one can control the race she is born with. Thus, "merit and character" take precedence over "random biology"—because merit and control tell us about the *choices* an individual makes. In other words, Naomi is primarily concerned with *accountability* and *agency*. According to her logic, race is unimportant because it is beyond the control of the individual; therefore, attention to race unfairly holds people accountable for a dimension of their identity that they did not choose.[40]

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[40] Though she does not say it, Naomi's stance may reflect her experiences as a white woman; whites are more likely than people of color to be viewed as *individuals*; thus, it is relatively easy for Naomi to imagine a world in which she is seen as an individual (rather than as part of a group) and therefore easier to dismiss race as "superficial" (since it has been unimportant in her life). Moreover, focusing on individual accountability removes Naomi's whiteness— and any accompanying responsibility for racism—from the framework. This focus on the individual rather than the group enables Naomi to sidestep the notion that she, as a white woman, bears some responsibility for racism. Instead, if each individual is held accountable for her actions, Naomi may see herself as "off the hook" (to borrow a phrase from Johnson 2005). Naomi's thinking also aligns nicely with Bonilla-Silva's discussion of abstract liberalism as a contributing factor to "racism without racists" (2008). Whether she does so intentionally or not, Naomi presents race as unimportant.

An important caveat: because this study does not systematically compare groups of students, I cannot (nor do I wish to) claim that Naomi's endorsement of this narrative is entirely due to her race. However, I hope to offer some context and insight about her stance, given what the literature says. As I have said previously, further investigation

Furthermore, by using the term "character," Naomi tacitly conjures messages from Martin Luther King, Jr.—ultimately connecting her narrative of individuality to civil rights. Other students who support the narrative of individual uniqueness also refer to MLK to support their position. For example, Collin, a white man in the WRID dialogue, opens his end-of-term paper by referring to Martin Luther King Jr.'s 1963 "I Have a Dream" speech, which he interprets as a treatise for individualism.

> There is probably no better way to summarize and convey my views on being white and race issues than through strength and validity of MLK's words from his fantastic I Have a Dream speech. I am an individual. In my interactions with the other individuals I judge others solely based on the content of character and the merit of their actions. This is the mentality I have had my entire life and with which I came into our white racial identity IGR class. I think it is a testimony to the strength, validity and righteousness of that ideology that I now also come out of the IGR class with that mentality…. What I'm really trying to get across is that I'm sick of seeing people only as groups rather than individuals. How hard is it really to just stop trying to group people together into all kinds of social identities? I have frowned upon this behavior all my life and I will continue to do so…. To constantly place people in identity groups rather than identifying them as individuals perpetuates racial problems in society in my opinion… I always saw other people as such, as other people, not as "white" or "Asian" or "black." Even in South Korea where I was surrounded by people who looked very different from me and had a very different culture, issues of race simply weren't a factor. I knew that I could expect and receive equal treatment when treating people as individuals rather than members of an identity group." (White man, WRID, Winter 2010, end-of-semester paper)

Like Lance (in the previous section) and Naomi, Collin seems to focus on eliminating racial problems and proposes a solution to do so—for Collin and Naomi, concentrating on the individual, rather than the group, will lead to a more positive and just world. Moreover, Collin's explicit reference to Martin Luther King, Jr. suggests that he, like Naomi, see this strategy as consistent with at least one prominent figure in the historical fight for civil rights. Unfortunately,

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will explore whether particular narratives (e.g., individual uniqueness) are more common among white students as compared to their peers.

however, neither student considers how socio-political contexts shape the way we think about race currently—or how these contexts have shifted over time.[41]

Instead, Collin accurately notes that racism is fundamentally linked to race groups; however, like many students in the previous section, he assumes that the problem is rooted in *difference* rather than *differences of power* among groups. Thus, Collin reasons that attention to race groups validates or confirms their existence; morally appropriate action is to ignore groups and treat each individual as unique.

In this way, an important dynamic surfaces in Collin's paper: a tacit dichotomy between the individual and the group; Collin seems to assume that only the individual *or* the group is most important. Consider, for example, that Collin says he's "sick of seeing people only as groups rather than individuals." Collin assumes that attention to a racial group impedes the ability to recognize an individual's unique qualities. Thus, he concludes, we must pay attention to the individual.

Like students in the previous section, Collin does not simply feel strongly about his stance; he feels strongly about the *moral conviction* of his stance. For example, his language and the tone in his paper positions his stance as enlightened and superior; he distances himself from and criticizes those who draw attention to social identity groups (as he has "frowned on this behavior" and wonders whether it would be that difficult to adopt his opinion). His paper doesn't offer much analysis about others in the dialogue, or his development throughout the course.

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[41]While some issues of the 1960s Civil Rights movement remain salient today (e.g., the racism of the criminal justice system, police brutality, access to education, and voting rights), the context surrounding racism today is objectively different than it was decades ago. Consider, for example, how changes in technology and policy have shaped the public's awareness, perception of, and reaction to incidents of racism in current events. Of course, it is *also* salient to note that students are pointing to one particular speech and suggesting that it is representative of the breadth of MLK's work, which is arguably problematic.

Instead, he focuses proudly on his unchanging view and the righteousness of it—despite the program's apparent attempts to sway him.

Both his first paper and final paper present logical, well-crafted arguments; he employs a variety of rhetorical strategies to persuade the reader of the *correctness* of his view (e.g., linking his claim to Martin Luther King Jr., who is highly respected and celebrated for his leadership in the civil rights movement). While these efforts evidence his strong writing skills, they also suggest that Collin's ultimate goal in dialogue was not to listen to the experiences of others; instead, he felt compelled to defend and persuade others of his position. To some extent, this echoes patterns in first narrative, in which students typically see an overarching moral, universal truth as best—which may erase important differences in experience due to structural inequality.[42]

By contrast, some students acknowledge that race might feel important in the lives of *others*—even while they maintain its irrelevance in their own lives. This diverges markedly from the first narrative, as it requires that students acknowledge others' experiences may vary and not necessarily mirror their own. In other words, students conclude that because race means different things to different people, race identity is a personal matter of based on individual experiences. For example, Tabitha, a white woman, writes this in her introductory paper:

> I don't necessarily think race should have to truly define anyone. When describing oneself I don't think race is a huge important thing because it is just one of your many physical traits. If I said my name is [Tabitha], I have brown hair brown eyes and 5 [foot] 4 [inches] and am white, I don't think that "white" would need to be the essential characteristic to that autobiography. However, I do understand that different people have been brought up different ways and learned different things from their own personal situations. I respect anyone who believes their race is a vital part of their life. Race can sometimes be unimportant to any situation, or

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[42] Again, I can make no claims to whether this is due to whiteness, but a swath of literature—particularly standpoint theory—indicates that white privilege may lead students to view their own experiences as universal or "normal." For example, by universalizing from his own experience, Collin seemingly exercises and reproduces white privilege even while he argues that it is non-existent.

sometimes can heavily influence ones life. (White woman, R&E, Fall 2010, beginning-of-semester paper)

Tabitha emphasizes the need to acknowledge and respect variation of race in the lives of others. Like Sonia, she contends that it is problematic to treat race as static, because we know that race means different things depending on the situation and/or an individual's life experiences. Yet Tabitha is tacitly assuming that race can only be uniquely experienced or monolithic, rather than considering the possibility that race is *both* uniquely experienced and important indicative of particular patterns of power. Unlike Collin and Naomi, Tabitha is less adamant that race can *never* matter; instead, she contends that race is so multifaceted that we must always consider it a highly personal, individual matter. Thus, Tabitha wishes to respect the possible meanings of race—including those who see it as highly important—but she hesitates to consider race groups broadly; instead, the meaning and importance of race ought to be left up to the individual. Tabitha thus concludes that while she does not consider her own whiteness to be very important, she can understand how *someone else* may conclude that his race is important.

For Tabitha, then, race becomes an *individual*—rather than a group—matter. Tabitha sidesteps the question of whether or not race matters by concluding that for some it does, and for others it may not. Yet if the importance of race is *only* relative to the individual, then there is no way to account for the influence of structural power—that is, how race operates at a societal level. This has important consequences for how students make sense of the relationship between race and power—which will be explored in the next section.

On the other hand, her peer, Katie, agrees that the meaning of race shifts depending on the individual, but that Katie uses this assumption to impose a universal rule—that moving away from race as a point of focus will eliminate racism.

"My race has little to no influence on how I identify myself as a person, and more specifically as a woman. … I am fully aware that there is racism in the world, and that in

a lot of places minorities are still oppressed and persecuted in ways that I can barely imagine, but none of that has a real impact on my life. I don't identify as white, so it really shouldn't matter, socially, if someone else chooses to identify as anything [sic] other race or creed… I have certainly had more contact with minorities since I've come to college, and recognize that not many people, especially minorities, feel the way I do towards race, in particular. … Just because I don't feel that race should play a role in daily life, doesn't mean that I don't understand that minorities don't experience oppression on a level that I don't necessarily understand. There are a lot of issues surrounding race, even today, and I am fully aware of many of these issues. I am not uninformed, and I don't feel entitled to this opinion simply because I am a member of the racial majority. I simply feel that if everyone wasn't so focused on race, we, as a nation, could probably get much more accomplished." (White woman, R&E, Winter 2010, beginning-of-semester paper)

Like Collin, Katie demonstrates discomfort with overgeneralizations; and, like Tabitha, she points out that the ways that individuals make meaning of race can vary drastically. For Katie, race identity is a choice in her life and therefore is also presumably a choice in the lives of others—which assumes that all people have *equal power* to decide whether and how race matters in their lives. If she can value other aspects of her life more than her race identity, she reasons, why couldn't someone of a different race do the same?

According to Katie and Tabitha, we must move beyond race and instead consider how *individuals* make sense of their own experiences—because individuals will inevitably vary in how they interpret experiences; therefore, individual agency and empowerment are tied to one's own capacity to define herself. Furthermore, those experiences may be related to race or not, according to the individual (for example, she says her own whiteness has no bearing on her perception of herself, but that "many people, especially minorities" may have a different relationship to their own race identity.) The vast and varying possible meanings that race has in individual lives means that race can only be understood on a case-by-case, individual basis— which implies that attention to groups is pointless.

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Like Tabitha, Katie acknowledges that her worldview may be shaped by her experience; her perspective is *partial* and hers alone. However, each downplays the relevance of race in her own life. In other words, each points out that others' experiences of race may differ vastly from her own, and both indicate that they are cognitively aware of racial oppression, but neither considers how her assumptions about race reflect the privilege that accompanies whiteness. In other words, despite their stated awareness of inequality, both Tabitha and Katie rest firmly on the side of individualism. While Tabitha's position is susceptible to solipsism, Katie imposes clear universal "truths"—that individual choice is of utmost importance and that race interferes with this. Moreover, she concludes that race is a distraction; if we could recognize how unimportant it is, we would be more productive as a nation.

Like Naomi and Collin, Tabitha and Katie implicitly assume that *either* the group *or* the individual matters more; rather than focusing on merit or character, however, Katie advocates the importance of *individual agency* in race identity. In other words, she argues that it is the right of the individual to decide how they identify, racially. In promoting this message, Katie grasps one important dimension of race—that individuals have some power in how they name their race to themselves and others. However, Katie fails to recognize that there are other dimensions to personal race identity—namely (a) that race is not only personally felt, it is *also* externally ascribed, and (b) that individuals do not have equal agency and freedom to pick their race identities.

Interestingly, however, students sometimes promote Katie's conclusion (that an individual lens is most appropriate), but they arrive at this conclusion by a very different path. Rather than claiming that everyone has the ability to determine his/her own identity, they argue that an individual lens is critical because people may not always be able to control how others

view them. Sam, for example, a Chinese man, advocates individualism *because* he cannot

prevent others' assumptions. He explains why he becomes so frustrated when it seems like his

race matters more than his individual characteristics in his final paper:

> "I constantly hear conversations like this:
> A: Hey today I met a really cool guy X.
> B: Yeah X is a cool Asian dude.
> "I can't understand why people must add 'Asian' in front of 'dude' instead of saying X is
> a cool dude. Why must they specifically address the racial identity? This obviously
> makes me feel estranged. The hidden connotation is that there are different standards to
> judge if a dude is cool, standards for Asian and standards for non-Asian. Treating people
> differently according to races signs inequality. So I strongly hope that people can just say
> a "dude" rather than an "Asian dude" (Asian man, R&E, Fall 2011, end-of-semester
> paper)

Later, in the interview, Sam expands on this. He describes pressure to join an Asian

fraternity on campus; he also expresses frustration in U.S. citizens' tendency to lump "Asian"

into a monolithic group, saying, "In order to achieve a convenience, you just ignore differences

between people. It really irritates me." He states that he sees "no reason" to gloss over important

cultural differences simply because people are from the same continent.

For Sam, highlighting race suggests differing standards. In other words, he shares the fear

expressed by many students in the sameness section—that acknowledging difference is a

discriminatory act in and of itself. As he puts it, he sees tacit, "hidden" meanings attached to race

categories. However, Sam rejects an assumption of similarity (distinguishing him from the first

narrative); instead, he works hard to argue that his experiences are unique. Thus, he wants to be

seen as an individual "dude," rather than feeling automatically tied to his race identity.

Similarly, Sonia (whose interview was quoted in the previous section) writes in her exit

paper, "I find the claim that one's race or color is essential to their being offensive. As someone

who is of color, I prefer that people judge me by my actions, accomplishments, and character,

not by my color." (Indian woman, R&E, Fall 2011, end-of-semester paper). Like Sam and

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Tabitha, Sonia is wary of how useful information about race can be. She points out that her race is not essential (i.e., biological); moreover, to treat race as real, fixed and perceptible is dangerous, because it precludes other possible meanings. Interestingly, Sonia here identifies as a person of color (despite her earlier claims of colorblindness), and builds that into her explanation of why she wants others to focus on her actions and accomplishments. Sonia does not want to be seen for her race first—perhaps because she shares Sam's concerns that attention to her race can only bring harmful information; perhaps because she does not want race to be viewed as real, static, or fixed.

Arguably, Sam and Sonia—like Katie and Tabitha—promote individualism because of their own lived experiences. Katie endorses agency and flexibility in identity choice, citing her own decision to not identify as white; by contrast, Sam says that we must recognize individuals first because racism has limited his own agency in identity choice.

While students may arrive at the conclusion in different ways (as they draw on their own experiences), both students of color and white students endorse the claim that *race doesn't matter because individual characteristics make each person unique*. Ultimately, students' reasoning reveals an important binary assumption: that attention to race precludes the possibility of diverse experiences within a race category. That is, students who endorse this narrative tend to overlook that a "race group" may in fact be quite diverse; instead, they view race as problematically homogenizing and therefore emphasize the unique experience of *individuals*, regardless of race group.

The tendency of students to emphasize the individual over the group has important implications for how they view power and racism, which I will discuss in the conclusion.

Meta-Narrative #2: Race *Shouldn't* Matter, But It (Sometimes) Does

Just as certain narratives help demonstrate how students *reject* the complexities of race, there are also narratives that help explain students' *struggle* to make sense of race. The unique design of intergroup and intragroup dialogue asks that students interact with others to know more about the world and about themselves, which invites difficult questions as students grapple with the relationship between the individual and the group. As students begin to consider others' experiences and integrate these perspectives into their own worldview, they may struggle with how and when race matters—at large, and in their own lives. Thus, many students express narratives that fall into a second broad narrative: *Race shouldn't matter, but it sometimes does*.

Unlike narratives described previously, these narratives do not convey certainty, but tend to convey confusion and contradiction; they both accept *and* challenge the reality and importance of race and racism. Specifically, these narratives reveal students' confusion as they listen to others' experiences, reevaluate their commitment to colorblindness, and reflect on the contradictions between their lived experiences and the messages that they have received about race. For example, students often express skepticism about the all-encompassing nature of privilege and oppression—though they are willing to acknowledge that it exists. This tension is most clear in two narratives: (a) the challenge of learning from others about groups without generalizing and (b) acknowledging that patterns of inequality exist but challenging their inevitability. Both of these narratives acknowledge groups exist (differentiating this broad narrative from the one above), but deconstructing these narratives highlights students' difficulty integrating both the individual and the group experience.

3. Learning from/about others: Struggling to see and represent race difference "correctly"

For many students, an intergroup dialogue is an exciting opportunity to talk to and learn from others (who presumably come from very different backgrounds).[43] In their pre-paper, students are asked about their hopes and fears for the class; most are eager to gain exposure to new cultures and new ideas, unlearn stereotypes, and reach across difference to build relationships. In this way, dialogue may raise yet another difficult tension for students—that of difference and sameness. Building relationships across differences may pose challenges for students who would rather dismiss differences and focus on similarities. On the other hand, some students seem to heartily embrace learning about other race groups.

When asked about important lessons and takeaways, many students highlight the value of learning *from* their peers *about* "other" categories. As Bill, a white man in the race and ethnicity dialogue, puts it: "The biggest impact that this dialogue had on me… was being able to understand not only how it feels to a Black person in America, but also how Chinese, Malaysian, and Pakistani people feel as well." (White man, R&E, Winter 2010, end-of-semester paper). Similarly, Sonia (who you'll remember from the previous section) explains in the interview that the main purpose of the course is disproving stereotypes—that is, learning about the uniqueness of *others*.

> And I think, for someone like me, I value the class because maybe it might help people who haven't had the same type of learning as me to realize that, you know, you need to look outside of race and, I don't know, expand our understanding of, you know, what a black person may or may not be, um, or what a white person may or may not be, or what a, you know, a Chinese person may or may not be. Um, so I think in that sense it was valuable for me because it kind of reinforced what I've been taught my whole life, but for other people it might be maybe I need to, you know, get rid of these stereotypes in my head. Um, I talked about the fried chicken incident with, you know, one of my peers in

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[43] The eagerness of students to learn from others is similarly found in other empirical studies about intergroup dialogue experiences (e.g., Ford 2012). This is, presumably, why white students express frustration to discover they have been placed in the all-white WRID dialogue, where they expect to learn very little (as described by their pre-papers).

the class. She's like, I don't like fried chicken. I wouldn't go to the dining hall. So, you know, even, like, those small moments where you learn about, you know, their preferences for chicken, I think it says a lot about how we are as a society--that we don't tend to look at people as individuals, that we, like, group them together. So I feel like that's something people can learn from this class, and I definitely learned more about it. (Indian woman, R&E, Fall 2011, exit interview)

While Bill focuses on similarity and Sonia focuses on unique differences, both focus on the program's (perceived) goals: learning about *other groups of people.* Bill and Sonia are, to some extent, correct: recognizing and appreciating the experiences of others is a critical component of dialogic learning; however, while intergroup and intragroup dialogue programs may challenge stereotypes, this is not the program's *only* goal. Furthermore, the actual class may not unfold so neatly. The design of intergroup dialogue (and intragroup dialogue) relies on sharing personal experiences in order to better understand group patterns, but an individual's personal experience may confirm or challenge stereotypes and predicted patterns. Thus, learning *about groups from individuals* poses a unique challenge for students—for example, when and how to appropriately consider group difference (i.e., race), or how to present the relationship between individual experience and group identity.

While not everyone expresses *concern* about this dynamic, many students refer to the pressure to "represent my race"—both outside and within the dialogue space. For example, in his interview, Douglas was asked to describe his experience as a black man in the R&E program:

> R: As far as the dialogue I guess it was just being able to get the opinions and thoughts and experiences from each race. So I represented mine by giving my opinions and thoughts and experiences.
> I: What were some of the thoughts and opinions that you shared?
> R: It's kind of broad. I don't know how to… basically I mean on every topic that we had I just… I don't know how to answer it. It's so broad.
> I: Were there particular activities in the dialogue where you really felt like you had to stand up to represent your race?
> R: Stand up? Um… I don't know if I would say "stand up" to represent my race. No. I don't think I ever felt like I had to stand up. Because there weren't any, like, clashes or

anything that was trying to put us down or anybody said anything like that and I had to say "Hold on" or something like that. But just when I say "represent" it's just being the black person there that they want a white person there, then they had someone who was the white person so they represented white. But no. It was nothing like stand-uppish type stuff. Just being able to offer. Because it's dialogue so we're talking. Just being there to talk.

I: Thank you. I think I understand now. (Black man, R&E, Fall 2010, exit interview)

Douglas uses the word "represent" to explain his understanding of the purpose (or at least the process) of the course. When the interviewer follows up with the term "represent," he is quick to distance himself from defensive behavior—he emphasizes that he didn't have to take an active role in challenging his peers; as he puts it, there was nothing "stand-uppish" about it. Instead, he rightfully recognizes the program's design, which intentionally considers the race identities of the students. In other words, it is clear to Douglas that the course design emphasizes race differences or social identities. This emphasis may exert pressure on students—particularly if they are students from an underrepresented minority group. As Douglas points out, the dialogic nature of the course leaves room for students to disagree, challenge, or find commonalities across these differences. Yet he fundamentally views representation as an important component of the program—thus conveying his own awareness and difficulty parsing out his experiences as both individual and within a race group.

While the notion of representation did not seem to bother Douglas, other students *do* express discomfort. Mallory, for example, said that when she spoke in the dialogue, she "often felt like a representative of the whole Asian female population and this pressure oppressed me [*sic*] from saying a few things." (Asian woman, R&E, Fall 2011, end-of-semester paper). Ming, a student from China, shares concerns that people may extrapolate or generalize about all Chinese people based on her contributions: "Participants of intergroup dialogue sit together because they have different cultural background… which enhances our understanding about global society.

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However, I [am concerned that] we may consider the opinion of an individual as the view of a group and form new stereotype[s]. I think my ideas can only represent how some Chinese think, not every Chinese." (Chinese woman, R&E, Fall 2011, beginning-of-semester paper). Al expresses similar concern at the beginning of the semester: "I get tokenized when I am asked to share 'The Latino Perspective' – I don't enjoy it because it's mine, it's not the entire culture; I don't want others to make assumptions about all [Latinos]." (Latino man, R&E, Winter 2011, beginning-of-semester paper). At the end of the semester, Al conveys some pride in his ability to add "a Latino's viewpoint" to the dialogue, and that his "developed sense of race and ethnicity" provided a unique lens for his peers. In the interview, however, Al expresses a *sense of responsibility*: "That's what intergroup is, in my opinion. Just you educating others on your own experiences."

Similarly, Kelsey explains the pressure to educate others:

R: I would say I felt like… I felt like the class wasn't for me. It was, like, for white people to get to know people like me.
I: Really?
R: Yeah. Because, like, it was a lot of stuff that they said they didn't know. Like, this one girl gave kind of like a testimony that she thought that all people flew in private planes and like, can get whatever they want if they ask their parents. And like, when the black people in class were giving their testimonies it was kind of like an eye opener for them that we didn't have as much.
I: Really?
R: Yeah. So I just felt like they were learning about us but we were just hearing… I mean, we heard their testimonies it's like stuff that we already knew. So I just felt like on the other side of it, it was just us being used for them to get an understanding of how we got here. (Black woman, R&E, Fall 2010, exit interview)

Interestingly, Kelsey does say that she benefited from the class when a white peer talked about growing up in poverty: "I didn't think that all white people were rich, but I thought they were at least, like, middle class. And she just didn't strike me as someone who grew up, like, lower class or something. I guess I learned just not to take my assumptions, stereotypes onto every person of

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a certain group." Nonetheless, at the end of the semester, Kelsey says, "I kind of found it [the class] pointless. That's probably why I won't take another IGR class." When the interviewer prompts her to say more, Kelsey explains, "This might sound selfish, but I didn't really get anything out of it [the class]." Kelsey's stance seems contradictory: she both reports that she got nothing out of the class *and* that she learned from others.

Nonetheless, like Al and Kelsey, several students of color refer to a dynamic in which they feel *compelled* to educate their white peers about their race-based experiences. By contrast, few white students express the need to "educate" students of color about race; however, many are anxious to demonstrate their non-racist tendencies. In other words, both students of color and white students struggle to "represent" their race appropriately.

Thus, the cognitive challenge of contextualizing individual experiences within a race group framework creates particular challenges for students. By way of example, many students—both white students and students of color—highlight the tension of group and individual by expressing frustration with claims of colorblindness. In my sample, many students initially claim to be colorblind in the initial paper, but by the final paper, most have rescinded that opinion (exceptions are presented in the preceding analysis). In fact, many of them offer thoughtful reflection and analysis about *how* and *why* they held this position in the first place. Notably, students often say that a peer in the course challenged them to rethink their assumption about colorblindness.

In this way, an understanding about the consequences of race in the lives of others pushes students to consider the importance of race in society. In general, these students conclude the semester with a narrative that race *shouldn't* matter, but it *does*.

Many students attribute their changed perspective to the contributions of a peer in class. Here, Sicily, a black woman, offers insight about how it looked and felt to challenge her peers' claims of colorblindness. Sicily explains in her final paper that many of her white peers in the dialogue tried to "explain away" some of her personal experiences of discrimination; that is, they wanted to find an explanation unrelated to race; she quotes their reactions: "Maybe you are reading into it too much?" and "I bet you weren't *purposely* overlooked." However, she says,

> "As much as these comments did irritate me, what triggered me the most is when one of my male white counterparts said that he didn't see race, he 'didn't see color' and he didn't understand why it was still a prevalent issue in society. These comments are a direct example of colorblind racism.… It disgusts me how people of the hegemonic dominant group have the luxury to feel this way since they never have to be anything other than the norm. It was if is as he is saying that my experience associated to my color doesn't exist, that my markedness is just in my head." (Black woman, R&E, Fall 2011, end-of-semester paper).

Sicily explicitly links her white peer's vantage point to his positionality. It is unclear from her analysis whether she *believes* that he doesn't see race; her use of quotation marks hints that she may be skeptical about his reported colorblindness. Regardless of whether she believes his claim, she certainly expresses anger and frustration, describing herself as both "triggered" and "disgusted." It is unclear whether she is *more* upset about the white student's obliviousness about his power *or* the effect of his sweeping denial of race, which made her feel disbelieved, "dismissed," and powerless. By denying the reality of race, this peer has seemingly denied Sicily's agency to claim her race-related experiences as authentic. Importantly, the white student described in this scenario may or may not have intended to dismiss Sicily's feelings; nonetheless, the *consequences* of his actions are significant.[44] Thus, when [white] students promote colorblindness as a universal truth, or deny their ability to see race, they may (inadvertently or not) be denying the race-based experiences of students who have experienced racial oppression.

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[44] I talk more about intention and consequence in the following section.

We can also learn from the reaction of Sicily's white peers in the dialogue. As they challenge her to "prove" that her experiences are about race, they are fundamentally struggling to disentangle the relationship between the individual and the group. In part, students are grappling to integrate new information (race has affected my peer) with contradicting internalized messages (race doesn't matter). It is therefore understandably difficult for students to conceptualize how they might acknowledge race in productive ways.

In her exit interview, Lynn (whose narrative of sameness was presented in the previous section) says, "Because race categories shape individual[s], to ignore race is to ignore the individual and his/her experience of discrimination. I want to see race but not like judgmental" (Asian woman, R&E, Winter 2010, exit interview). Lynn's views have evolved since the beginning of the semester; she now wants to "see race" because it helps her understand the individual's experience. Yet she adds that *she does not want to be judgmental*—implying that she feels compelled to clarify her motivations: her desire to see race stems not from immorality or a desire to mistreat others; instead, she wants to understand. This small clarifying clause tells us that Lynn understands the importance of race; however, she is unsure of *how* and *when* it is appropriate to consider race identity. More importantly, Lynn sees the value of the group through an individual lens. In other words, understanding race is fundamentally a way to better understand other individuals' experiences.

Other students convey a similar difficulty as they struggle to integrate this new perspective. Here, a white woman, Amanda, struggles to incorporate new insights about the profound impact of race with her initial narrative (which was a moral commitment to fundamental sameness):

> We were talking about colorblindness. And so we had read all these articles. I had always thought, 'oh, you know colorblindness, like, if everyone was colorblind wouldn't

the world be perfect?' Because, like, obviously I wouldn't be treating an African American different from a white person—I'd be just based off their personality, who they are as a person. And this girl, [name] in my dialogue raised a point and she said, "You know, it's like color blindness does have its obvious positives but also, like, you need the race. You need to see the color in order to understand where they come from and their past and their struggles." And so, like, you can't treat, like, if everyone was the same color you couldn't treat the African American person – this is going to sound not the way I want it to sound – you can't treat them the same because they've come from different backgrounds and have had different situations. They come from a different culture and they might. And so, I don't know, you just have to be aware of that. I don't know if that makes sense. (White woman, WRID, Fall 2011, exit interview)

Like many of her peers, Amanda's investment in colorblindness is less about ignoring race and more about the presumed (positive) outcome of colorblindness: equal treatment. The tacit assumption is that one cannot treat differentially if she cannot discern difference. Ignoring race will force us to engage with more meaningful/valuable aspects of individuals—their personalities, or as other students have suggested, content of character, or common interests. These characteristics are all seen as more useful and more moral ways to "know" someone. Thus, she infuses both sameness and uniqueness as she describes her initial understanding of race. Again, it is easy to see how this view complements messages that white students learned from major institutions: race doesn't matter; treat everyone the same—or at least according to their individual unique personalities. Total disregard for race seems "ideal" to Amanda, but she now (post-dialogue) recognizes that race may shape people's experiences in important and real ways.

Following her discovery about the importance of race, Amanda is now struggling to integrate her newfound understanding of race as important with her initial tendency to claim a common sameness/uniqueness across people. It is relatively easy to report what her classmate told her, but she struggles to digest this information and explain how this information will change her actions. She punctuates her response to clarify that it might not sound "the way I

want"—implying that she is *afraid* that by considering difference in treatment, her behavior is offensive or problematic. In short, she is struggling with the paradox of race as important and not-important and also with an underlying tension to see both the group and the individual.

This tension comes across in Amanda's discussion of how she will relate to others in the future; she relies on a dichotomous you/them framework ("you can't treat *them* the same because *... they* come from a different culture"). As Amanda recognizes the importance of group (race), she may inadvertently essentialize difference and reinscribe boundaries (I-you and they-them). Ultimately, Amanda has been *persuaded* that the group matters, but she *struggles* to make sense of how groups can matter without making broad claims about an entire race group.

In many ways, the shift in thinking reported by Lynn and Amanda due to their peers' contributions (like the one described by Sicily) marks the success of the dialogue program. Its curriculum asks students to explicitly talk about race and their own experiences; thus, when students shift away from denying or avoiding race to "wanting to see it" in order to better understand others, students are arguably meeting at least some of the program's stated goals. But as Lynn and Amanda describe this insight, they also convey confusion about what this looks like in practice. This suggests that Lynn and Amanda both struggle to integrate *knowledge about race groups* (which enhance their ability to connect meaningfully with others from different race groups) with *positive interpersonal experiences* (i.e., seeing and interacting with others who may differ from them racially). Moreover, they understandably struggle to reconcile the notion that it is valuable to recognize race differences when they have been taught for years that is morally wrong to do so.

This can be difficult, given contradictory messages that students have received from various sources, wherein seeing race is read as *racism* (i.e., recognizing race is viewed as an

inherently racist act). Furthermore, reevaluating colorblindness tends to be exclusively about the oppression of people of color, not about the benefit of white people. This, in turn, creates difficult questions for students about how and when attention to race is helpful. Natasha puts this plainly: "My family had emphasized the significance of treating everyone as their own person and not a specific race. Therefore, while I think race can be acknowledged, it should not be a limiting factor in a person's identity in any way…. I wish everyone was more open-minded and accepted everyone for who they are not where they come from." (White woman, R&E, Fall 2011, end-of-semester paper)

Natasha identifies a newfound view that race matters because it negatively affects some people (i.e., oppressed racial minorities). Yet her early understandings of race still shape her ideals—she does not want race to be an obstacle for anyone, and she clings to the idea that the *best* scenario would be to focus on the *individual person*. Thus, Natasha is struggling to incorporate new understandings about race (that it should be acknowledged, rather than ignored), she is struggling to with the idea that race could hold positive meaning (given early messages about race). In effect, this leads Natasha to her overall broad narrative—race *shouldn't* matter (because if it did, it could only be negative), but it *does* sometimes (because it negatively impacts some people).

By and large, students who discuss a shift away from colorblindness emphasize the importance of *recognizing and respecting* group identities. Importantly, this suggests that students can reach new insights about colorblindness and race in a dialogue class that is entirely white. However, Alex's newfound understanding is still steeped in understanding "racial minorities." Thus, while he is reflecting on his own views, his reevaluation of colorblindness is not about his experiences of whiteness; it is about recognizing the experiences of *others*. In the

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next section, I will focus on how the tension of the group and individual is challenged in students' narratives about the *self*.

#4: I'm not a villain/victim!

The desire expressed by Douglas (and others) to "represent" one's race well is arguably linked to a dominant script about racism, which assumes that certain groups are victims (people of color) and certain groups are villains (white people). Of course, systemic racism operates in more complex ways, but this script underscores some cognitive challenges experienced by students in the dialogue course. In particular, students experience confusion as they feel "assigned" to a particular group, despite their experiences (which may diverge from the victim/villain script).

As students incorporate the role of groups into their lives, they must consider how and when race matters in interpersonal dynamics (as explored above); however, they also must integrate the relevance of group patterns in their own lives. Students frequently point out that their own lives do not simply mirror patterns of racism, because white individuals experience sorrow and difficulty and people of color experience satisfaction and joy. Of course, this assumes a binary (where one group wins and another loses). In other words, students note that the victim/villain narrative does not fully capture their own experience: they frequently challenge the veracity of social group patterns if they do not see evidence of those patterns in their own lives— i.e., if they do not *feel like* a victim or a villain.

Both white students and students of color challenge what they see as a problematic assumption: that every person who is white is a villain, and every person of color is a victim. These concerns echo the critiques made by post-structuralists (as described in the literature

review); however, in student narratives, it becomes clear that students are conflating group

patterns with individual experience.[45]

As Erica puts it, "Formally I learned about the subordination of Native Americans from

European settlers, the slave trade, and the Holocaust, to name a few events. Each of these events

exasperated [*sic*] ideas of colonialism, imperialism, and ultimately superiority of the white race.

Therefore historically, I learned that whites were pompous, narrow-minded, insensitive

people…[and] are always vying for power." (White woman, WRID, Winter 2010, end-of-

semester paper). White students thus have internalized a message that whiteness is equated with

villainy, yet most of them also contend that they have not intentionally acted in villainous ways.

Thus, white students sometimes espouse a narrative of opposition: I am not a villain!

Most white students acknowledge that racism exists, but they want to emphasize that it's

not a zero-sum game wherein whites maliciously benefit while intentionally harming people of

color. In highlighting this, white students often point out that whiteness has not always made

their lives easy. For example, after describing some of the privileges he has received due to his

whiteness, Nathan adds,

> Although, being White has not always been rainbows and butterflies. Many times when I
> have moved to a new place where the majority of the population has been Hispanic, or
> another race other than White, I have been provided the opportunity to see society from a
> new perspective. Being called names, having things thrown at me, having my house
> vandalized all because of the color of my skin or where I am from is a little less than fun,
> some might say. It's frightening, lying in bed at night knowing that there were people in
> my town that would rather me be dead. To feel like I have no way of deterring the
> thoughts and feelings that others have towards the people of my skin tone, and yet being
> blamed for it all, as if I myself was the one leading the movement against those that were

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[45] Attention to the victim/villain dichotomy also highlights another issue: entire groups of students who don't know
where they fit in. The binary construction of race makes it easy to identify the polar ends of the spectrum—in our
society, race typically viewed through a black-or-white lens. However, many students in the sample expressed
confusion about whether they were agents or targets—and sometimes challenged the notion that these are helpful
concepts. In particular, Asian students, Middle Eastern students, and bi- and multi-raced students expressed this
confusion. This feedback may indicate that the course would benefit from more explicit attention to these "in-
between" races.

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> accosting me, is more than enough to make me promise to do all this is in my power to never discriminate based on race or ethnicity." (White man, R&E, Fall 2011, beginning-of-semester paper)

Nathan demonstrates inconsistency but also uncertainty about that inconsistency. He seems certain that racism exists, and that it negatively affects those in minority races, but he *also* recalls his own experiences of discrimination. For Nathan, this is fundamentally an instructive lesson about why racism is bad; he sees his experience as an opportunity for *empathy*. By recalling his own fear and helplessness, he presumes to know what it discrimination is like for people of color, and he focuses his attention on what he *can* control (as seen in his vow against discrimination). Thus, Nathan, like so many other students, acknowledges that racism is bad, but distance himself from the role of *oppressor*. Instead, he acknowledges group-based inequalities but still positions himself as a sometime-victim of race discrimination.

Thus, Nathan's discussion seems to struggle to integrate group-based patterns of inequality (based on race) with his personal experiences, which, at times, contradict those patterns. Similarly, Lori, explains that her early understandings of race were confusing, because so many of the messages she received seemed to contradict one another: "At school I was told to both ask questions and be curious, but not offend anyone. At home, the jokes were usually offensive, and I didn't even know the questions to ask. I went with the flow, accepting the society as it was. I didn't question my [parents'] views on other races, and it never became a problem for me."

However, she recalls a particularly difficult experience as she worked at a local theme park one summer in high school. She noticed immediately that she was one of the only white employees, and felt self-conscious about it.

> Going in each morning, I would be stared at by each black employee I passed on my way to the security station. My subconscious told me not to make eye contact, the fear of

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being judged or humiliated kept me from speaking to anyone I didn't know and who wasn't of my race. Looking back on this experience, I must have seemed stuck-up. Due to both my racial preferences and my "higher status" as an Entertainment employee, as opposed to someone working in food service or ride operation, I carried myself like royalty. Chin tilted up, eyes forward, walking quickly, I was both constantly afraid for my safety and asserting my dominance over the rest of the employees.

In my immediate group of coworkers, I was also of minority status. Most of them were black, and they had an instant bond with each other, a kind of cultural acceptance that I could never be a part of. They called me "cracker", "white girl", and "princess" in snarling tones masked with sarcastic humor. I often had to ask for clarification about what they were saying because I couldn't understand their slang, which was embarrassing and caused them to mock me even more. I stuck close to our "Team Leader", Ryan, who was also white. Our dressing room was segregated, and I always felt on edge. The "privilege" of being white had no significance here, though it was suggested that Ryan received the leadership position because he was the oldest white member of our cast. If I tried to stand up against one of my coworkers, I was shut down immediately with biting words and physical confrontation. (White woman, WRID, Fall 2010, end-of-semester paper)

Lori explains that she was eventually promoted, which put her in an uncomfortable leadership position, but she began to enact company policy and "stopped turning a blind eye to their antics." At the end of the season, the cast members pulled a prank (in what Lori saw as retaliation): "They changed the music, and danced inappropriately with each other in front of a full audience of small children and their parents." Lori shut off the music, claimed "technical difficulties," escorted the actors off stage, and reported the incident to management. Lori was fired; she and her parents sued the theme park and received a settlement, which she saw as "hush money." Lori says, "What happened that summer made me regret my open-mind [*sic*] towards diversity. I was afraid of what would happen if I put myself into a situation where I was of target status. I wouldn't have a conversation with someone who was black that I didn't already know. The jokes that my parents had been telling me my whole life had been proven true.... Due to my experience during the summer at the theme park, I could only see the effects of reverse discrimination."

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Lori points out that, like many others, the messages she received about race did not always align neatly with one another; instead, she would hear certain things at school, different things at home, and struggled to integrate these messages with her own personal experiences—in which she felt that her whiteness wasn't simply unimportant, but actually worked against her. She challenges the notion of whether whiteness is always associated with privilege, or if agent/target status is situational. This underscores a complicated aspect of race and racism: race identity may be situational (at least, the salience of race identity may be situational, as described in social identity theory); however, privilege and oppression are not situational, but always reflecting broad systemic patterns. This mismatch between race and racism may help unpack how and when students struggle to make sense of their own experiences as they may or may not align with systemic patterns.

Importantly, these students are not arguing that inequality doesn't exist; instead, they are challenging the notion that they, themselves, benefit from the system. In this way, they are conflating important concepts that are in tension with one another but are ultimately and importantly distinct: First, like those in the previous section, these narratives conflate structural inequality (which has to do with the group) and individual experience (in their own lives). Second, these narratives confuse power-over with power-to. Power-over connotes the ability to dominate another person or group, whereas power-to refers to the unique potential of every person to shape his or her life and world (Hobbes 1985[1641]; Arendt 1970; VeneKlasen and Miller 2002; Allen 2008).

As is very clear in Lori's example, students who struggle to see their own privilege may be conflating different dimensions of power: Lori dismisses the power she holds over other individuals and instead focuses on her own experience, which represented a loss of control over

the performance. The relationship between control and power is difficult for many students as they make sense of racism; this will be discussed more in the third meta-narrative. Here, however, Lori focuses on the power exercised *by* others *over* her in a *particular situation*, rather than considering broad patterns of privilege (which an individual may or may not feel) and which may not crystallize as power over another person, but simply as power to act.

By failing to distinguish between power-over and power-to, students who espouse this narrative seem ready to accept that racism exists, but they are confused about how, precisely, they fit into it. Maria, a multiracial woman, describes this dynamic unfolding in her R&E dialogue:

> After hearing about racial discrimination from the perspective of 'target' individuals, I became curious to know where white people stand on the issue, and whether they feel responsible for the racial oppression that targets have experienced. During the large group dialogue that followed caucus sessions, I noticed that all of the white students in the room explained that they felt 'guilty' that the targets group has ever been oppressed. Furthermore, all of them believed that it is 'wrong' how the racial system in society leads target individuals to be treated this way. Nonetheless, several of them expressed that they don't think they should be called 'agents' because they are not responsible for the system—it is simply something that they have been put into at birth…. Though the privileged people are not to blame for the system that has been put into place, I don't think merely 'feeling bad' that the system exists makes white people any less of 'agents.' By going along with the system, they are accepting the privileges they are born with even if they think the privileges they get are unfair. (Multiracial woman, R&E, Fall 2011, end-of-semester paper)

As Maria points out, white students may reject the label of "agent" because they feel bad ("guilt")—although they may also do so because it feels inaccurate (as Erica hints at above). It is important to note that white students struggle against the label of "agent," even when they are in the all-white WRID dialogue—indicating that they are not simply "performing" for the benefit of students of color; instead, this narrative highlights an intricate and deep-rooted belief that emerges even in the safety of an all-white space. Meagan, for example, was very frustrated by her classmates' reluctance to identify as agents in her WRID dialogue:

I feel like one of the biggest moments in dialogue, like, I came to a point where I realized that I hold assumptions about people of other races. And I remember expressing, like, bringing something up in class. And I just remember being like, why can't anybody talk about this? Why can't anybody be honest? And it was so frustrating because that's what dialogue is. And this is a safe area. We're in an all white zone. Do you know what I mean? Or when people couldn't recognize white privilege and they talked about this individuality crap. And I was like, I get it. We're individuals. But I don't know….

Well, obviously there's definitely a stigma around white people being racist and I feel like white people are the major oppressive group in society and that can be shown throughout history. And I think we want to say that racism is dead and that it doesn't exist anymore and white people are longer responsible for the way that society is set up right now. So to admit that, to admit that the people of the major racial group in power are racist would be to say that all of these things that are going on to other groups is not their fault (White woman, WRID, Fall 2010, exit interview)

For Meagan, her own personal realizations about deep-seated assumptions helped her see herself

as part of a systemic pattern. However, her white peers were reluctant to recognize (or at least

articulate) their own relationship to power. Both Meagan and Maria link white students'

reluctance to self-identify as agents with issues of guilt and responsibility. If, as Meagan points

out, white folks acknowledge their power, then they have to admit their own culpability in a

racist society. A peer in Meagan's class, Danielle, offers her own perspective on this issue in her

interview:

R: And also I thought that a lot of the readings just generalized how whites are racist... I just felt like they were very… um. I don't know how to say it.

I: You can be candid.

R: I think that is a feeling that a lot of people had in the classroom. That they didn't agree with the readings, that they didn't like the readings. And I know that was one of the reasons why I didn't enjoy the class was because of the readings. Like, they just, I didn't feel that I agreed with what they were saying. And I felt that they were defining how something exists in society that you can't really define.

I: So besides defining the things differently, what did you disagree with?

R: Disagree with? I think I disagreed with why they think that… there was [*sic*] a lot of things I disagreed with in the readings. I can't, like… I just remember when I was reading them and I felt that… I felt that they were making me not only feel guilty because I was

white, but also making me feel that… (pause) That, like, it's my problem, I guess. When I don't think that the oppression in society today is my problem. I don't think that that's something… while I think that I can help, I don't think that it's my problem. That, like, it's solely my problem that people are being oppressed in society. And I think that a lot of the readings just overgeneralized what these theories about why people are racist and how come people are racist and I just didn't agree with them. (White woman, WRID, Fall 2010, exit interview)

In a way, Danielle's comments support Meagan's assessment of her peers—she doesn't feel like it is incumbent upon her to solve racism in society. Danielle *is* partially right: she, as an individual, is not entirely responsible for racism. She can help, but she can't fix it all. And yet Meagan is *also* right: the actions of individuals operate to uphold patterns of systemic racism. In this excerpt, Danielle appears to reject all responsibility ("it's not my problem"); however, later in the interview, she talks about challenging her friends to identify as white. Thus, she embodies a more inconsistent narrative—demonstrating that she is somewhere in-between rejecting race and fully buying in. Like other narratives in-between, Danielle's response highlights some misunderstanding between the group and the individual. The readings assume that racism exists on a structural level, but Danielle's description of the readings is about *individuals*—notably, she focuses on "why people are racist." Conversely, Maria highlights a distinction between the individual and the group, thereby enabling an understanding of individual experience as distinct from, but related to, racial groups—which makes her own perspective more aligned with the broad narrative in the following section.

Meta-Narrative #3: Race Matters in Complex Ways

The third broad narrative comprises those students who conclude that race does, in fact, matter. No student who claims that race matters says that this is the case due to its stagnant or biological nature. Instead, students who argue that race matters, by and large, demonstrate more comfort

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with inconsistency and contradiction. Arguably, this inconsistency reflects the actuality of race, which (as I have argued previously) is somewhat paradoxical in its nature—even if it is often clear in its consequences (to echo W.I. Thomas). In other words, these students both acknowledge that racism has real and important consequences, but that it may shape their lives in ways that are simultaneously predictable, uncertain and possibly invisible.

#5: *Accepting contradiction and uncertainty: Race matters, even if I can't always see or anticipate precisely how it shapes my life*

Both white students and students of color point out that they cannot always know with certainty about how and when their race identities matter. For many white students, this class was the first opportunity (whether desired or not!) to confront their race identities. As one white student succinctly puts it: "Being white seems like an almost irrelevant descriptor to me" (White woman, WRID, Winter 2011, beginning-of-semester paper). By contrast, at the end of the semester, most white students describe a different set of beliefs—endorsing race as an important dynamic in society. For some, newfound understandings of race are primarily focused on the lives of *others*. For others, newfound understandings of race are focused on their *own* lives.

Nora describes the newfound meaning of whiteness in her own life:

"However, this is the very crux of the learning I have had this semester; because I am white, I have had the privilege of not having to worry about race and its factors on my daily life. It is safe to say that for my entire life, I had never attributed any aspect of my life situation to my race. For me, race was the negative space on the canvas of my life: it was there, and certainly visible, but not often commented about or even noticed. In my opinion, my life epitomizes what it means to be a white person in this country in many ways. Until a few months ago, my knowledge of present-day racial issues was nearly non- existent. As a white person, I would have ignorantly said that race issues were not a big deal, and that they were an extreme case in the American existence." (White woman, R&E, Fall 2011, end-of-semester paper)

Nora highlights the challenging nature of whiteness for her was that, even if it was visible, it was unnoticeable for her. Moreover, Nora explicitly links the previously unperceived role of whiteness to her understanding of race relations in the United States: whereas she would have previously assumed that "race issues" were only present in "extreme cases," she now believes that race (broadly) and her whiteness (specifically) is relevant on a daily basis.

Like Nora, many white students emphasize that they have simply never considered their whiteness before. In fact, many white students note that they have never been asked to consider the significance of whiteness before. This pattern is echoed in the exit interviews and post papers; when prompted to reflect on what their race means to them, many white students contrast their newfound understandings of whiteness with their prior understandings. Alan writes: "Before this class, I didn't really realize that I was white, I just thought of myself as like clear. So before this class, I would say that it means nothing for me to be white. … I didn't know what white meant. Now white means to me extensive privilege. I realize how much other groups are inhibited by their skin color but for me, I am not playing on the same playing field. I have an incredible advantage." (White man, WRID, Fall 2011, end-of-semester paper). Just as it did initially for Nora, whiteness previously held no meaning whatsoever for Alan, who describes it as "clear." Alan's choice of words suggests that he didn't think race was absurd or nonexistent—but rather that it was translucent and invisible but nonetheless present. This metaphor suggests the evasive capacity of whiteness to shape one's view without realizing it, like a pane of glass in a window. His realization following the course reflects not just an understanding of the social world, but of his own position within it. In other words, the course pushed him to think about himself and others.

A white student named Jason begins his final paper this way: "My name is Jason. I am a nineteen-year-old Jewish male from a mid-high socio economic background and I recently discovered that I am white. It might seem like a silly finding, growing up in an all white environment and being quite white in physical appearance, but after many weeks of discussion I have found meaning in being white." (White man, WRID, Fall 2011, end-of-semester paper). This student summarizes the bizarre complexity of whiteness: it is everywhere; it is visible, and yet it can remain unseen. He dismisses this as "silly"—but for him, his white race really *is* a discovery; it's a totally new way to understand his own life.

In the interview, Jason explains that his earlier oversight was not a total dismissal about the importance of race overall, but in his inability to see *whiteness* as meaningful, specifically:

> "Now after the White Racial Dialogue I think I identify myself more by my white race. Before I really didn't think about being white as much. It was just, like, normal. Like I was nothing and other people were either black or Mexican or whatever race I thought they were. …. But [now] it makes me think more about my history where my grandparents and their parents came from. And also what it means to be white and the privileges associated with that." (White man, WRID, Fall 2011, exit interview)

Jason demonstrates a heightened awareness of his racial identity as white, but he *also* feels more personally connected to what whiteness means in his own life. He cites specific ways that whiteness connects his biography to history (*à la* C. Wright Mills) and to his position in society, including the privileges afforded by whiteness. Moreover, he contrasts this with his cognitive awareness prior to the dialogue, when he didn't think about his race "as much." In reflecting on his growth, he provides a clear trajectory of growth: he now acknowledges the importance of whiteness, wherein it transitions from nothing to *something*; moreover, Jason is able to articulate what that "something" is: how his privilege today is connected to family history. By way of example, in the exit paper, Jason explains that he has realized that he cannot understand his own

success without considering his grandfather's success, and he cannot truly know whether and how his grandfather's whiteness contributed to his early success; thus, his grandfather's success laid a legacy that also improved Jason's own options.

Nora, Alan and Jason demonstrate a shift from whiteness-as-nothing and race-as-external to seeing whiteness-as-relevant and themselves as *raced* in making sense of their own lives. Unlike the narratives previously described in this chapter, these white students emphasize the utility and importance of thinking about race groups; however, each demonstrates the ability to connect the knowledge of the group back to his or her own individual lived experiences.

Ultimately, Nora, Alan and Jason have accepted that whiteness has shaped their lives, even if they did not initially see or acknowledge it. Nora, Alan and Jason articulate newfound meaning in whiteness, but in doing so, they acknowledge that the meaning of race may shift over time. By contrast, some students embrace a dynamic and uncertain definition of whiteness; they remain unsure of what, precisely, whiteness means—but they *are* certain that it *matters*. For example, Belinda says in her final paper: "Even after taking this class, my white racial identity is still somewhat of a mystery. I'm trying to figure out how it intersects with my other identities and how to make it a positive part of my life. That being said, being white to me means being unaware that one has a racial identity. Being white means taking advantage of the opportunities with which we are provided and learning not to question how the world of race works." (White woman, WRID, Fall 2011, end-of-semester paper)

Belinda argues that performing whiteness as socialized means to accept privilege uncritically (and, consequently, often without noticing it). By contrast, her newfound reflection has pushed her to think differently about whiteness; and, though she expresses uncertainty about where this awareness will take her, she is open to further exploration.

Similarly, Rachel explains that, even though she has difficulty articulating what whiteness means for her, she recognizes that it may shape the way others view and interact with her.

> R: And then white, it's funny because, obviously, going into this class and coming out you learn a few things and it kind of changes what you see that as. But white to me comes as just kind of I don't necessarily know my entire cultural background and what my ancestry is and all of that. But it's come to mean more than just a blanket, 'well I'm white' and that's about it. Because that's kind of how I thought about it before the class. And now it's just more of thinking about my ancestry and kind of who and what it really means to be white. I can't as necessarily pin-point the certain things of that, so, you may have to prompt me through that. But it means more than just a blanket white. That's kind of vague, but.
>
> I: No, not at all. So how often then do you think about your racial identification as someone who's white?
>
> R: See, the thing, and kind of how I phrase [inaudible], it's not that I necessarily think of me being white, it's how I think of, I think of it as how I affect other people being white. So it's not necessarily that I think about myself, it's how I'm affecting others. That's kind of how the context is. I think that's kind of how we're taught to think about it throughout school and society because we are the majority and we're not the ones being oppressed, so. I mean, we are in our own way, but that's a different point, so. (White woman, WRID, Fall 2011, exit interview)

For Rachel, the meaning of whiteness is defined externally, but this external definition pushes her to reflect on how she is read by other people. Thus, the narratives of both Rachel and Belinda express uncertainty (which contrasts with their white peers Nora, Alan and Jason, who seem relatively more certain in defining their whiteness); however, Rachel and Belinda are *also* accepting of this uncertainty. In doing so, Rachel and Belinda demonstrate the capacity to embrace contradiction and inconsistency—making them similar to the narratives of uncertainty that are conveyed by students of color.

Many students of color enter the course having already considered their race identity, as it has surfaced both overtly and more frequently than it has for white students. Yet this awareness typically reflects the role of *others* in making meaning of their race. In contrast to

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most white students who have rarely considered their whiteness, most students of color enter the dialogue already able to describe an array of experiences that made their race identity salient to them. Further, unlike white students (for whom their own race was 'unimportant' and 'invisible' thanks to privilege), students of color express frustration about their inability to be seen as individuals, as their group identity carries meaning that has been attributed to them—echoing Sam from the previous section.

Ron, a black man, writes, "My racial or ethnic identity is not the most important part of my life, although it is important to some degree. When I describe myself over the phone I usually talk about where I go to school my major. Race is a shallow measure of a person's characteristics. What a person does, or believes in is far more important than what you look like. People cannot control what they look like but they can control their actions and beliefs." (Black man, Fall 2011, R&E, end-of-semester paper). Like Sam, Ron sees race as ultimately unimportant, calling it "shallow" in contrast to measures that seem more important (e.g., a person's actions, such as a chosen major, and his beliefs). Importantly, Ron emphasizes the issue of individual control. Unlike Sam, however, Ron does see his race as important "to some degree."

For most students of color, race may be "shallow" or "problematic," but it is influential nonetheless. In general, students of color can easily identify stereotypes about their race. When prompted to describe what her race means, Sicily, a black woman, describes a laundry list of stereotypes about black people:

> "Black people are angry and patient. We have strong ties to Christianity as portrayed in commercial media as a reverence for hooting and hollering in the spirit while our male spiritual leaders live sexually deviant lives. If not bible toting, Blacks can be seen at the uniquely original street corner store buying malt liquor and 1800, while trading welfare checks for fake hair, rims and gold chains. Black men live in prison cells and black women fill up the schools until the 3rd trimester of their teenage pregnancy. Poverty

strikes every community because we live in a system of perpetual dependency of welfare. For those fortunate enough to become the token Black student in college, who escape drugs, alcohol, sexual promiscuity, crime, pollution and government cheese, they will forever be labeled as "whitewashed" and constantly reminded that they are not welcome in the environment in which they were communally raised with their homeboys and girls because they have sold out from down the street struggling. In the end, we all come from this homogenous "welcoming and working" community, completely raised the same way with the same history and beliefs. I have been taught many things about my race. My excerpt above briefly illustrates what mainstream media portrays my community as. The social construct of race is limiting. Being a member of the African American community, I can look to television programs, newspaper headlines, local news broadcasts; radio commercials, uninformed inexperienced teachers and ignorant white people [an obvious generalization] to define my identity even before I could personally conceptualize it. If I had not been raised by my support system, I would probably have had a difficult time recognizing the negative controlling images that the hegemonic higher beings construct. Having the ability to self define your racial community is a rare power that many people of color do not possess. It is a concept that I grapple with and one that directly influences what my racial/ethnic identity means to me." (Black woman, R&E, Fall 2011, end-of-semester paper)

Like Sam (who advocates for individualism) Sicily expresses discomfort about the negative meanings of her race that accompany her—as she puts it, "the social construct of race is limiting." Unlike Sam, however, who promotes disregard for race in lieu of individuality, Sicily suggests that her group identity is limiting but this limitation offers important information about her own life. Sicily describes entering a world in which certain assumptions preexist her; her black identity, as she puts it, is "predefined." This predefinition offers important information about what Sicily's race means to her—in large part because Sicily focuses not just solely on groups but on how those groups influence her individual life. In short, because she connects the group to her own experience, Sicily does not eschew the group, but she is left struggling to incorporate the group and the individual in making meaning of her own life.

For many students of color, these stigmatizing messages are not merely abstract; the overwhelming majority of students of color in my sample describe one or more experiences of discrimination in school, at work, while traveling, or with friends. Several Asian students

describe young experiences on the school playground in which classmates would pull at their eyelids and yell "cheechongching" to presumably imitate an Asian language; an Indian woman recalls second-graders telling her she could not eat lunch with them because her "skin was brown and therefore dirty"; black students describe being questioned again and again about their qualifications to get into U of M. Students of color sometimes dismiss these experiences of interpersonal discrimination as unimportant or unusual; they sometimes see these experiences as significant and influential, but for many students of color, experiences of discrimination highlight the difficulty they have in disentangling their individual experience from their group membership. As Mia, a black woman puts it, "I have always been aware of being black. However, challenges and experiences I faced, have made being black more visible." (Black woman, R&E, Fall 2010, end-of-semester paper)

To some extent, the reliance on others (through interpersonal interactions and institutional messages) forces students of color to *already* live with contradiction and uncertainty. This is articulated by Carolyn, a black woman, who begins her paper by observing, "race is a funny thing." She points out that she was somehow both hyper-visible and invisible in an almost-entirely white high school. She adds that this was made even more complex by her interactions with white peers, teachers and administrators, who never explicitly addressed her race, but her race seemed to shape her experiences nonetheless. Carolyn provides the following example:

> On the main floor, there's a hallway strictly for seniors.… [O]ne of the teachers told my mother that senior hallway was full (it was), and that she had placed me in the Math hallway (aka the "black hallway"). The teacher told my mother that she had placed me next to these two friends, these students were black. The senior hallway being full nor being placed in the math hallway had upset me. It was the fact that she called those two black students my friends and she had no idea if they were or not. The three of us never really talked—so just because I'm black, automatically means that all three of us are friends? I'm very sure it wasn't her intention to make me feel the way I did. However,

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being black makes little situations like this sound an alarm in my head, especially because I'm the minority." (Black woman, R&E, Fall 2011, beginning-of-semester paper)

Carolyn highlights that part of the challenge of living as a black woman is to live with uncertainty about how and when her race matters—her experiences sound an alarm, warranting her attention, regardless of how she ultimately makes sense of the situation. In particular, Carolyn seems resigned to uncertainty and contradiction—which echoes the sentiment of Rachel and Belinda, who describe their uncertainty above. There *are* important differences in power that distinguish the Carolyn's experience from Rachel and Belinda's uncertainty—specifically, that Rachel and Belinda could operate in the world for years without attending to this uncertainty. In the interview, for example, when asked how often she thinks about her identity as a black woman, she answers without hesitation: "All the time." This sharply contrasts with the way Rachel and Belinda arrive at their realizations about whiteness; in fact, they both attribute their new understandings to the dialogue itself. Nonetheless, this important similarity may offer an important insight about how both white students and students of color grapple with the inconsistent and paradoxical nature of race.

Lila, who identifies as Persian American, writes about her experience with Todd, a white boy she had a crush on in high school. She invited him to her parents' house to do homework. Lila explains,

> "I know it was these Persian-inspired house decorations that provoked [Todd] to worriedly ask me if my dad wears a turban later during our study session. Though I was a bit offended by [Todd's] ignorant, stereotypical question, I simply laughed off the matter by saying 'No, my parents aren't like that at all.' … My parents are not even religious, and hearing Todd worriedly ask that question brought out a personal anxiety I knew I always had. It reminded me that my ethnic background can turn others off, even if the negative assumptions people have about me because of my ethnicity are entirely wrong. It reminded me of the unfavorable images and stereotypes people might associate with Iranians – such as terrorism and radical Islam. I brushed off Todd's question because in all honestly, I wanted

him to like me. I didn't want to turn him off, and I wanted him to treat me like just another one of the charming white girls that went to our school. My reaction during this experience made me realize that even the subtle traces of my ethnicity can make me feel like an outsider—someone alien and unlikeable." (Arabic woman, R&E, Fall 2011, end-of-semester paper)

Lila points out that even though she knows that stereotypes and assumptions are inaccurate, they *do* influence how others perceive her. The way Lila sees herself is never divorced from how others perceive her; furthermore, the limited meanings of who she can be (as part of a group) directly influence how she decides to respond. Though his question offended her, and ultimately made her feel "alien and unlikeable," she wants Todd to like her. In short, to echo Sicily, Lila feels *limited* by the way her ethnicity has been externally defined. She contrasts this feeling with what she wants: to feel like she is "just another one of the charming white girls." Lila does *not* explicitly say she wants to feel like an individual, but she does want to feel normal and desirable—attributes she associates with her white peers (whose normalcy allows them to exist as individuals). Experiences like this one, according to Lila, made her aware that she may be a person of color, even though she had previously thought of herself as white. Like Sicily, Lila finds it impossible to disentangle her individual experiences from her group membership, but she expresses a desire to consider both her groupness and her unique individuality. Specifically, Mia implies that what she *does* with her race-based experiences sets her apart as an individual.

Similarly, Amir highlights that race has no essential truth, as the meaning of race is dynamic; nonetheless, race is still "real" in his life. Because race is socially constructed, broad social meanings of race may change, alter, or sustain along current events. For example, in his final reflection paper, Amir, an Arab-American Muslim man describes the changes in his life following the attacks on September 11, 2001:

"I knew exactly how I was going to be perceived: as a violent enemy to the USA. I first witnessed prejudice toward Arabs and Muslims through the media, but also experienced it myself. First of all, I was often 'randomly screened' every time I went to an airport. I recall an experience where I was 'randomly' screened with two other gentlemen named [Amir] as well. I also first-handedly heard 'terrorist' jokes in reference to Arab-Americans. It often upset me; however, I also took it as encouragement. I knew that I was an Arab and a Muslim and I could serve as a good example to represent my people. I knew that I did not fit the violent terroristic stereotype that had been placed on Arabs following the tragic 9/11 attacks. Therefore, I would say this was definitely the most influential event that increased my visibility of my identity. I wanted and still want everyone to know I am an Arab, and a good person." (Arabic man, R&E, Winter 2010, end-of-semester paper)

In an interview, when he discusses these experiences, he adds: "the jokes died down after a year… thank God"—and he laughs. Amir's awareness of his identities as an Arab *and* as a Muslim were heightened following 9/11; though anti-Islam sentiment existed prior to this incident, his experiences are distinctly different following 9/11. In the media, at the airport, and with his friends, his identities carry seemingly newfound attention and weight. Importantly, each of these settings emphasizes an interaction with others. The meaning of race emerges from these settings, regardless of the meaning he sees in these identities, himself. It's not that he's not an Arab, it's that he wants people to understand that it is possible to be *both* an Arab and a good person. Thus, the meanings of Arab for this student are inherently both about the group and the individual. He wants to acknowledge that *both* the stereotype is real—in fact, it's reinforced by multiple powerful sources (media, airport security, who represent the United States government, even his friends). That three people sharing a name are "randomly selected" at the airport is not just statistically improbable; it evidences a larger pattern.

In this way, Amir's experiences reveal a variety of tensions: the negative label attached to his identities is inaccurate, but it is real, not imagined (in that it's not "just in his head"). In this way, Amir is continuously navigating what it means to hold a group identity in the US that is

laden with meaning, even while wanting to challenge that meaning. He does not want to simply be seen as a generic "good person"—he specifies that he wants people to see that he is both an Arab *and* a good person. He is confident that he holds both of these, despite what dominant discourse may suggest.

This highlights a few important—and yet seemingly paradoxical—components of race. First, race (or any identity) can take on new or altered meanings following a current event, which seems to highlight the artificial nature of race. In fact, although Arab still doesn't exist as a race category on the United States census, it has been long recognized as a major ethnic category in the US and in other countries (e.g., France).

For many students of color, the negative connotations of race are simultaneously real and not real: they are real in the sense that they aren't falsified, but they are not real in that they don't hold up. Therefore, even if race is totally artificial in nature—which is congruent with the narratives posed by students who reject race in favor of individualism—students in this narrative highlight that race has very real consequences in people's lives. Similarly, at least some white students draw connections between whiteness (as a group phenomenon) and their own individual experiences.

Thus, meanings of race are situational; they reflect a dynamic and changing society, but they are not divorced from *power*. Like Katie (the white student who adheres to individualism and race identity as a choice in meta-narrative #1), Amir works with the "cards he was dealt." Importantly, though, for Amir, the possible meanings of his race are not *entirely* dictated by him alone; current events, cultural phenomena (e.g., media), and peers shape his available options. In particular, Amir struggles to both acknowledge that not everyone of his race can or should be seen as similar to terrorists, simply due to group membership *but still* conveys some pressure

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(even if self-imposed) to make sure "represents his people" in a positive way. His commitment to improve the perceptions of his group through his individual actions demonstrates a strain in traversing from the individual to the group—and reveals that the options available to Amir in terms of identity are far more constrained than are Katie's.

In short, Amir is both "buying into" the myth that race is real (according to a post-structuralist perspective) and acknowledging that systemic meanings exist outside of him in ways that constrain his options about how to act (echoing a structuralist perspective). Amir here struggles with wanting to—and knowing that—he is good but also refusing to relinquish his Arab and Muslim identities. This echoes Lila's conundrum above: she wants to feel "normal" but is trapped by also embracing her Persian heritage. Both struggle against a dominant discourse to create new possible meanings of identity. Thus, Amir—like Lila, Mia, and other students of color—straddles a stance that encompasses contradiction: race is inconsistent; its meaning may change according to social context; yet individual experiences are often shaped by powerful patterns about race. Put differently, students who demonstrate this narrative espouse a narrative of *both/and,* rather than the binary (either/or) that characterizes narratives in the first section (i.e., narratives that conclude that race doesn't matter). Moreover, these narratives demonstrate comfort with both/and, even when it is paradoxical or self-contradicting.

#6. Both intent and *consequence matter.*

If we live in a world in which race is paradoxical and interactions are somewhat uncertain, then it is unsurprising that many students struggle to disentangle the relationship between intent and consequence. Carolyn emphasizes this point in her excerpt (above) about the senior hallway—

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regardless of the school administrator's intention, her identity as a Black woman heightened her awareness of why and how race may have mattered in that situation.

In one of the dialogues, a heated conflict emerged between two students that eventually highlighted the complex relationship between intent and consequence. The conflict was so intense that most students commented on it in their end-of-semester paper or interview. By piecing together multiple versions of the story, I can summarize what happened, and then analyze students' reflections, which underscores this moment of conflict as an important learning moment.

In a discussion about interracial dating, David (a white man) made a comment that was both derisive and stereotypical and managed to insult women, black women, and large women all at once. His comment pertained to Gabourey Sidibe, known for her role as the main character in the film *Precious*. According to multiple reports, David evaluated Sidibe's appearance negatively, and then made a comment that if black women were more beautiful, then perhaps black men would "go for" black females. Specifically, David said that if more black women "looked like Beyoncé," then more black men would pursue black women. A number of students reacted to this comment. Specifically, a black woman in the class, Frances, challenged David, pointing out that Beyoncé embodies white standards of beauty (e.g., she is tall and thin, with lighter skin and long, relaxed hair). In effect, Frances pointed out that David's comments and assumptions reflect dominant patterns of racism that devalue black femininity, in general. David then tried to "explain himself" to Frances, and denied that race played any role in his comment. From his point of view, David says that Frances thought he was being "totally racist," which was unfair, and that he thought she was "really biased about it and trying to paint me into a box"—

which, he says, "shows that [his] position as an agent is kind of being exploited." (White man, Fall 2011, R&E, exit interview)

As the exchange continued, David's friend Adam—also a white male—chimed in (or interrupted, depending on whose report you read) and said he "completely understood [Frances'] feelings, *but...*" and then tried to justify David's comments, which most students read as Adam attempt to excuse—and align himself with—David.

Adam says that he wanted to find common ground. "I forget what it was I said but it had to do with like there aren't like, I'm personally attracted to some black women but not, not like all of them, just like I'm attracted to some white women, not all of them. Like, I don't think, to me it's not, it's not a race thing, it's more of an aesthetic thing." (White man, R&E, Fall 2011, exit interview). And, Adam continues, when he said that, Frances "went off" and eventually she "even left class because she was so like so offended that I stood up and sided with him." (Other students corroborate that Frances left during a bathroom break after the interaction.)

While Adam saw his efforts as "being a good guy," Lila and Maria (both women of color) saw Adam's actions as dismissive and as complicit in enacting and defending white privilege (from the same R&E course in 2011). According to Maria, Adam's comments tried to deescalate the situation, which pushed it from a dialogue to a discussion. Lila says that Adam made an error. She knows that Adam is a good guy, and that "he didn't mean anything wrong"— but, she contends, he still helped support racism. Therefore, even though she was triggered by his comments, she refrained from talking to him about it. She adds, "I wouldn't have minded offending [Adam] if he was being malicious and intentionally playing the agent role. However, because Adam was just trying to prove that he and David are not bad guys (which they are not), I would have felt overly critical of him if I had told him he was being an agent in his actions."

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(This excerpt is from Lila's end-of-semester paper.) Instead, she said, she understands that Adam has been socialized to resist understanding privilege, which meant it was difficult to acknowledge the racism inherent in David's comment. Thus, while Lila saw the *effect* of Adam's comment as problematic, her decision not to interject was fundamentally shaped by her knowledge about Adam's *intention*. Lila concludes that "though the racial discrimination in David's comment [and, presumably, Adam's interjection] was not necessarily intentional, it shouldn't get David off the hook. In order for whites acknowledge their privilege and shatter this target/agent system, they should first understand that racism is not always a visible or intentional behavior." Maria points out that it affected the entire remainder of the class and did not seem to reach a resolution, "but at the same time, I guess it needed to be brought out, if, like, they were feeling this way" (from her interview).

Lila highlights this experience as a key learning moment for her: she began to realize how easily her White peers could enact privilege without being "bad" people. She says that this helped her empathize with whites who may seem oblivious. Understanding the process of socialization helped her see how white privilege is enacted without malicious intent; this, in turn, helped her disentangle the messy nature of intent and consequence. Ultimately, she sees how difficulty it can be for agents to see consequence, but that this does not negate the issue of *responsibility.* Ultimately, this is why it is so impactful when whites do reflect on consequences, not simply intention.

This distinction is highlighted when we contrast David's and Adam's reflection on the class: in their interviews, they each saw this particular day of class as memorable, but in very different ways. For the most part, David felt unsupported in his own reflection. Facilitators apparently distributed portions of journals, some of which were easily identified as his, which

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made him feel targeted and attacked. Furthermore, he distances himself from responsibility, adding, "a lot of the stuff I write should probably be taken with a grain of salt. Because I'm pretty blunt and direct with some of the things I say. And, I don't know. I also try and throw in some humor. So it could be offensive to people who don't see things the exact way that I think about them. I don't know." Ultimately, as David reflects on the dialogue experience, he references Adam in a way that puts him "in cahoots" with him:

> R: We provoked so much crap from everybody. And, like, it got to be such a pain talking about it. At the same time nobody else was provoking stuff like that. Everybody else was trying to just, like, 'oh that's so interesting. That's so fascinating.' So I feel like while we took a lot of flack for it we really brought out a lot of the good in the class."

> I: So you kind of made it your own experience. You made it your own, like, you took control and said the things you wanted to say.

> R: I always say the things I want to say. So there's really no controlling [inaudible 0:21:58.2]. But, like, yeah. Without us I think that dialogue would have been a lot more tame. And it wouldn't have gone beneath the surface in certain areas that people were really thinking about.

> David concluded that the experience was not particularly meaningful. Moreover, he

focuses solely on the experience from *his* perspective. Notice, for example, that he adopts

Adam's experience as his own ("we provoked so much crap... while we took a lot of flack for it,

we really brought out a lot of good in the class.")

By contrast, Adam saw the moment not as simply memorable, but a valuable learning

opportunity. In his exit interview, Adam reflects on the experience:

> R: And that for me was like a learning moment because like, it wasn't that I that I said something wrong or that I did something wrong, it's the fact that like, I'm a white guy and if a white guy teams up with a white guy no matter what the argument is, it's, it's empowered. It's overpowering; it's overbearing. And like that's where I learned the whole intention action thing.
> I: So it sounds like intention versus action—
> R: Yeah

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I: was a big lesson that you gained?

R: Yeah, for me. And then like the following week we, when we were like dialoguing about it, cause like we really spent a lot of time about that.

I: You went back to it and kind of re-addressed it? Yeah.

R: Yeah, and then like, every time we would do that I would bring that up because, that was, that was a big, that was like, I think the biggest thing I gained out of the whole thing. Is just that like inherently people are ignorant, not like on purpose, but since people are ignorant, they think that their intentions matter. But I don't think intentions really matter if they come across as racist, or—

I: Yeah, sounds like that was a big lesson. (Laughs)

R: Yeah (laughs). I think so.

Thus, Adam reached an important insight: that regardless of his intent, *he cannot control how his behaviors are read by others*. Moreover, he cannot divorce himself from his race identity, which means that his behaviors are always *potentially* viewed by others as related to (or within the context of) his white race identity. Thus, he cannot predict when and how others will view his actions, but he can integrate what he knows about race and whiteness and accept others perceptions about how his whiteness matters. In short, Adam, too, accepts the complex, inconsistent nature of race—while *also* integrating this with his knowledge about whiteness, white privilege, and power.

Ultimately, accepting the importance of consequences (not only intentions) demonstrates students' acceptance of inconsistency: though views may differ, integrating and considering multiple angles sheds more light on a mutually understood—and mutually constructed—society.

CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSION

This dissertation aims to unpack the ways that students cognitively make sense of race—which may or may not seem visible, important or consistent in their own lives. The aim is not to discount the importance of psychological processes (including empathy, emotion, resistance) that occur within the critical-dialogic model, but to *also* acknowledge and shed light on how students rely on particular patterns of logic and reasoning as they make sense of complicated concepts in social life, such as structure and agency. In other words, this project unearths narratives in order to identify how students' *beliefs* (about what is true/false) uphold assumptions about race and racism. Attention to these processes will ultimately enhance the critical-dialogic model for intergroup dialogue, making it more comprehensive.

The results from this project reveal that students draw on a variety of strategies to understand the roles of structure and agency in race and racism. In particular, certain narratives tend to uphold the notion that race does not matter; others reveal uncertainty about how and when race matters; still others convey students' work to embrace the paradoxical and inconsistent components of race, structure and agency.

These findings supplement existing literature on race and racism in a few major ways. First, results support existing theories that posit race as complex, inconsistent, and socially constructed (see, for example, Omi & Winant 1994; Johnson 2001; Takaki 2008). In particular,

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narratives highlight four logical paradoxes that are sometimes difficult for students: (1) that race is important, even if it is not scientifically "real;" (2) that both the individual experience *and* the group patterns are relevant, even when they seem in conflict; (3) that race is not binary, but privilege and oppression *are*; and (4) that *power* is different from *control*.

In particular, narratives that convey students' struggle of how and when race matters (i.e., those in the second meta-narrative) emphasize the paradoxical aspects of race (e.g., that structural patterns matter, but they do not uniformly represent individuals' experiences). To this end, students sometimes describe their confusion about how race should inform their interpersonal interactions. Others cite their own experiences that seem incompatible with presiding theories of racism. For these students, a key challenge manifests in disentangling and acknowledging *both* the individual experience *and* group-based patterns (even when they seem contradictory). Recall, for example, the reluctance of white students to see themselves as "agents," some of whom pointed to an experience of "reverse discrimination" (e.g., Lori, who had worked at a theme park). While students may grapple with discomfort, they may *also* be struggling to understand how patterns of racism can be true, given their personal experience.

By contrast, narratives within the third meta-narrative (race matters in complex ways) seem more comfortable with inconsistency and unknowability—and, in doing so, once again affirm the paradoxical nature of race. For example, students simultaneously point out that it can be difficult to see how, precisely, race shapes one's life—and they can *also* offer rich examples about how their ascribed racial identity has affected their experiences. Many students explain that the meaning of race is dynamic, changing over time and according to socio-political context (for example, as Amir reflects on being an Arab Muslim in a post-9/11 world). Ultimately, this approach accepts the importance of *both* individual experience *and* group patterns. By doing so,

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these students *reconcile the dynamic nature of race with the pervasive nature of racism*. Put differently, race is not binary, but structural patterns of privilege and oppression are. Finally, narratives in this section acknowledge the paradox that power is not the same as control: by acknowledging that we cannot always know the motivations or interpretations of others, students distinguish between *power* (e.g., white privilege) and *control* of a situation (e.g., dismissing others with "good intentions"). Ultimately, those who endorse the third meta-narrative accept that they cannot *control* structural patterns—though they are generally eager to challenge them, nonetheless.

In this way, students' understandings of race and racism are closely related to their understandings of power and powerlessness. For example, when students employ binary thinking (as in the first meta-narrative), they feel compelled to choose between the individual and the group—which results in a clear endorsement of agency, as students typically view individuals as all-powerful. This relationship adds support to previous literature that links individualism and attribution of racism to a few "bad people" (e.g., Mahoney 1994; Chesler 1995). By contrast, other students convey narratives of confusion and difficulty (in the second meta-narrative), suggesting their uncertainty about power and powerlessness. Finally, those narratives in the third meta-narrative demonstrate acceptance of both structure and agency as relevant.

A second contribution to the literature is in this study's ability to inform instruction and dialogue practice. This dissertation aims to inform the critical-dialogic model by providing information about how students make sense of race and racism. This, in turn, has important implications for instructors, dialogue facilitators, and curriculum/program design. For example, the analysis supports the link between abstract liberalism and colorblindness (outlined by

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Bonilla-Silva); however, the results of this study may better equip instructors to identify and productively respond to abstract liberalism.

The first meta-narrative (race doesn't matter) is upheld by two (seemingly contradictory) emergent narratives: that we are all the same, and that everyone is unique. Arguably, these form the basis of abstract liberalism, which espouses universal egalitarianism (i.e., a core sameness across humanity) and individualism (i.e., appreciating the uniqueness of each person). By contrast, analysis presented in this dissertation differs in two ways: First, it unpacks the beliefs that may uphold abstract liberalism (shedding light on not just *what* people say, but *why* they believe it is true). For example, students may espouse colorblindness because they have internalized messages that seeing race is discrimination, or that overgeneralizations are problematic. Moreover, students who employ these narratives tend to employ binary thinking (e.g., *either* one is responsible for racism, *or* one is not.)

This information provides instructors and practitioners with key insights about how to connect with students and challenge them in useful and productive ways. For example, instructors may find it helpful to challenge the binary nature of students' narratives (e.g., "Why does it have to be true that only the individual *or* the group is most important?"). Perhaps more importantly, while "abstract liberalism" remains somewhat vague and opaque, the emergent narratives here offer concrete, recognizable components of the concept. In short, this analysis may help instructors identify abstract liberalism when it emerges in the classroom or in students' submitted work.

An additional resource for instructors and facilitators resides in the potential of critical empathy to help instructors re-think resistance. While a great deal of research has identified student resistance and strategies to confront it (e.g., Goodman 2001; Johnson 2008), far less

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works to identify how students reach their conclusions and unearth tacit assumptions. To be clear: resistance helps explain a great deal about students' experience in the classroom. However, attention to how students draw on and uphold particular assumptions about race may offer additional strategies and insights.

In this dissertation, applying critical empathy allowed me to better understand where students were coming from, instead of focusing on ways that they dismissed or challenged course content. In other words, deconstructing students' cognitive scaffolding yielded insights about the tacit assumptions that they made—which shed light on how a student may at times *appear* affectively resistant but *actually* also be struggling with the process of logically reasoning through complicated concepts. Furthermore, approaching students' ideas with critical empathy prevented me from fixating on patterns that have already been described elsewhere (e.g., resistance); instead, I was able to generate new theory by shifting between perspective-taking and critical reflection and analysis. In sum, critical empathy enabled me to better practice dialogue: to listen for understanding, rather than identifying—or labeling—a student who just "didn't get it."

This deeper understanding was further enabled by a focus on narratives, which highlighted students' cognitive processes (rather than attitudes or stage development, which tend to view students as stagnant). Instead, the focus on narratives represents my own perspective that students are dynamic and complex; it acknowledges that students (like life) may be self-contradicting at times. Yet narrative analysis reveals that certain narratives reject the complexities of race by rejecting paradoxes inherent in race and racism. Moreover, the analysis of meta-narratives ultimately sheds light on *how* students arrive at meta-narratives. This has clear implications for practitioners: Broad narratives are *best* understood when they also attend to

various paths that students take, because broad narratives—and the tacit assumptions that accompany them—help us identify what students assume and how they process the information they have received. Ultimately, this enables interested parties (e.g., instructors, interventionists) to attend more *precisely* to students' confusion or potential leaps in logic. In other words, considering these pathways will allow for more strategies in the classroom and beyond.

Summary

Ultimately, this dissertation provides insights to social theorists, facilitators and instructors. I hope that by understanding how individuals articulate their learning and understanding about race, I can provide valuable insight for course planning and facilitation that guides student interactions in productive and meaningful ways. In fact, focusing on articulated positions ensures that instructors can provide more specific guided learning—it allows facilitators to ask intentional and specific questions, rather than inferring emotional content, which in turn, force students to acknowledge their own assumptions and "own" their positions. Moreover, when facilitators ask pointed questions, they avoid misattributing emotions to students (which may or may not be there).

Specifically, attention to meta-narratives reveals important tensions cognitively experienced by students as they learn about race and racism in a critical-dialogic course design. Unpacking meta-narratives ultimately reveals challenges experienced by students as they reject, struggle to integrate, or accept various paradoxes. Two narratives (we are all the same; everyone is unique) tend to adhere to binary or dualistic thinking and therefore reject the complexities of race. Instead, they tend to prioritize the individual. To some extent, this seems to reflect students' very natural concern about (or distaste for) overgeneralization; however, because they see it as

an either-or (i.e., the group *or* the individual), these narratives ultimately reject the utility of the group entirely. Instead, these narratives favor *only* the individual. This, in turn, neglects that groups *do* matter and shape our experiences in important ways.

Two other narratives seem to highlight the confusion that students experience as they make sense of structure and agency with regard to race. Specifically, students frequently cite the realization that race *does* matter, but they express difficulty understanding how and when to pay attention to race in ways that are productive and socially appropriate. Essentially, these narratives hint that students acknowledge that the group matters, but are not precisely sure when and how to apply that knowledge to their own lives (e.g., in interpersonal interactions). Furthermore, students note that they receive contradictory messages about race, which adds to their confusion about the "rules" for race. Finally, white students highlight that they do not feel like the bad guy or even very powerful. While this could be arguably seen as resistant behavior, it may also reflect cognitive difficulty understanding the way that racism operates *systemically*; while racism is binary, race is not; furthermore, while racism unfolds in predictably ways in society overall, individual experiences of discrimination may align or not align with those broad patterns. Ultimately, this has important implications for how students understand their own experiences and the role of race in society—as well as the meaning of power. For example, students who apply a dichotomous lens assert with confidence that the individual matters more than the group and poses power as power-over rather than power-to.

Finally, two major narratives highlight students' cognitive acceptance of the importance of race. Specifically, these narratives are: accepting contradiction and unknowability, and valuing both intent and consequence. Unlike the first two narratives, which embody binary thinking, these narratives embody a both-and approach. Thus, these final narratives highlight the

value and importance of *both* the individual *and* the group experience; thus, these narratives recognize that racism exists, but that we have our own unique experiences. Moreover, these narratives hint at students' complex views of power: students who value both intent and consequence see our own inherent power to affect others *and also* accept that we cannot always control how others view us. In many ways, the discussion of power and control evokes and reinforces early writing on power by Hobbes, Arendt, and others. Power-to remains distinct from power-over—and distinguishing between the two may be difficult for students.

Future Directions

This study lays important groundwork for ensuring quality dialogue program design. My next step for this project is to use these six emergent narratives to learn more about effective programming. For example—because the dataset has both pre-test and post-test measures—I can assess whether and how students change in their commitment to various narratives following dialogue participation. Moreover, I can assess whether there are significant differences among students (e.g., white students compared to students of color) and explore whether there are significant differences in one type of dialogue as compared to another (e.g., intragroup dialogue versus intergroup dialogue). Ultimately, these sorts of questions will unlock useful insights about the critical-dialogic model. Future researchers are encouraged to explore the processes through which individuals maintain, alter, or reflect on their belief structure—including whether this particular set of narratives helps explain people's beliefs in other settings (e.g., outside of academia, or those learning through a different program curriculum).

The results from this project are made possible by allowing for the messiness of race and racism in lived experiences. In other words, students' confusion with paradoxes was discernable

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due to the project's methodological design, which emphasized narratives rather than psychological development, and which acknowledged students' own contradiction and confusion (rather than labeling students or putting them in stagnant attitude categories).

In particular, students' struggle with these paradoxes was ultimately discernable because my approach emphasized *narratives* and *critical empathy*. Employing critical empathy as a tool for data analysis offered a unique and innovative approach to understanding *how* students reasonably arrive at conclusions/meta-narratives, because it values multiple perspectives. In other words, critical empathy offers a unique approach to deconstruction/data analysis that values multiple perspectives. The subsequent results two important insights: first, it ultimately sheds light on how two students may espouse a similar meta-narrative (e.g., race doesn't matter) but arrive at that conclusion in different ways. Second, this approach enables a better understanding of whether and how students may enact sound logic but struggle to make sense of race due to their assumptions. Critical empathy may be an especially interesting approach for scholars in social sciences, as no method has thus far explicitly worked to bridge the tension between agency and structure. Subsequent research is encouraged to think creatively about research methods in ways that allow for contradiction and uncertainty, as these may enhance the validity of the project and unlock new insights about how people make sense of complex social issues.

As I have indicated previously, I see a few major limitations to this study. First, the study is limited by my inability to know outside of my own experiences, perspectives, and identities. Second, the sample is limited to a particular subset (those who signed up for a dialogue course) and lacks a comparison group. Nonetheless, I hope that my methodological choices (including critical empathy and grounded theory) help counteract some of these constraints.

Overall, I want to be clear: I invite and welcome responses, others' perspectives and challenges. In the end, after all, the goal is to continue learning.

Appendix A. Prompt for beginning-of-semester paper.

PRELIMINARY PAPER FOR PARTICIPANTS IN THE WHITE RACIAL IDENTITY DIALOGUE

The purpose of this paper is to help you prepare for your conversations and readings in this Race/Ethnicity dialogue. This initial paper assignment is a 6 page (double-spaced) semi-biographical and self-reflection paper. You should write about your experiences, your thoughts and reflections. The paper should address the specific questions below but should not be written in a "question-answer" format; try to integrate your ideas in each section into a coherent reflection and finally into a single paper that reads smoothly across a series of sections and questions.

To the extent that you can, write about WHITENESS without writing about any other groups that are not WHITE.

Please indicate:

Your gender_____.

Your ethnicity or national origin_____.

Your socioeconomic class_____

Your religion_____

With regard to social identity

1. What and how were you taught (explicitly or implicitly) about what it means to be your race, in terms of attitudes, behaviors, your future, the nature of the society, etc.?

2. Is your racial/ethnic identity as a person of color or a white person one of the most important aspects of your life? For example, when you describe yourself to others (i.e. over the phone or internet), is it one of the first things you would think of to say?

3. What do you know about your ethnic/cultural heritage (i.e., the culture, country or region of the world from which your ancestors came)? And how might this affect your feelings about being considered part of your racial group?

4. What are some experiences that have made your race/ethnicity visible to you?

With regard to social structures

5. Throughout your life, have most of your friends and other people close to you been of the same racial/ethnic background? If so, why do you think this was the case? If not, what do you think led you to cross racial/ethnic lines in these relationships?

6. Have you been subject to discrimination based on your race/ethnicity? If so, what type of discrimination (be specific with examples)?

7. Has your racial/ethnic identity brought you any privileges or benefits? If so, what types of privileges or benefits (be specific with examples)?

8. How do you think demographic changes that are currently underway in the U.S. and the world will affect your experiences and attitudes relating to race/ethnicity and racism?

With regard to the dialogue

9. What are some of your hopes, or learning objectives, for this dialogue? What issues do you wish to discuss.

10. What are some of your fears or concerns about participating in this dialogue?

Appendix B. Rubric for end-of-semester papers (provided to both students and graders).

The purpose of this paper is to integrate your learning from the intergroup dialogue, the ICP, the readings, the in-class exercises and activities, and your journals over the weeks of this course. The final paper assignment is an **8-10 page (double-spaced)** reflection paper. You should write about your experiences, what you learned, your thoughts, feelings, and reactions, as well as discussing how the readings helped you understand the issues within a broader context.

Articles that you decide to integrate into your paper are your decision, but you need to incorporate at least **6-8 different readings**. The questions below are designed to help you structure your paper around four topic areas. The paper should address each topic area, but should not be written in a "question-answer" format; rather, integrate your ideas into one paper that reads smoothly.

DUE: Friday, April 18th, by 3pm to c-tools. No late papers will be accepted. Your final paper is worth 30% of your course grade.

SOCIAL IDENTITY: SELF-REFLECTION AND COGNITIVE LEARNING. (16 PTS)
        A: 15-16pts   **B:** 14-13pts   **C:** 11-12pts

Total: ___/16

- Describe your understanding of your own (_____identity) before you entered the class, and how you understand it now that the class had ended. Please focus on the identity that is the focus on this dialogue, and your particular position (being a woman/man/transgender; being white, a student of color, etc.)
- What insights have you gained about the advantages and disadvantages available to you and others based on your social group membership(s)? What did you learn about how social identity and privilege/oppression impact intergroup relations?
- What have you learned about institutional and cultural influences on these groups and on your own experience?
- How is the way you understand your multiple social identities different from your understanding before taking this class?
- How do new insights about the identity of focus in your dialogue this semester relate to your understanding of your other social identities?

GROUP INTERACTION AND COMMUNICATION (16 PTS)
        A: 15-16pts   **B:** 14-13pts   **C:** 11-12pts

Total: ___/16

- What have you learned this semester about group interaction and communication? What aspects of the course contributed most to this learning?
- How have the patterns of interaction and communication in your dialogue mirrored, diverted from, or complicated the theories of group interaction described in the readings?
- How did your and your group's understanding of dialogue as a process impact interaction and communication in class and in your ICP?
- How did your own participation in class or in the ICP affect group dynamics?

III. EXPLORING DIFFERENCES AND DISAGREEMENTS (16 POINTS)
        A: 15-16pts   **B:** 14-13pts   **C:** 11-12pts

Total: ___/16

Describe a disagreement or difference of perspectives that occurred in your dialogue group that was significant for you.
   a. What were the different viewpoints and feelings during the episode? What role did individuals' social identities play in the dialogue at this point? How did this particular disagreement or difference affect the group?
   b. What were your own views and feelings on the topic? What choices did you make about how you wanted to participate in this conversation and why? What did you learn about yourself in this disagreement that you will take with you in future interaction?

IV. CHALLENGES AND REWARDS FROM THE DIALOGUE. (16 POINTS) FOR EXAMPLE:
        A: 15-16pts   **B:** 14-13pts   **C:** 11-12pts

- Looking back on your hopes and fears at the beginning of the course, how did your experience in dialogue match your initial expectations?
- In what ways has the dialogue experience been difficult for you? In what ways were you challenged in the dialogue?
- What have you found most rewarding about this experience?
- If you were to participate in this dialogue again, how would your participation be different'?
- Do you think this experience will affect your relations with others? If so, how?
- What has been the impact of this semester's dialogue on your knowledge and views about being part of your identity group within U.S. society?

Total: ___/16

V. FUTURE IMPLICATIONS (16 POINTS)
        A: 15-16pts   **B:** 14-13pts   **C:** 11-12pts

- Based on your experiences, what does it mean to form an alliance in the context of social identity groups, social conflict, and the pursuit of social justice?
- Thinking about your dialogue and ICP, what lessons about collaborating across difference did you learn?
- What, if any, are your goals for your personal next steps concerning the topic of this dialogue? What needs or concerns do you have regarding these goals?
- How, if at all, do you expect to use what you have learned in the future (both at UM and beyond)? Discuss SPECIFIC examples.
- What challenges do you expect in the future if you apply what you have learned in dialogues to other aspects of your life? What obstacles do you expect; what rewards do you anticipate; and what support do you need in this endeavor?
- What intergroup relations skills have you learned (e.g., communicating with others, feeling and showing empathy for others, staying in dialogue when experiencing conflict with others, taking risks, and so on)? What aspects of the course contributed the most to this learning?

Total: ___/16

VI. OVERALL QUALITY OF PAPER (10 POINTS)
        A: 15-16pts   **B:** 14-13pts   **C:** 11-12pts

- Are the author's ideas and conclusions expressed clearly and compellingly? When examples are used, are they concrete and specific, and do they deepen the reader's understanding? Are vague generalities avoided?
- Is the paper very well written and presented, when compared to a high standard of excellence? Are there spelling or grammatical errors, or other problems in presentation? (Of course, allowance should be made for different cultural means of expression -- e.g., for the style of presentation of speakers of languages other than English. etc.)

Total: ___/10

VII. MEANINGFUL INCORPORATION OF 6-8 READINGS (10 POINTS)
    A: 8 or more readings, 10pts   **B:** 6 readings, 8tps   **C:** 5 readings or less, 7pts or less
- Meaningful incorporation means citing a reading and also discussing it in more than one sentence.

Total: ___/10

Final Grade

        TOTAL POINTS: _____ x .30 = #points/FINAL GRADE: _____

TOTAL:

_____/100

Appendix C. Interview guide.

INTRODUCE YOURSELF AND THE PROJECT

General: Background Information and Racial Identity

1. You recently completed an (IGD on R/E or WRID) course with the Intergroup Relations (IGR) program at the University. A good portion of this course focused on social identities. So in terms of race and gender, how did you identify yourself in this class?
   a. What does this mean to you?
   b. How often do you think about your racial identification?

2. How does your racial identification shape your personal beliefs?
   a. What were you taught, explicitly or implicitly, about what it means to be (a White Person or a Person of Color)? [E.g., attitudes, behaviors, your future, the nature of the society, etc.]?

3. What are some experiences that have made your race visible to you?

Dialoging about Race: Experiences with and Learning from IGR

4. As an (race and/or gender identity response), can you tell me what being in the (WRID or R/E) dialogue was like for you?

   PROBE: How did you feel about being a _____ in this dialogue? Tell me more...

5. What primary lessons did you take away from this experience? If possible, please provide concrete examples.

   PROBE: For example, lessons related to working with your own group or other groups, how you engage with conflict, how you might ally with others...

6. Now let's turn to communication and interaction with others in the dialogue group. How easy or difficult was it for you to talk about your reactions or feelings in the group?
   a. What was it about your dialogue group that helped you to be able to share?
   b. What was it about your dialogue group that made it difficult for you to share?

7. During this dialogue you had a chance to hear other people share personal experiences, stories and testimonials. Please give me an example of a time when someone from your own social identity group shared an experience that had an impact on you. What was their story about?

a. What kinds of feelings came up for you when you heard the story or experience?
b. (**For R/E only**) Please give me an example of a time when someone from another social identity group shared an experience that had an impact on you. What was their story?
    i. What kinds of feelings came up for you when you heard the story or experience?

8. Did your dialogue experience have an impact on how your now feel about people from your own identity group?
    a. Please describe a particular incident that caused you to feel this way. What happened? What was going on?
    b. Did your dialogue experience have an impact on how you now feel about people from another racial identity group?
        i. Please describe a particular incident that caused you to feel this way. What happened? What was going on?

9. In learning about race/ethnicity, do you think there are any special advantages to being in a (white only or interracial) dialogue?
    a. Are there any special disadvantages to being in a (white only or interracial) dialogue?

10. (**For students in R/E only**) Some people argue that interracial dialogue, ones with white students and students of color, often take the form of students of color educating or telling white students about their experiences and lives. To what extent did this happen in your dialogue?
    a. Do you feel that was a good use of dialogue time and energy?

Wrap Up: Reflections & Recommendations
11. Did you find the Dialogue course beneficial? Why or why not?
    a. How did your own participation in this course (e.g., interactive exercises, discussions and Collaboration Project) affect group dynamics?
    b. If you were to participate in this Dialogue again, would your participation be different? Please explain.

12. Do you feel comfortable talking outside the dialogue program with people of another identity group? Why or why not?
    a. Did your participation in the dialogue help you be more comfortable or less so?
        i. How? What happened? What didn't happen?

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview!

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