MULTIDIMENSIONAL IDENTITIES AND MEANING-MAKING STRUCTURES OF WHITE FACULTY AND STAFF AS CRITICAL SOCIAL JUSTICE PRACTITIONERS

A Dissertation
by
CATHY J. ROBERTS-COOPER

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Abstract

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WHITE FACULTY AND STAFF AS CRITICAL SOCIAL JUSTICE PRACTITIONERS

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The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of how white faculty

and staff thought about and acted upon social justice issues in US higher education.

White faculty and staff are assumed to be prepared to educate students about social

justice issues. However, even the most self-aware white individuals operate within

the historic, systematically oppressive structures of higher education. Research

questions considered how participants valued practicing critical social justice, how

they understood their social identities, and how they responded to tension narratives.

Through a combined framework of constructivism and critical whiteness

studies, this narrative study included interviews with nine white participants who

were identified by campus diversity staff as initiating positive efforts in advocating

for social justice. Findings focused on the motivations of participants, possible

development topics for white faculty and staff, concepts for understanding resistance

narratives experienced by white faculty and staff, and coping strategies.

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The level of fulfillment that has come to me at the end of this program is greater than I expected. My growth would not have been possible without the infinite support and patience of my dissertation committee. Thank you to Dr. Laura DeSisto and Dr. Brandy Bryson for keeping me from getting lost in the rabbit hole of qualitative research and for your insightful questions that pushed me to not settle for the minimum of what I could do. And to my chair, Dr. Nickolas Jordan, it is hard to express the ways that you saved me on this journey. From stepping in to be my committee chair, to keeping me calm when I had to start over – you validated my belief that getting this dissertation done was a realistic goal and not a fortuitous fantasy. A special thanks goes to Dr. Chuck Claxton for introducing me to the value of the subject-object relationship in class. Thank you for the hours of your time in serving as the second analyzer for the subject-object portion of this study. And to Paige Abe, thank you for being the amazingly kind soul that you are – you know why. Thank you to my partner, Jacob, for your ardent support and understanding. To my two sons, Aidan and Lachlan, thank you for your patience when dissertation time overlapped with play time. Thank you to the rest of my family for believing in me: my parents, sisters, and in-laws. Lastly, thank you to my professional circle of friends: Chrystal Dean, David Elrod, Shannon Jordan, Jordan and Meghan Luzader, Brandon Nelson, Jason Timpson, Alicia Vest, Aaron W. Voyles, Tierza Watts, Shari Williamson, Ainsley Wilson-Graden, Matt Zalman, and Stephanie Zee. Thank you for your help and for being my cheerleaders.

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Prologue

To offer my study any foundation in merit, I believe it is important to share my identity and work experience. My intent is not to say "Here are all of the ways I am qualified to talk about social justice in higher education" but to be as honest as I can about my perspective and how it influences my research. I align my views with Lincoln (2005) who states that:

> Since the researcher is frequently the "instrument" in constructivist inquiries, it is mandatory that this human instrument reflect upon research practices, activities, relationships, decisions, choices, and his or her own values in those arenas (p. 63).

This self-disclosure is in line with my paradigmatic leanings toward constructivism and critical theory. My instincts have always been to question the ideology behind preconceived notions of society and individuals even when I did not know it was called critical theory (Freire, 1970/2010; Noblit, 2005). I have also been fascinated by the ways that individuals and groups organize thoughts and activities into a system of meaningful living as constructivists generally view the world (Kegan, 1994; Lincoln, 2005; Piaget 1970). Both of these epistemologies underlie my personal, professional, and academic journey into the practice of critical social justice in higher education.

But what does critical social justice mean? It is a term from the literature that I have connected to the life goals I have tried to enact. The practice of critical social justice emerged when I became increasingly aware that society is unequally divided by socially constructed definitions of race, socio-economic status, gender, sexuality, and ability. With my awareness of societal inequities has come my effort toward the action of altering the systematic discrimination that occurs through policy and procedure to create equitable

structures. Awareness and action surrounding diversity issues is the practice of critical social justice (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012).

After more than a decade of living and working in the United States (US) higher education environment in student affairs as a staff member, I am sure of one thing – issues surrounding critical social justice (awareness and action) are embedded in every aspect of the college experience. My perspective on my own privileged and oppressed identity highlights the multiple factors influencing how I think about social justice in higher education. I am white, heterosexual, and married. I grew up in a middle-class family. I am college educated. Each of these attributes affords me many unearned entitlements to consciously and unconsciously exert my privilege and dominate others (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Johnson, 2001; Leonardo, 2009; McIntosh, 1989; Wise, 2013). By living and working at a predominantly white university in the Bible Belt of the southeastern part of the US, I have the unearned advantage of being surrounded by others of my own race. I am able to walk around the community with my heterosexual partner without feeling pressure from religious conservatives to avoid holding hands as a sign of affection, and my marriage has always been accepted by the state and federal governments without question. The student population that I work with mainly comes from the middle-class, so the resources I had access to while I was in college often mirrors that of my students and further normalizes my experience and theirs as the most desirable way to navigate college.

In contrast to some of my privileged identities, as a female, Agnostic/Pagan who, until recently, lived in a lower socio-economic status with a family of four has led me to encounter oppression in my life. Examples include supervisor criticism that my demeanor is overly aggressive while my male counterparts engage in even more blatantly direct language

without being reprimanded, accusations of religious oversensitivity when I object to departmental funds being spent on an office Christmas tree display as a representation of department unity, sexual harassment veiled as jokes or innocent questions about my physical body because I am a woman of child-bearing age, and the continual questioning by some faculty and staff of my ability to afford the time and financial commitment to complete my doctorate because of the birth of my second child.

I have listed aspects of my identity as if they are clearly separated into privileged and oppressed roles but they are far more interconnected than how I have referenced them. While the above mentioned aspects of my identity bring me some level of unearned privilege and oppression, my whiteness is the dominating lens through which I experience my other socially constructed identities. In this study, race is viewed as a socially constructed characteristic that holds significance in determining the treatment of an individual or group when race is observed by others (Blank, Dabady, & Citro, 2004; Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Frankenberg, 1993; hooks, 1994; Leonardo, 2009). The prominence of race as a filter by which to view my environment is in line with bell hooks' (1994) work that described historical and current cultural norms of life in the US as being a product of the white-supremacist-capitalistic-patriarchy that continues to maintain its oppression by indoctrinating each generation into defending it. The categorization of being white or white-like bestows upon that individual or group the advantage of being normal and the most strived-for way of living. Identification as being white comes about through external and internal perceptions. Externally, a person who is perceived as white is treated as superior to those perceived as people of color, thus acquiring the privileges that come with that supposed superior whiteness. Internally, people who define themselves as white by believing they are better

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than people of color are apt to demand that they be granted privileges via their behavior. The internal and external beliefs about whiteness reinforce each other and can cause whites and people of color to not realize how they defer superiority to people who are white or white-like (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Frankenberg, 1993; Hallam, 2004/2007; hooks, 1994; Leonardo, 2009; Wellman, 1997; Wise, 2012).

I see the most dramatic shift in my societal status when I view my whiteness in conjunction with any other facet of my identity than if, as a comparison, I evaluated my experiences by placing my spirituality at the forefront of consideration. My privileged and non-privileged roles represent an aspect of my identity that combine to motivate how I perceive the world at any given moment. For example, my experience as a woman has placed me in secondary social status to men; however, by considering the socially constructed hierarchy of race at the forefront of my experiences with gender I realize that as a white woman I am placed in higher social standing than women of color (Frankenberg, 1993; hooks, 1994; McLaren, 1999). My personal view and my study assume that race is a primary filter for how white faculty and staff work within higher education.

The intricacies of how oppressed and privileged subjectivities come together has shaped my overall understanding of my own identity and has led me to question my role in maintaining, reproducing, and/or challenging oppression in the institution where I live and work. Until three years ago, I was a full-time housing professional who lived on campus in a staff apartment located in a residence hall. I did not have the same level of separation between my work life, home life, and student life that other college educators are more likely to experience. In that environment I began to realize that the awareness and action required for me to practice critical social justice requires continual self-reflection in order for me to be

aware of how I use my power and privilege to dominate my surroundings. I am equally worried about what I cannot see or have not realized. Most difficult of all, for me, has been the action-oriented piece of critical social justice that involves the tearing down of oppressive institutional structures to enact positive, long-lasting, and equitable change (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Freire, 1970/2010; hooks, 1994; Leonardo, 2009; Noblit, 2005).

My struggle to enact critical social justice has led me to reflect a great deal on what it means to be white and how the culture of whiteness in the US is reflected in the system of higher education. My desire to be a social justice practitioner has motivated me to look deeper into what critical theory has to offer in analyzing my social construction of race. In turn, this has given way to a progression toward a body of literature and research called critical whiteness studies (Quaye, 2013). I have found critical whiteness studies personally helpful because of the focus on making white culture visible and tangible to me. Critical whiteness attempts to strip away the false pretenses of why my efforts of achieving social justice have failed and has revealed a new truth of my efforts: I have done anti-discriminatory work so long as I did not have to actually give up any of my unearned privileges. Critical whiteness literature has documented similar half-hearted attempts at achieving an equitable society by other self-proclaimed, racially aware white people through narrative reflection and analysis (Clark, 1999; Clark & O'Donnell, 1999; Frankenberg, 1993; hooks, 1994; Johnson, 2001; McLaren, 1999; Wise, 2012; Wise, 2013). The half-hearted attempts of well-intentioned white people, like myself, has led me to question the use of critical whiteness literature as merely a reflective tool to narrate the ways that whiteness continues to dominate social systems and all people within those systems.

Instead, I use critical whiteness studies as a framework for undoing the white-supremacist-capitalistic-patriarchy (hooks, 1994) as it is promoted and maintained within higher education. A critical whiteness framework pushes me beyond just acknowledging my unearned privilege as an invisible knapsack (McIntosh, 1989) that has appeared without a known source. Critical whiteness as a framework to this study materializes the path that I have taken to willingly shop at the market of whiteness and *pack my own knapsack* of privilege. I have packed the privileged knapsacks of other whites. I have touted my unearned privileges as something beyond my control and have failed to acknowledge my privilege as a symptom of the larger system of domination that is the cause: white supremacy (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Leonardo, 2009).

When I began reading the works of white scholars discussing critical whiteness studies I willingly accepted the message of white people narrating their realization that their whiteness oppressed others. Despite the centuries of non-white scholars coming to the same conclusion, the emergence of critical whiteness studies took the participation of white scholars to gain legitimacy. Yet that legitimacy stretches only to the point of whites' admittance that white people need to do better and need to reflect more on their whiteness (Clark, 1999; Clark & O'Donnell, 1999; Frankenberg, 1993; Helfand & Lea, 2004/2007). While reflection is important, it has been a passive approach to engaging whites in changing their role of actively dominating non-whites and maintaining oppressive systems. My dissertation committee urged me toward the works of non-white scholars such as Eduardo Bonilla-Silva and Zeus Leonardo. I was able to follow their scholarly leads to see how a framework of critical whiteness could move past reflection and into an active mode of questioning and identifying manifestations of privilege and oppression in the hands of white

faculty and staff. A critical whiteness framework must incorporate white privilege *and* white

supremacy if the symptoms and causes of discrimination will be changed (Bonilla-Silva,

2014; Leonardo, 2009).

I am a biased individual, and it is with bias that I have offered an analysis based in a

critical whiteness framework of how social justice has been addressed in higher education

and, specifically, how critical social justice has been practiced or not practiced by white

educators. Constructivism and critical whiteness offered a match of complementary

perspectives for reflecting on my own identity and the identities of white educators as

practitioners of critical social justice. The nature of constructivism questions how white

educators, like me, have individually and socially built the higher education system to

normalize white culture and how we have maintained it as a legitimate, meaningful, and

oppressive structure (Désautels, Garrison, & Fleury, 1998; Kegan, 1994; Larochelle &

Bednarz, 1998; Lincoln, 2005; Piaget, 1970). Critical whiteness unmasks the so-called

culture-less practices of white culture and reveals the dominating structures of the higher

education system that negatively affect groups and individuals. Those who do not fall in line

with seemingly neutral academic standards of what has been scholarly and professional

(Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Frankenberg, 1993; Hallam, 2004/2007; hooks, 1994; Leonardo, 2009;

O'Brien, 2004/2007) are negatively impacted in their ability to succeed in college because

the expectations do not leave space for the meaning-making structures and values of

oppressed groups. Together, constructivism and critical whiteness offer a foundation for

identifying dominating structures in education and exploring ways to raise new, un-

oppressive organizations that are of a meaningful existence (Clark, 1999; Clark &

O'Donnell, 1999; Frankenberg, 1993; Freire, 1970/2010; hooks, 1994; Johnson, 2001; Jones

& Abes, 2013; Lincoln, 2005; McLaren, 1999; Noblit, 2005). Both ideologies can be used to analyze the interconnectivity of individual white identity and the manifestations of whiteness as dominant and oppressive practice in higher education.

> Whiteness refers to a set of locations that are historically, socially, politically, and culturally produced… intrinsically linked to unfolding relations of domination… To look at the social construction of whiteness, then is to look head-on at a site of domination (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 6).

By looking at the multidimensional "locations" of college educators, how white educators construct meaning in their work and white identity development, I strived to better understand how white identity intersects with the unique "locations" of being a white educator in higher education who has been expected to practice critical social justice. I focused on identifying the subtle and not so subtle domination of whiteness in colleges and universities. My goal was to construct "locations" of change, via my dissertation, to allow space for reflection, awareness, and action. These "locations" of change were access points for faculty, staff, and students of all social identities to work toward becoming practitioners of critical social justice. Some of the "locations" included, but were not limited to, resource allocation, curriculum development and implementation, programming, recruitment, hiring, training, and professional development of faculty and staff.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Before I delve further into my justifications for a focus on the practice of critical social justice of white faculty and staff in higher education, I have provided a stronger foundation for the value of connecting faculty and staff to the practice of critical social justice in the US university system. A constructivist and critical lens has led me to view the topic of critical social justice in post-secondary education from an institutional level, as individual identities operating within the social group of faculty and staff perceptions, and when considering what has been the most quality experience for students. The institutional level and faculty/staff groups connected to each other through interactions of policy, identity development, and socially constructed group norms that dictated a power structure for how the practice of critical social justice was purposeful or not in the higher education system. At the institutional level, accreditation and ethics were jeopardized if a university did not address how critical social justice was practiced on its campus, and institutions faced the challenge of buy-in when implementing faculty and staff development initiatives. At the individual and group level, racial identity development viewed through critical whiteness contextualized the challenges white faculty and staff encountered in their efforts to practice critical social justice.

The Value of Social Justice in Higher Education

At the institutional level, external forces helped educators find purpose and set priorities for what has made a meaningful college experience. The US Department of Education (2013) defines its mission as one that fosters "preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access" ("Mission Statement" para 1). Faculty and staff have played a vital role in the ability of the higher

education system to achieve a national mission of preparing students for life and work. Yet, there was little guidance from the US Department of Education for how institutions should reach the national mission; this task has been given to regional accrediting agencies. The limited direction at the national level has resulted in varied goal setting across the country for the best way to achieve the national mission of the US Department of Education.

Professional literature has set expectations of faculty and staff in higher education to have been aware of social justice issues and to have acted upon that awareness to create equitable changes. The references to awareness and action were the very principles that underlie the operational definition of critical social justice from Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012). Based on the multiple references to awareness and action, or critical social justice, that were listed in the accreditation standards I assumed that critical social justice was an important competency for *all* faculty and staff in the US (Jones & Abes, 2013; Pope, Reynolds, & Mueller, 2004; Professional and Organizational Development Network, 2017; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012; Sorcinelli, Austin, Eddy, & Beach, 2006). Furthermore, the repeated references to critical social justice in the literature supported the idea that social justice issues were still present in higher education and needed to be addressed from more than just a perspective of changing demographics in the student, staff, and faculty populations. Discriminatory practices still have been operating at all levels of colleges and universities; dismantling those oppressive structures has required the practice of critical social justice by faculty and staff because they have held power within the system (American Federation of Teachers Higher Education, 2010; Carr & Lund, 2009; Helfand & Lea, 2004/2007; hooks, 1994; Jones & McEwen 2000; Ouellett, 2010a; Pope-Davis & Ottavi, 1992; Pope, Reynolds, & Mueller, 2004; Professional and Organizational Development

Network, 2017; Stanley, 2010; Tuitt, 2010). The necessity for faculty and staff to practice critical social justice has been widely identified in the standards of regional accrediting bodies for colleges and universities in the form of awareness and action toward equitable practices of recruitment, hiring, training, curriculum, student support services, and resource allocation. It was important to note that none of the regional accreditation standards covered all of these areas for addressing social justice issues. However, the list represents the collective references of these accrediting bodies to promote the practice of critical social justice, and each accrediting region references at least one of these areas – most referenced three or more. Regardless of the accrediting agency, all universities that sought were expected to meet the diverse needs of their campus populations, to enact equitable policies and procedures, and for educators to have empowered students to think critically about their impact on a globalized community (Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2013; New England Association of Schools and Colleges, 2011; North Central Association: Higher Learning Commission, 2013; Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, 2010; Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, 2011; Western Association of Schools and Colleges, 2012).

The difficulty for accrediting bodies to require the practice of critical social justice has not been with identifying a vision for which to strive. The difficulty has been in the implementation of how institutions were to achieve socially just goals. From a constructivist perspective, the accreditation standards provided a vision for organizing meaningful practices of critical social justice. Still, implementation has relied on the standards being filtered through how an individual or group experienced the environment and conceptualized how the standards interacted within that constructed environment (Désautels, Garrison, & Fleury,

1998; Fosnot & Perry, 2005; von Glasersfeld, 2005). Accreditation standards cannot be enacted without passing through layers of multiple value systems imposed by those who held power that was central to the implementation of socially just goals. Critical whiteness has further questioned the neutrality of social justice goals as an example of language that reflected white culture and forced marginalized groups to conform in order to become successful. Who defined what success looked like and the tools that were necessary to become successful? For instance, strategic plans designed to create a more inclusive campus climate for underrepresented students may have instead drawn upon stereotypes that resulted in more exclusion (Hallam, 2004/2007; Pope, Reynolds, & Mueller, 2004; Quaye, 2013).

Constructivism and critical theory should be used to analyze white faculty and staff meaning-making structures, identities and their understanding of how to practice critical social justice. Such analysis provides insight for college educators to implement critical social justice practices at the individual, group, and systematic levels. My study delved into the experiences of those who benefited most by maintaining the dominating nature of higher education, such as white faculty and staff working in an environment that rewarded white culture as the most academic. Through a focus on narratives of privileged experiences my purpose in facilitating this study was to identify dominant language, policies, and practices that can serve as future rallying points, or "locations" for anti-discriminatory work in education. Albeit intentionally and unintentionally, these sites of oppression have been created and maintained, in part, by white faculty and staff (Blank, Dabady, & Citro, 2004; Clark, 1999; Clark & O'Donnell, 1999; Désautels, Garrison, & Fleury, 1998; Freire, 1970/2010; Helfand & Lea, 2004/2007; hooks, 1994; McLaren, 1999; Obear, 2013; Wise, 2012; Wise, 2013). The dominating sites should be discovered, described, and connected to

the larger structural frame of white supremacy that supported the foundation of higher education. Identification of whiteness as the basis for most discrimination in colleges and universities has been necessary to dismantle oppressive structures and transform the locations of the new, anti-discriminatory structures that emerged. In this study, whiteness was defined as a social construction in which an individual self-identified as Caucasian or a person was perceived and treated as white-like because of their physical appearance and cultural mannerisms (Blank, Dabady, & Citro, 2004; Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Leonardo, 2009).

Beyond losing accreditation, colleges and universities faced other consequences if critical social justice was not implemented in institutional structures. There have been legal ramifications if an institution engaged in discriminatory practices based on race, sex, religion, national origin, disability, gender, or age. Failure to comply with Titles II, IV, and IX have resulted in financial penalties imposed on individual institutions and federal financial assistance may have been withheld (Office of Civil Rights, 2013 "Laws and Regulations Enforced by OCR;" Office of Civil Rights, 2013 "Office of Civil Rights" para 1).

Student wellness and persistence also has been at stake when discrimination was not addressed through critical social justice practices. Students of color have had a more negative experience at predominantly white institutions due to interactions with racism on campus (Johnson, Wasserman, Yildrim, & Yonai, 2014) and have been more likely to maintain their academic, professional, and social interactions with the university in the margins of operation – seemingly self-segregated but without a clear invitation to have engaged in the university (Bourke, 2016).

Institution leaders have faced other challenges to practicing critical social justice even after the university has committed to follow federal regulations and accrediting standards. Since the current expectation of higher education has been that faculty and staff operated as facilitators of learning, such as with social justice awareness and advocacy (Pope, Reynolds, & Mueller, 2004; Stanley, 2010), it was appropriate to consider how universities addressed faculty and staff professional development. Many professional development centers across the US have served faculty and staff in the programs they offered in an effort to carry out growth for individuals and to improve the quality of education being provided (Ouellett, 2010b). The opportunity for misguided or unproductive learning has been a possibility in the way faculty and staff were educated to practice critical social justice. Some of the struggle has come from a lack of understanding the best ways to engage faculty and staff in critical social justice education when they have not self-selected to participate in such development activities and reflection (Ouellett, 2010a; Stanley, 2010; Tuitt, 2010).

In this section I explored the legal and professional ramifications of higher education systems ignoring the need to address critical social justice on campus. Now, I turn my attention to discussing why it has been important for faculty and staff, specifically white faculty and staff, to become practitioners of critical social justice.

Understanding White Faculty and Staff as Critical Social Justice Practitioners

Earlier studies on critical social justice have considered the value of understanding multiple identities of adults attending college and how those constructed perspectives interacted together, or intersected, to create a clearer picture of the complete person (Bridwell-Bowles, 1998; Deaux, 1993; Dill & Zambrana, 2009; Espiritu, 1994; Jones & Abes, 2013; Jones & McEwen, 2000; Reynolds & Pope, 1991; Thompson & Tyagi, 1996).

However, these studies were void of identity development models that acknowledged the unique and specific role of university educators functioning as critical social justice practitioners as they worked through their own multiple identities of privilege and oppression. Faculty and staff were expected to challenge students, but the identity development struggles of faculty and staff must be understood in order for the educators to be appropriately challenged as well (Hallam, 2004/2007; Helms, 1990; hooks, 1994; Jones & Abes, 2013).

The combined concepts of white identity with the practice of critical social justice provided a foundation for understanding the largest racial group that worked in the US university system (US Department of Education, 2014). Focusing on the construction of white identity and critical social justice has provided a basis to critique the traditional white-supremacist-capitalistic-patriarchy (hooks, 1994) upon which the US higher education system was built and still operates (American Federation of Teachers Higher Education, 2010; Blank, Dabady & Citro, 2004; Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Freire, 1970/2010; Helfand & Lea, 2004/2007; hooks, 1994; Jones & Abes, 2013; Leonardo, 2009; Noblit, 2005; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012; Wise, 2012; Wise, 2013). In the grounded theory study by Jones and McEwen (2000), the authors developed multiple dimensions of identity in a college environment and concluded that "systems of privilege and inequality were least visible and understood by those who are most privileged by these systems" (p. 410). Since white faculty and staff worked in a system where white norms were imbedded in the structure and thus, more hidden from sight for those privileged educators, then white faculty and staff represented a population that was more likely to have struggled to see and understand the dynamics of power and oppression around them.

While race was the dominant oppressive factor that has operated within higher education it was not the only social dimension that shaped the US college experience (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Désautels, Garrison, & Fleury, 1998; hooks, 1994; Jones & Abes, 2013; Jones & McEwen, 2000; Leonardo, 2009). Racial identity development was a main component of this study but it was too narrowly focused to address what it meant to be a white faculty or staff member who educated others on how to practice critical social justice. Models of multiple dimensions of identity (MDI) development have been helpful in response to the complexities imposed by varying identities because such models critiqued the intersections, or "locations" of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, socio-economic status, education, and other constructed experiences and environments. MDI models have offered a way to comprehend how identity manifested into espoused beliefs and observable behaviors (Dill & Zambrana, 2009; Jones & Abes, 2013; Jones & McEwen, 2000; Pope, Reynolds, & Mueller, 2004; Reynolds & Pope, 1991). In relation to my study, MDI literature suggested the need for understanding the contextual interactions of education, individual experiences of white faculty and staff, and the institutional environment surrounding white identity.

From the constructivist perspective, we are simultaneously engaged in two realities; one reality deals with the "physical" and "tangible" world and the other is our "constructed reality" of how our values have helped us to organize our lives in a meaningful way (Lincoln, 2005, p. 61). This would suggest that white college educators have operated "physically" within the larger context of the institution and its mission, all while having brought with them a history of other cultural labels and experiences that combined into some semblance of how they understood themselves and acted upon their values – their constructed world. In turn,

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the interactions of these constructed worlds has further created a cumulative system of higher education that is experienced as a constructed reality by those just beginning to have engaged the system (Blank, Dabady, & Citro, 2004). Discrimination has been then perpetuated in the academic realm via the accumulation of historical oppressive structures that interacted with the current individual value systems of white faculty and staff. As white faculty and staff operated at varying levels of critical social justice they still contended with systematic domination seeping into their educational efforts. The ability of white faculty and staff to have navigated this complex environment depended on how their internal organization of experiences and values manifested into their constructed world. This internal system dictated how, for instance, white faculty and staff thought about and responded to interactions that required the practice of critical social justice (Baxter-Magolda, 2001, 2004; Désautels, Garrison, & Fleury, 1998; Jones & Abes, 2013; Kegan, 1994; Larochelle & Bednarz, 1998; Piaget, 1970; von Glasersfeld, 2005). I have found constructivism helpful in conceptualizing how multiple identities and influences integrated to form a whole system that individual white faculty and staff used to make sense of social justice issues. The understanding of how white educators have thought about social justice should be balanced with a consideration of whiteness filtered out as a separate, but still dominant concept.

I now turn to race identity development models as a way to hone in on the psychological underpinnings of whiteness. These models have described organized stages of racial awareness for how whites experienced their constructed realities. The spectrum of stages from these models ranged from describing whites who were oblivious to their racial culture, to whites who were aware of whites' role in blatant racism but were still working through nuances of subtle racism, and lastly, whites who demonstrated awareness and action

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that was characteristic of critical social justice (Hardiman, 1982; Helms, 1990; Helms, 1995; Howard, 2004; Sue, 2003). Published in 1990, Helms' White Identity Development Model was the most commonly referenced model of whiteness I found in higher education literature. Later, this model is described in greater detail, as well as how it was used for distinguishing white identity traits in this study.

Under white identity development models, white faculty and staff can have grown and developed to a level of practicing critical social justice, but there has been no guarantee that individuals would have ever progressed that far. My literature review did not produce a number for how many white faculty and staff developed to the highest level of racial awareness. Moreover, orderly processes for white faculty and staff to reflect on their racial identity development to address their own contributions to individual racism and their role in maintaining or promoting oppression in higher education have been problematically limited (Carr & Lund, 2009; Pope-Davis & Ottavi, 1992). Disconcertingly, white faculty and staff have been expected to operate as practitioners of critical social justice, yet it has been unclear how many faculty and staff were actually doing so, even as the opportunities for professional development in the area of critical social justice were circumscribed (Ouellett, 2010a; Stanley, 2010; Tuitt, 2010).

Further connections from informal interviews.

My curiosity about MDI development of white faculty and staff as practitioners of critical social justice prompted me to speak with a few professionals at an institution where I once worked while fulfilling the requirements of my coursework for my doctoral program. I was looking for more ideas on how I could focus my research interests on the topic of white faculty and staff development in regards to issues of social justice.

In fall 2012, I informally interviewed two faculty and three staff members at a large, predominantly white public university in the southeastern region of the US. One of the faculty members was a person of color while the remaining faculty member and three staff members were white. I asked all participants to describe their perceptions of responsibility to address discrimination at their institution. The initial coding of the interview notes led to the categorization of three themes that influenced their work: campus climate, social identity awareness, and understanding of social justice education concepts. While all three themes were important to understanding faculty and staff perceptions, I observed that white participants spoke in terms that linked their social identity awareness to the tension they experienced in their sense of responsibility to advocate for equitable changes. Their expressed understanding of social identity as a privileged or oppressed person was each participants' verbalized justification for not challenging policy (limited awareness of their social identity as a white person) or for taking action toward policy change (higher awareness of their social identity as a white person). The participants who felt a responsibility to take action to bring about equitable social change were also able to give examples in their work where they linked theory to practice. The participants with limited awareness of their white social identities struggled to provide examples of how they practiced critical social justice, and they were unable to link theory to practice. Additionally, all five participants, including the participant of color, expressed that the political campus climate did not require them to integrate critical social justice into their work in order to be successful at the institution. Each participant made the choice to either practice critical social justice or to ignore the possibility that they should need to practice it.

The distinction between identity awareness and sense of responsibility prompted me to ask: how did white faculty and staff demonstrate they were developmentally prepared to practice critical social justice on individual, group, and institutional levels and take action out of feelings of responsibility? What did the thinking of white educators look and sound like when they were highly aware of their social identity and felt responsible to act upon social justice issues? Who was best equipped or responsible for making sure college faculty and staff were critical social justice educators? These questions guided the development of this study.

Significance of studying white faculty and staff.

I sought to achieve three primary benefits by considering white faculty and staff development within a model of multiple identities integrated into the way they practiced critical social justice. First, universities would be better equipped to implement professional development for white faculty and staff that complemented their growth as critical social justice practitioners and brought about change in their educational systems. Second, white faculty and staff would become better equipped to pursue individual efforts to grow into critical social justice practitioners and aid in the dismantling of oppressive structures. Third, drawing attention to the practice of critical social justice among white faculty and staff would improve the quality of interactions they had with students when challenging students to think more critically about taking action toward an equitable, globalized world (Carr & Lund, 2009; Freire, 1970/2010; hooks, 1994; Jones & McEwen 2000; Pope-Davis & Ottavi, 1992). I have addressed the first two benefits listed via recommendations in the discussion of my results. The third benefit has been grappled with throughout the design, implementation, and highlighted results and discussion of the study. Specifically, I have filtered through white

faculty and staff narratives to identify dominant language, policies, and practices that can serve as future rallying points for anti-discriminatory work in education. I have described how study participants navigated dominant practices through their own understanding of their social identities and how they organized their own internal value structures.

Guiding Research Questions

My goal in this study was to begin crafting an understanding of the complex social identities of white faculty and staff and how they practiced critical social justice in higher education. I have done this through a constructive-critical-whiteness framework and interviewed participants using meaning-making and intersectional data collection and analysis. The following questions were used to guide the design and preliminary analysis of this narrative study:

1) In what ways did white faculty and staff understand their identity as critical social justice practitioners in higher education via a model of multiple dimensions of identity?

2) In what ways did white faculty and staff place value on critical social justice work in higher education via their internal meaning-making structures?

3) In what ways did white faculty and staff navigate resistance narratives (tension) between their personal values and those of the institution in which they work?

Just as it has been important for me to offer my construct of what my study sought to do it has been equally valuable for me to offer what my study would *not* do:

1) It has not estimated how many white faculty and staff were critical social justice practitioners within an institution. As I have been unsure of how a critical social

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justice practitioner would look, think and behave, I have not tried to quantify the number of white faculty and staff who have developed into such practitioners.

2) This study has not offered a development model for white critical social justice practitioners in higher education. Instead, the scope of this study has focused on describing and defining the habits of critical social justice practitioners; how they perceived their interactions with social justice concepts on an individual and systematic level. I have not suggested a progression of how white faculty and staff get "there" as a critical social justice practitioner as I have been unclear of what "there" might have looked like.

I have posed this study in the critical and constructive epistemologies because they have been complementary to the exploration of knowledge and power that were core concepts to the way white faculty and staff operated as practitioners of critical social justice. I proposed the questions as guiding my research because I wished to leave space for adjusting the questions during the design of this study and during data collection and analysis. This semi-loose structure of questioning was in line with qualitative research methods for retaining flexible inquiry that allowed for new ideas to emerge and inform more concise questions at the conclusion of the study (Glesne, 2011; Maxwell, 2005). In other words, I have acknowledged that the qualitative process meant I may have concluded this study having answered questions I had not anticipated or that my starting questions were flawed with my own assumptions. Additionally, the assumptions I brought to this study came from my how I made personal meaning as a white college educator who sought to become a critical social justice practitioner. My meaning-making system, or reflexivity, to this topic has been explored and reflected upon throughout the

design and implementation of this study. This reflection was in line with the

constructivist perspective indicated in the opening quote from Lincoln that referred to the

researcher as an "instrument" (2005, p. 63) that must also be analyzed. As I delved

further into my reflexivity surrounding my topic, it meant that my guiding questions

could have changed.

Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

This chapter provides greater detail for how I have conceived the constructive-critical-whiteness framework of this study. I started with constructivism as the foundation for exploring socially constructed realities and the ways people generated meaning in their lives (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Baxter Magolda, 2004; Hornak & Ortiz, 2004; Kegan, 1994; Lincoln, 2005). Consequently, I focused on how the meaning-making structures, or value systems, of white faculty and staff have been understood through constructivism. Subsequently, I used critical theory and critical whiteness studies to explain how white faculty and staff interacted with systematic constructions of race in higher education through their awareness of multiple dimensions of social identity (Clark & O'Donnell, 1999; Frankenberg, 1993; Noblit, 2005; Pope, Reynolds, & Mueller, 2004). Brought together, a constructive-critical-whiteness framework centers on how meaning-making structures of power and privilege have been internalized by white faculty and staff and how these individuals navigated institutional power structures in their work. The consideration of white identity and cultural whiteness operating in post-secondary education provided a previously unexplored understanding of how white faculty and staff made sense of their identities, how they have shaped the oppressive structures in higher education and how, simultaneously, the system has shaped the identities of those same white faculty and staff (Dill, 2009; Dill & Zambrana, 2009; Dill, Zambrana, & McLaughlin, 2009; Kegan, 1994; Jones & Abes, 2013).

Overview of Constructivism

In general, constructivism has focused on how individuals cognitively organized their value systems that determined how those individuals interacted with and reflected upon the external world. Constructivism assumes that knowledge has been filtered and interpreted in

varying ways based on the unique thought process of the individual. Thus, constructive epistemology has questioned what counts as true knowledge or fact (Fosnot & Perry, 2005; Kegan, 1994; Lincoln, 2005; Piaget, 1970; von Glasersfeld, 2005). Constructivism has been less interested with the content of thought and more concerned with the *process* of thought and how the process has been shaped and continually shifted. Put another way, constructivism has looked at how individuals think about thinking (Kegan, 1994; Larochelle & Bednarz, 1998). The purpose of constructive critique was not aimed at "developing a theory of the world but, rather, at elaborating a theory of the organism who creates for him- or herself a theory of the world" (von Glasersfeld as cited in Larochelle & Bednarz, 1998, p. 5). This study has sought to elaborate on what a theory of practicing critical social justice in the world might look like, if it existed at all, in the cognition of white faculty and staff.

Constructivism has offered specific views on defining *structures*, *adaptation*, *environment*, and *interaction*. These concepts were helpful as a way to explain how white faculty and staff derived meaning in their work as they interacted with a variety of people. The university experience should not only be developmental for students; how had faculty and staff been influenced from being constantly mired in an environment of ideas? Constructive thinking further described *interactions* as types of resistance narratives that resulted from individuals reflecting on their contact with social reality (Fosnot & Perry, 2005; Lincoln, 2005; Piaget, 1970; von Glasersfeld, 2005). These resistance narratives have been crucial to analyzing white faculty and staff values about practicing critical social justice and how they have influenced and have been influenced by institutional social structures of power and privilege.

Defining structures.

S*tructures* are cognitively human-made and are discernible when three attributes are present: *wholeness*, *transformation*, and *self-regulation*. Cognitive structures have been useful in our lives because they have helped us think about and respond to our surroundings without expending an inordinate amount of time and energy (Fosnot & Perry, 2005; Piaget, 1970). For instance, faculty have not re-read every piece of material for a curriculum they have taught many times. Instead, they used the syllabus as a guide but employed their previous memories of teaching the material. These structures were mental shortcuts in our brains that built a foundation of decision-making abilities out of our experiences so that new information was organized, sorted, and then acted upon in the physical world.

Wholeness refers to the ability of many parts to integrate into a larger system to create a concept that individual pieces could not accomplish if considered singularly. The collective operation of the pieces makes the parts indistinct unless specific effort is made to deconstruct them into their separate form (Fosnot & Perry, 2005; Piaget, 1970). For example, my belief that higher education has been important for upward social mobility has been created from several life experiences and reflections upon those experiences. A quick response of how this value emerged in my life was that family members and friends communicated the message to me that a college education was necessary if I wanted to avoid living in poverty. I also remembered that having a post-secondary educational degree appeared as the distinguishing factor between people I observed to not live in poverty as compared to people who lived in poverty. Finally, I continually reflected on those memories to prioritize them and decided what they meant for my own educational pursuits.

My initial answer to how my value formed was indicative of the pieces of my belief system that combined to form the overall value, or wholeness, of that particular structure. My instant recollection of the creation of this personal value was translated to my fingertips and punched out on the keyboard without much cognitive effort. I have taken several moments to think about distinctive experiences that created and added to my belief that higher education was important for social mobility. Singularly, none of these experiences or reflections were strong enough to lead me to the conclusion that I have decided to value and to strive for a higher education. Thus, wholeness operated freely, invisible, unless I intentionally have tried to distinguish pieces of this structure.

By viewing my value of higher education as a whole, I have quickly compared it to new information that either contradicted or was in line with my already held belief. The potential for a contradictory belief to enter my cognitive structure and influence it has led to another concept of constructive structures called *transformation*. *Transformation* occurs when the pieces of the structure or several wholes interact with each other. The result is a cognitive re-organization of one or more structures in a way that can alter the value that a particular structure supports. For instance, a collection of the same experiences could be organized to result in a person valuing higher education *or* to instead value something different. The reorganization can also change the process by which the same value is reached, meaning that there are countless experiences that could connect and add up to the same outcome of valuing higher education (Fosnot & Perry, 2005; Piaget, 1970).

When applied to my previous example, that I valued getting a higher education, consider what has happened when I reflected on my experiences of the doctoral program for educational leadership. Prior to having started the doctoral program, part of me wanted

another post-secondary degree because I believed it showed prospective employers that I was a hard worker. If I were perceived as a hard worker then an employer would have been willing to pay me more money. Now that I have completed the coursework of the doctoral program, my thinking has shifted. I still valued getting my doctorate, but my justification for continuing the program has been that it helped me further develop my critical thinking and problem solving skills. In turn, these skills have allowed me to perform better in my work, and I have become better equipped to respond to future obstacles. I believed that my improved performance and response to problems has increased my happiness at work and in my personal life. A certain amount of money has been necessary for me to achieve the happiness of providing for life necessities; however, my ability to advocate for myself at work has taken priority over my desire to be seen as a hard worker and be paid more money. Regardless of the altered process my thoughts have taken, I still have valued getting a higher education. Although I have reached the same conclusion of what I value, my cognitive structure has transformed in response to my reflecting on new experiences in the doctoral program.

Transformation is important to constructive structures because it provides the forward motion of cognitive development. Without transformation, structures would "collapse into static forms" (Piaget, 1970, p.12) and new information entering the structure would pass through the mind without impact. Our lives would be a collection of experiences without any connection of meaning because we would be able to reflect on them in only one way. Transformation allows cognitive growth to happen as our minds develop more complex ways of understanding our perceptions of the world. If transformation failed to start after a new

meaning-making structure was created then there would be no thinking difference between children and adults.

The final characteristic of a structure is its ability to *self-regulate*. This is easiest to understand when considered alongside the other traits of wholeness and transformation. Picture one structure as a complete assembly line of experiences bound together with the nuts and bolts of reflection. The assembly line is the structure's wholeness and the motion of the conveyor belt is propelled forward by transformation. New ideas and experiences cannot just wait at the opening of the assembly line – transformation ensures that each piece has been examined from all angles and tested out as ways to either strengthen the structure or call for the assembly line to be re-organized. But what would happen when a piece has been deemed to be of value, have no value, or it no longer helped the assembly line as it once did? Self-regulation would prevent these experiences from cluttering the assembly line because they needed to be disposed of or were waiting to be incorporated into a transformed structure (Fosnot & Perry, 2005; Piaget, 1970). Through self-regulation, our minds "seek self-maintenance, organization, and closure" (Fosnot & Perry, 2005, p. 21). Self-regulation maintains the benefit of structures as mental short-cuts to processing the world because it prevents our minds from getting tangled with experiences that we have decided do not change the structures of our values. If we need more time to reflect on an experience then our self-regulating structures would find a holding space until we made a decision.

This study focused on the structures of white faculty and staff in relation to the way they valued practicing critical social justice and then sought to act upon that value in their environments. What pieces of a structure would output a value on critical social justice, and how would those pieces form the whole? How would such structures transform and self-

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regulate? By searching for the attributes of wholeness, transformation, and self-regulation as indicators of a meaning-making structure, I have sought to construct my own version of what a white critical social justice practitioner would look like.

Still, creating a representation of what a white critical social justice practitioner would look like requires more than an understanding of what would comprise such a structure. I waded through numerous structures of the participants to discern what specific values they had concerning critical social justice. Constructive ideology provided more concepts to understand how structures and external surroundings influence each other.

Defining adaptation.

Cognitively, the act of transformation would require some guidance on how something should be transformed. Every new experience could technically re-structure the entire assembly line of thought, but how would we use reflection to decide if a re-organization would be warranted? *Adaptation* is the constructive idea that certain structures would be more useful than others in helping us attain our goals. We have thought about the world as we do because accepting a cognitive structure would have increased the likelihood that our long or short term goals were more feasible. The knowledge that an individual has would not be an accurate reflection of the physical world, but rather, how the person has been "mapping" and perceiving the world in a way that has "proven viable" in the past (von Glasersfeld, 2005, p. 4).

Turning back to the example of my valuing education, I have adapted my reasons for valuing an education as a way to increase my chances of completing my doctorate. I have moved from wanting my doctorate because I would make more money for being a hard worker to the belief that I have enjoyed learning to think more critically so I could better

advocate for myself. When my value system was challenged, I abandoned my original

thought structure because I observed that other students before me were less likely to

complete their doctorate when they saw it only as a path to higher pay for hard work. This

observation was in line with similar experiences I had during my undergraduate and earlier

graduate studies. So, when the opportunity for my thinking to shift toward focusing on

critical thinking and advocacy skills came up, my mind had chosen to adapt. The alternative

for my mind would have been to either stick with the current structure of thinking or to adopt

another structure altogether.

The most viable adaptation would be important when looking at the meaning-making

structures of white faculty and staff because such transformations would have indicated best

practices for other developing practitioners of critical social justice. Would there be themes

for the types of adaptive transformations white faculty and staff have used in their work on

critical social justice? As I examined the structures of my participants, I questioned in what

ways their structures were the most viable for succeeding with students, colleagues, and on

campus. White faculty and staff must find their own balance between the earlier mentioned

"tangible" world and their individualized "constructed reality" (Lincoln, 2005, p. 5). Would

the two realities for white faculty and staff harmonize, remain at odds with each other, or

remain in a constant state of flux? Dissonance between the two worlds would have led to the

creation of "resistance narratives" (Lincoln, 2005, p. 62) or "tugs and pulls" (Fosnot & Perry,

2005, p. 31). These discrepant narratives could be avoided as a means of maintaining the

balance between the two realities. However, I believed that white faculty and staff could

discover greater confidence in their values and behaviors when their current social justice

structures were tested against, or altered, in response to interactions with values that were

different than theirs (Lincoln, 2005). I assumed that the processing of tugs and pulls, or the avoidance of them, would indicate the adaptations that white faculty and staff chose in order to make their work goals more attainable.

Adaptation has represented the most viable structure we have used to achieve our goals. It has guided when transformation occurs or when a structure has remained the same; however, our choice of adaptation depends heavily on our perceptions of our environment.

Defining environment.

The constructive understanding of *environment* "refers to the totality of permanent objects and their relations that we have abstracted" from our experience with them (von Glasersfeld, 2005, p. 5). In other words, the environment of my doctoral classes was not just a classroom with a table and chairs. The environment included the table, chairs, and the meaning I have associated with those particular objects in the physical world. If I explained what my experiences have been while working on my doctoral degree, I might have described occasions of sitting in one of the chairs around the conference table. When I mentioned the table and chair, I was not equating the literal act of sitting at a table as a reason for my positive experience in the program. I was using the chair and table to allude to the pleasant memory of learning with academic peers. In this explanation, I have referred to a physical aspect of the environment to represent additional meanings that I connected to sitting in the classroom. Other doctoral students may have extrapolated different experiences of what it meant to sit in the classroom, or, they may have highlighted other physical components of the room to describe a meaningful memory similar to the one I have given. Thus, my classmates and I sat in the same room and heard the same course information but

constructed different interpretations of the experience and how we have talked about the environment in a physical way.

Still, the constructive environment goes beyond the one or two physical items I have focused upon in my description. Constructivism indicates that when we "focus our attention on a particular item, [then] environment refers to the surroundings of the item we have isolated" (von Glasersfeld, 2005, p. 5). In my example that involved the classroom, my meaning-making structure used the table and chairs as an anchoring point for assigning value to all other physical aspects of the room. When I had chosen to sit in the chair that was at the foot of the oval table, I had made the decision based on my value structure of wanting a clear view of the professor and all of my classmates when they spoke. I took notice of other parts of the room (e.g., window, door, outlets, lighting, noise) but each piece was placed in a hierarchy of what I saw as most prominent to the experience of being in the classroom. My reasons for sitting where I did were different from the explanations that classmates had given me for why they sat where they did. Some classmates preferred to have a view looking out of the window, or because they wanted to be closer to an outlet so they could charge their laptop and still use it during class. Each of us have constructed our own version of what the physical environment looked like based on other values we brought to analyzing the space. It has been important to acknowledge the different ways in which we understood the same physical environment because, as researchers, we often forget that our interpretations have been "part of our own experiential field, not an observer-independent objective world" (von Glasersfled, 2005, p. 5). I could not, in good conscience, demand that others accept my view of sitting in the doctoral classroom as the only way to have experienced that environment.

The constructive environment has direct implications for how white faculty and staff have observed and responded to their physical surroundings on issues of social justice. When interviewing my participants, I looked for themes that I believed marked their understanding of the campus climate surrounding their work as practitioners of critical social justice. This included patterns of how they described different situations in similar ways or how they described the same situation in different ways. By viewing participants' accounts through a social justice lens I have tried to describe their meaning-making structures based on what types of physical components they focused upon or pushed to the foreground in their understanding of their work environment. What people or objects did they believe played the greatest role in their ability to practice critical social justice? My understanding of structures, adaptation, and the environment has guided some of the ways I identified patterns of white faculty and staff practicing critical social justice.

Constructive Models for Looking at White Faculty and Staff

It is one thing to have abstracted the pieces of structures, environments, and adaptations of white faculty and staff and quite another to have used these concepts for practical application. For help, I have turned to more experienced theorists who operated in the realm of identifying meaning-making structures in adult learning. The existence and manifestation of meaning-making structures has been researched at length by Kegan (1994) and Baxter Magolda (2001, 2004). Kegan's work resulted in the formation of a Social Maturity Model (Kegan, 1994; Kegan, Noam, & Rogers, 1982) that was later used by Baxter Magolda to focus on adult learning of traditional, college-aged students. Baxter Magolda's work with college students has provided some tentative conclusions about how faculty and staff have contributed to adult learning in higher education (Baxter Magolda 2001, 2004). I

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chose these models because they have come closest to exploring the development of faculty and staff in higher education. I have been unable to locate a model that specifically discussed the meaning-making structures of college faculty and staff.

Overview of the Social Maturity Model.

Kegan's work has been beneficial for considering the structures of white faculty and staff because his model assumed the capability of individuals to learn and develop across the entire lifespan. He believed that working through resistance narratives allowed individuals to develop a more complex understanding of their environment and the options they have for adaptation (Kegan, 1994).

As a therapist, Kegan spent years observing his clients navigate the stressful demands of their lives. He set out to test his ideas of how varying levels of mental capacity allowed children and adults to overcome typical psychological challenges in their daily lives, or in other words, how they processed their tugs and pulls. His longitudinal study involved 22 adult participants who were interviewed annually over four years. Interview questions focused on gathering information about the types of challenges participants had faced, why they had been perceived as challenges, how they had decided to react to the challenges, and how they felt and thought about the outcomes afterward (Kegan, 1994).

Kegan's resulting Social Maturity Model included two important concepts: the orders (stages) of consciousness and the subject-object relationship. Each order represented a dimensional level that a person can progress to, although Kegan estimated that one-half to two-thirds of adults never reached the fourth order. His study suggested that people needed their own time to progress through the re-structuring of each order – they could not be taught new skills to put into practice as a way to skip a level. The trigger, or moment, that allowed

a person to transition to the next order was dependent upon the subject-object relationship of the interaction (Kegan, 1994).

Subject-object relationship.

At first glance, the terminology of the subject-object relationship may have made the concept appear in opposition to the subjective nature of constructivism. Kegan's use of the terms *subject* or *object* operated under the umbrella of our subjectivity. The unique, or subjective, understanding we have held included *both* aspects of being subject or object in the way we made meaning. According to Kegan, when we have spoken about our experiences and reflected upon them, we have provided two types of indicators that have represented the organization of our meaning-making structures. One representation he referred to as *subject* and the other he called *object* (Kegan, 1994; Lahey, Souvaine, Kegan, Goodman, & Felix, 2011).

If we have been subject to how we interacted with something then we have operated in a naturally occurring meaning-making structure, or system, that has been invisible to us. We could not see all the moving parts that have constructed our way of knowing the world or interacting with it. As a tangible example, subject would have been like trying to understand the spread of germs and infection before our culture had the scientific knowledge to support such an understanding. Prior to our medical understanding of germs, we did not alter our hygiene because we had not deduced that changes to our cleanliness could change the outcome of an infection. We could not have reflected upon the best way to handle germs because we were unaware that they existed as something we could choose or not choose to have responded to with a specific hygienic regimen (Kegan, 1994; Lahey et al., 2011).

Now, think about the invisibility of being subject when tied to this study. As one possible example, if I had asked white faculty or staff to tell me about a time they experienced tension involving a social justice issue, I might have received tales of conflict between them and a senior-level administrator. If the faculty or staff member had been subject to their relationship with the administrator then they might have said their decision to feel and think about an approach to a social justice topic in their work was dictated by what the administrator wanted. The faculty or staff member might have expressed feeling frustrated, that they saw no option for recourse to address the administrator, and that the administrator's wants were being imposed upon them. Further questioning might have revealed that the faculty or staff member viewed the responsibility of solving the situation as beyond their control. In this example, the meaning-making structure of the faculty or staff member would have caused them to be subject to the wants of the administrator. The administrator's influence would have been incorporated into the faculty or staff member's understanding of the environment as something that was unalterable and as that which made the faculty or staff member feel a certain way. Thus, the influence of the administrator would have still been at the foreground of their experience. It would have been difficult for the faculty or staff member to have reflected on what the interactions with the administrator meant to them because they would have been unaware of, or unsure of how to act upon, their ability to have controlled their response to the situation. The faculty or staff member who was subject to their environment would not have been able to take responsibility for how they chose to feel about the administrator's effect on them; instead, the faculty or staff member might have blamed the administrator for having made them feel frustrated.

Likewise, *object* designates the opposite of subject in Kegan's Social Maturity model. To be object in a relationship means we have distinguished the motivations of others as separate from our own needs to have thought or behaved a certain way. Object also refers to our ability to have recognized an interaction with our environment as something that could be responded to in multiple ways, and we would be able to choose which way we responded even if we did not like the choices available. Object implies our awareness that how we have thought about social interactions has been a choice we have made and not one that has been made for us. This would be in contrast to the single-mindedness of being subject to a situation, where we had perceived we had no other option but to accept things as they were or could not cognitively grasp an alternative path (Kegan, 1994; Lahey et al., 2011).

Going back to the most recent example with the senior-level administrator, a faculty or staff member who has been object would have thought, acted, and spoke about the same situation in a different way. The faculty or staff member might have voiced the opinion that they did not agree with the administrator's requests but had made the changes because they chose to accomplish their social justice goals another way. A faculty or staff member who was object in this situation might also have expressed a lack of knowing everything that was effecting the actions of the administrator, but they could still have articulated how they felt about the administrator's actions. In this example, the faculty or staff member who had been object to their relationship with the administrator might have processed their experience as thinking "I am frustrated by the administrator because of the way I have viewed things and what I valued." Whereas if the faculty or staff member were subject to the administrator they might instead have processed their experience as thinking "The administrator makes me

frustrated because of what the administrator wants and values" (Kegan, 1994; Lahey et al., 2011).

To be object in a situation means we have reflected on the interaction of our meaning-making structures with our environment from multiple viewpoints. Put differently, we could have reflected on and talked about "what it is [we] can control, be responsible for, know about and not know about" (Lahey et al., 2011, p. 8) when having considered our resistance narratives. In the previous example, certain key perspectives of the faculty or staff member would have indicated to me that their meaning-making structures would have been object in their reflection and action toward the situation. They could have taken responsibility for their actions by having made the changes the administrator wanted while still opting to have achieved their social justice goals for their students another way. If they had been object to the administrator then they would have been able to speak about the administrator's desires as separate from their own and then would have made a decision on how to respond because they had decided it was the best course and not determined solely by what the administrator had wanted. Another indicator of being object in this instance would have been the faculty or staff member's recognition that they had not presumed to know all the reasons or motivations for why the administrator had pushed them to change the social justice component. This point would have further highlighted the faculty or staff member's ability to have viewed their values and desires as separate from the administrator's values and desires. The faculty or staff member who had been object to the situation would have been able to successfully interact with the administrator without having to have accepted the administrator's values as their own in their cognitive processing about the experience (Kegan, 1994; Lahey et al., 2011).

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Alternatively to being object, to be subject means "we cannot be responsible for, or in control of, or reflect upon that which is subject… Subject is ultimate or absolute" (Kegan, 1994, p. 32). A person who has operated from an internal structure of being subject would have struggled to see any other conclusion than the one that had already happened to them, and this could result in feelings of loss of control. Just like the example with the faculty or staff member who had been subject to the administrator – the faculty or staff member had perceived that doing what the administrator wanted was the only viable option, or adaptation, within their environment as they have constructed it in their minds. The subject faculty or staff member would have likely perceived the *administrator had made* them feel the emotions they experienced, as opposed to an object meaning-making structure where the faculty or staff member would have likely realized *their internal priorities or values had made* them feel their current emotions (Kegan, 1994; Lahey et al., 2011). Kegan postulated that the subject-object relationship was the primary way that we have organized experiences and perceptions of those moments into an internal system of decision-making in response to resistance narratives. We have chosen to think about and react somewhere along the spectrum of having avoided conflict or engaged resistance narratives in a way that expanded our understanding of personal identity and relationships with our environments. Avoidance or unproductive thoughts and engagement with conflict has occurred when we have been subject to our immediate surroundings, including relationships, and how we have understood the moment (Kegan, 1994).

Experience and reflection, together, was the remedy for moving from being subject to being object in a situation. When we have been object we had the ability to separate personal identity from past relationships long enough to "reflect on, handle, look at, be responsible

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for, relate to each other, internalize, assimilate, or otherwise operate upon" (Kegan, 1994, p. 32) new solutions that moved us forward in a productive, or adaptive, way. The subject-object relationship has asked us to consider if we have been our environment and relationships, to be subject, or if we have operated independently and have independent beliefs within our environment and relationships, to be object. Development through each subject-object relationship included three areas: first having had an internal belief about the environment, then having chosen to act on that belief in the environment, and then having re-evaluated the original belief to determine if the belief (and its resulting action) should have been maintained or altered based on thinking about the experience. The subject-object relationship was not just concerned with individual beliefs or actions but with how those beliefs and actions had related to each other in supporting a person in reaching a goal. The ability to move from subject to object was a process and not the mere effort of a flipped switch. We must each have been given the time to process through our own understanding of how we have seen ourselves in relation to outside relationships and interactions with our environments (Kegan, 1994; von Glasersfeld, 2005).

Development within the Social Maturity Model was classified by how meaning-making structures have aligned with a person's behaviors through the subject-object relationship. This model considered how a person had thought about their experiences, acted upon those thoughts, and then reflected upon the experience of having acted on their own thoughts. As conscious experience and thought happened simultaneously and without pause, there was no definitive start or end in determining the developmental boundaries of a person based on the Social Maturity Model. Instead, placement within the model was based on a person's verbal reflection on what they had thought about their experiences and how, if at all,

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they had chosen or not chosen to act upon those beliefs. Meaning-making structures outlined within the Social Maturity Model were discernible when a person had articulated (or had been unable to articulate) certain combinations of thought and action as a result of the types of cognitive tension they had experienced (Kegan, 1994; Lahey et al. 2011).

An underlying assumption of this study was that white faculty and staff who were practitioners of critical social justice would have understood that they have a responsibility to do critical social justice work. The subject-object relationship of Kegan's model emphasized the need for us to have taken responsibility for how our own values, or meaning-making structures, had interacted with our environment. In the context of this study, the subject-object relationship suggested that white faculty and staff who were critical social justice practitioners may have been at different points of understanding their responsibility to have operated in the realm of social justice work. I used the subject-object relationship to look for varying degrees of how white faculty and staff had expressed their ability to take responsibility for and talk about the way they had practiced, or had not practiced, critical social justice.

O**rders of consciousness.**

This study primarily employed the third, fourth, and fifth orders of consciousness from Kegan's Social Maturity model; however, I have decided to describe the pre-order, first, and second orders because they provided additional examples of how Kegan discussed the subject-object relationship. Each order demonstrated a different resistance narrative that we overcome when we have moved from being subject to object in the way we responded to the tension in a particular order of consciousness (Kegan, 1994; Lahey et al., 2011).

Although not frequently referenced, Kegan's research discussed a developmental level that was prior to the first order of consciousness. Kegan referred to early childhood as a time that we have been subject to everything, or a pre-order to the first order of consciousness. In this stage, the child lacked the ability to distinguish a cognitive boundary between internal and external forces of anxiety or enjoyment. All sensation was without subject-object value because the child had yet to encounter symbolic or cultural meaning that was required for reflection that generated organized thought structures (Kegan, Noam, & Rogers, 1982). Essentially, children at this stage lacked the mental capacity to reflect on their surroundings beyond what was immediately in front of them. In 2011, Lahey, Souvaine, Kegan, Goodman, and Felix discussed that the use of the subject-object interview to determine the meaning-making structures operating within a child at the earliest stage depended upon the language ability of that child. In other words, determining the meaning-making structure of someone moving into the first order of consciousness could be delayed if the child was unable to speak about their thoughts.

First order of consciousness.

The transition into the first order of consciousness occurred when a child had begun to physically and psychologically grasp object permanence as a way to understand their environment. In the physical sense, object permanence was when a child comprehended that a thing had continued to exist even when they could not see it. A game of peek-a-boo had become less of a surprise for the child because they realized a caretaker existed when the caretaker hid from the child behind the caretaker's hands. Psychologically speaking, object permanence referred to a child who had realized they could be physically separated from a primary caregiver without their own emotional health being compromised. The child cried

less and clung to their caretakers less when they moved from being subject to the emotional loss of separation and had become object to realizing they had not lost a part of themselves when separated from their caregivers (Kegan, Noam, & Rogers, 1982).

The subject-object relationship in the first order was characterized by the emergence of a meaning-making structure driven by reflexes. A person in this stage was defined by their impulses – they had become their impulses – and any environmental challenge to those motivations caused a gut reaction, or reflex to their existence being threatened. A person's inability to express a desire likely induced a temper tantrum because "the child's organization (not simply an element of this organization) is frustrated" (Kegan, Noam, & Rogers, 1982, p. 294). A child in the first order was viewed as subject to their motivations because they were unable to see their existence beyond the moment of not getting their way on something they decided was an essential need. Consequently, a child operating with a first order meaning-making structure was unable to consider more than one impulse or desire at a time, including the desires, or viewpoints, of others. A child who firmly developed first order meaning-making structures understood that there were parts of the environment that extended beyond their own existence. Still, the first order thinking made the child assume that others in their surroundings held the same desires the child had until the child had begun to transition into the second order of consciousness (Kegan, Noam, & Rogers, 1982).

Second order of consciousness.

Transition into the second order of consciousness was signaled by an adaptation to the way a child made decisions on what was right or wrong. During the first order, a child's decision-making was based on avoiding consequences that were typically imposed by parents or other caregivers. The right decision was deemed to be the one with the fewest negative

consequences. The second order transition was indicated by the child starting to deem the right decision to be the one that moved the child closest to a long term desire, even at the expense of consequences. The child who was between the first and second orders started to adapt to accepting consequences when their decision puts them closer to achieving something that was of a personal interest. The adaptation had identified a new viable path for the child to reach goals that, in turn, had transformed the meaning-making structure for what the child decided was a right or wrong decision. The transition from first to second order was further identified by the realization that other people in the environment had their own unique desires that did not have to be in line with those of the child (Kegan, Noam, & Rogers, 1982). The disruption of the child's fanciful world where everyone desired the same thing as the child did then lead to chaotic emotions of "confusion, doubt, conflict, anxiety, sadness, and feeling closed out, cut off, and not included" (Kegan, Noam, & Rogers, 1982, p. 296).

The child who operated with a second order meaning-making system reflected on their experiences with a new sense of loss and gain as compared to how they previously thought about their environment. The child realized that others had a distinct set of interests and needs as compared to the child; this awareness of independent thinking by others resulted in a loss of perceived support from those others. Concurrently, the child gained confidence in their self-reliance through increased knowledge of self and goals – a clear shift in the subject-object relationship they previously had with their desires (Kegan, 1994; Kegan, Noam, & Rogers, 1982). With a developed second order structure in place the child could now "reflect on, handle, look at, [and] be responsible for" (Kegan, 1994, p. 32) their desires and the work need for them to achieve the goals that resulted from those interests. This was in contrast to their previous meaning-making structures where the child's sense of self

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existed from moment to moment as the impulse. While the child was now object to their impulses and could exert prolonged self-control, they were still subject to the needs that emerged from those impulses (Kegan, 1994; Kegan, Noam, & Rogers, 1982). Such needs had begun to control the child's strategy for achieving their goals, which was further influenced by their continued successes of exerting their self-reliance. Thus, the child encountered "joy in the exercising of physical and behavioral competence and fear of adult reaction to rule violations (based on consequences to the continued pursuit of needs, rather than guilt at violating trust or jeopardizing a relationship)" (Kegan, Noam, & Rogers, 1982, p. 290). As the child had begun to achieve more on their own, in terms of thinking about and acting to reach need-based goals, they also become more concerned with understanding their sense of self by determining what socially-defined groups they belonged to. The child used group identifications such as race, gender, religion, and school affiliations to generate more knowledge about what they perceived they needed or wanted and used those group networks to achieve their goals (Kegan, 1994; Kegan, Noam, & Rogers, 1982).

   Third order of consciousness.

   Kegan's research suggested that transition into the third order commonly occurred as a teenager headed toward young adulthood; however, that timeline was only a general indicator and was not indicative of the developmental path of all individuals. Progression from the second order and into the third order of consciousness was marked by feelings of loss of independence. Where the second order of consciousness had the teenager focused on personal goals and the capacity to accomplish them through self-sufficiency, transformation into the third order strengthened the ability of their meaning-making structures to empathize with and take partial responsibility for the desires of others. The teenager adult chose a

course of action that met their needs and the commitments they made to others. This "reciprocal obligation" came at a heavy price of emotional turmoil when it came into contact with "structures of the old self" that Kegan said was often referred to as "adolescent moodiness" (Kegan, Noam, & Rogers, 1982, p. 291). Remnants of second order structures operated alongside early formations of a third order framework that resulted in moments of internal conflict because the self-imposed expectation for the teenager to help others felt like a transgression against the happiness of nurturing the self before others. When the teenager was subject to the situation then they may have resented others who allowed the teenager to agree to take on the commitment of helping someone else instead of having taken the most direct route to helping themselves. As the teenager became object to such moments then they saw how others had an equal right to have their needs met as the teenager did (Kegan, 1994; Kegan, Noam, & Rogers, 1982).

Full transformation into the third order of consciousness was characterized by a self-awareness of basic personal values and desires that were weighed against the needs of others when there was an already existing relationship. The person (commonly a young adult) assumed a "co-ownership of feelings" that created a "shared reality" (Kegan, Noam, & Rogers, 1982, p. 291) perceived around everyone with whom the person had built a relationship. Tension arose when the person felt an obligation between two shared realities of different relationships. Additionally, the third order individual chose to put the needs of others first while having believed there was no other choice when the person was subject to others' needs. This was because they internalized the shared reality that came from having relationships as their own reality. The person would have considered a dereliction in their support of others' needs as a failure to respect themselves. Put another way, a third order

meaning-making structure caused the person to think that the quality of interaction in their relationships with others was a reflection on the quality or value of self. The third order subject-object struggle was focused on navigating tension between having honored the needs of others and having ensured a healthy balance of the individual's needs were met. A person who operated with a third order meaning-making structure may have sacrificed their desires and overall well-being for the sake of maintaining relationships with others whose goals were incompatible to theirs. Meaning-making structures of the third order of consciousness placed the individual in a position of feeling their own progress depended on the happiness and support they provided for people with whom they had a prior connection (Kegan, 1994; Kegan, Noam, & Rogers, 1982; Love & Guthrie, 1999).

My earlier example of the white faculty member who dealt with the senior administrator reflected the subject-object relationship that should be mastered in order to develop beyond structures of the third order of consciousness. In that scenario, the faculty member struggled in trying to maintain their way of teaching critical social justice in the classroom because of how their meaning-making structure processed the conflict with the administrator's values. The faculty member was subject to the administrator's desire to have social justice concepts taught a certain way in the classroom. The meaning-making structure of the faculty member perceived a shared reality in which the faculty member believed the administrator's decisions had left the faculty member without an alternative option (Kegan, 1994; Kegan, Noam, & Rogers, 1982). Furthermore, the faculty member was unable to "reflect on" or "take responsibility for" (Kegan, 1994, p. 32) their own decisions in the scenario because they remained focused on how to maintain the relationship with the administrator despite not agreeing with the administrator's actions.

The Social Maturity Model postulated that approximately one-half to two-thirds of the US population never developed beyond the third order of consciousness. So although there were two additional orders of consciousness after the third one, Kegan concluded through his observations that there was no guarantee adults progressed to the fourth order or higher (Kegan, 1994).

Fourth order of consciousness.

Transition from the third to fourth order of consciousness did not have a clear timeline because the majority of adults never progressed beyond the third order. However, those who made the transition into the fourth order maintained varying levels of relationships based on meeting the needs of others without compromising core values. Whereas a person with third order structures *was* their relationships because of the shared reality defining their self-worth, the person with a fourth order meaning-making structure *had* relationships because they saw that splitting away from the shared reality did not automatically end their relationships or their sense of self (Kegan, 1994; Kegan, Noam, & Rogers, 1982; Love & Guthrie, 1999).

The new structure that developed in a fourth order structures was in the realm of prioritizing values, or as Love and Guthrie (1999) put it, constructing "values *about* values provide[d] a means for choosing among values when they conflict[d]" (p. 72). For example, a person who believed that stealing was wrong might do so to feed a starved child. The value of not stealing was circumvented by a higher priority value in the person's meaning-making system that weighed the level of harm being done to the starving child as greater than the harm done to the entity that was stolen from. The prioritization of values allowed the fourth order adult to self-regulate their meaning-making system, which thus allowed them to

cognitively grow beyond the stalemate of values and shared realities they were subject to during the third order (Fosnot & Perry, 2005; Kegan, 1994; Love & Guthrie, 1999).

Turning back the results of the study shared in this document, an interview with a white faculty and staff member who functioned in the fourth order of consciousness might have revealed an attempt to balance the value of support with the value of challenging students in social justice conversations. While a faculty or staff member in the third order might find those values too contradictory for both to be pursued, a faculty or staff member who operated within the fourth order would have articulated how they decided when the need for building support and trust took precedence over the need for challenge and confrontation. Likewise, a fourth order structure could have allowed a faculty or staff member to identify the moments that called for students in a social justice discussion to be confronted about privilege and oppression. A faculty or staff member who functioned with a third order structure would have likely made relationship building and trust the priority for students engaged in a social justice conversation as a way to have created a shared reality. But fourth order thinking from a faculty or staff member would have likely encouraged students to have tested the boundaries of their relationships and fostered an understanding that maintaining comfortable relationships should not have solely dictated their thoughts and actions about social justice issues. In this way, the complexity of the faculty or staff member's cognitive development would have impacted their ability to create an environment where students also developed more complex meaning-making structures (Kegan, 1994).

Fifth order of consciousness.

Kegan believed the fifth, and final, order of consciousness was rarely achieved and was not a guaranteed eventual level of development for those who previously reached the

fourth order. The order was heavily critiqued as too abstract to be understood (Kegan, 1994;

Love & Guthrie, 1999). With that in mind, I have included my understanding of the fifth

order.

The fifth order was characterized by the awareness of multiple systems that operated

simultaneously and often in naturally contradictory ways. Whereas fourth order structures

prompted individuals to address the contradiction by working it through their personal

system of values and authority, a fifth order structure made individuals comfortable with

having positioned themselves between both ends of the spectrum. They accepted natural

contradictions were going to occur. The dichotomy of the spectrum did not result in the

person's thinking having become conflicted because the fifth order adult had, instead,

focused on analyzing the relationship that tied both contradictory options together (Kegan,

1994; Kegan, Noam, & Rogers, 1982; Love & Guthrie, 1999). In 1994, Kegan provided an

analogy of fifth order thinking using a glass cylinder. He argued that a common way to

understand the cylinder was as a glass tube that had an opening at either end. A person who

had a fourth order meaning-making structure would have likely focused on each end of the

tube as a separated system and would have found resolution in those two systems having

come together because they operated under similar systems of values. But a fifth order adult

would have viewed the same cylinder as "two openings connected by a glass tube. [They

saw] the glass tube as the connector or relator of the two ends" (Kegan, 1994, p. 313). In this

way, an adult with a fifth order meaning-making structure would not be concerned with

resolving the two opposites represented by either end of the tube – instead they would have

concentrated on understanding and influencing the relationship that brought the

contradictions, or the middle of the cylinder, into contact with one another (Kegan, 1994;

Kegan, Noam, & Rogers, 1982; Love & Guthrie, 1999).

Kegan further described the adult with a fifth order structure as a postmodern

consciousness that saw how seemingly complete and whole systems were nothing more than

parts they had chosen to view in connection with other systems (Kegan, 1994). Love and

Guthrie (1999) clarified this aspect of the fifth order with this description:

> [Fifth order thinking] suggests a notion of development beyond the autonomy of
>
> establishing one's identity and points to a level of development that relies on the
>
> individual being able to experience a sharing or intimacy with others. …[I]ndividuals
>
> hold suspect their sense of their own and each other's wholeness; they reject false
>
> assumptions of distinctness or completeness. The self-as-system is seen as
>
> incomplete – only a partial construction of all that the self is. It is the process of
>
> creating self through relationships that is imperative. (p. 73)

Fifth order cognitive structures brought the internal motivation for relating to others and

promoting the relationship building between all others for the sake of everyone who has

searched for completeness and not because of guilt (second order), confused desires (third

order), or having chosen to disagree with someone while having maintained an unchanged

value system (fourth order). An adult who had a fifth order structure understood and honored

the need for everyone to find their identity via a connective system comprised of others who

were striving for self-understanding. Even as others sought self-understanding, so too, did a

person who operated within the fifth order look for understanding among contradictions that

may have existed within their own identity and how they interacted with social expectations.

Reflection on contradictions in their identity and the systems and people around them opened

an adult with fifth order thinking to having organized a new sense of self without having completely relived cognitive struggles of the first four orders of consciousness. Coupled with the ability to find connection among many meaning-making systems, a person who operated in the fifth order of consciousness was positioned to be a strong social justice practitioner (Kegan, 1994; Kegan, Noam, & Rogers, 1982; Love & Guthrie, 1999).

Let us look once again to the example with the faculty member and the senior-level administrator. If the faculty member operated within the fifth order of the Social Maturity Model then they might have assumed that both they and the administrator had students' best interests in mind for how to teach them social justice concepts. Rather than dismissing the administrator's approach to pursue their own ideas, as might have happened in the fourth order, the faculty member might instead have searched for a way to connect with the administrator to create a solution that encompassed both methods of teaching social justice. This is not to suggest that a third or fourth order person could not take the same route as what was just described in the fifth order scenario. But the reasons why a third or fourth order person had chosen to find an integrated solution would have been different for each level of thinking. A faculty member who had a third order structure might have expressed feeling they had no choice but to talk more with the administrator, or they might have accepted the administrator's goals for their own. A faculty member who had a fourth order meaning-making structure might have decided that conversing about more options would have convinced the administrator that the faculty member's value system really should have taken priority in the matter of teaching social justice to students. A faculty member who operated a fifth order structure might have said they had chosen to discuss more options with the

administrator for the sake of furthered development for their own sense of self *and* that of the administrator and students.

The Social Maturity Model assumed that adulthood involved the third, fourth, and fifth orders of consciousness, although Kegan said there were no guarantees that adults progressed beyond the third order to the fourth one. Kegan believed even a smaller number of adults navigated the subject-object relationship to establish meaning-making structures from the fifth order. Since this dissertation study focused on faculty and staff, or those who were in their mid-20s and older, then it was appropriate to have focused this study on how to understand and apply the third, fourth, and fifth orders to white faculty and staff (Kegan, 1994; Kegan, Noam, & Rogers, 1982).

Relevance of the Social Maturity Model to this study.

Kegan's Social Maturity Model outlined the ways that people constructed meaning in their lives and how resistance narratives were overcome based on the ability of individuals to understand how they had built assumptions around the problem being faced, acted on that understanding, and then reflected on the experience (Kegan, 1994; Kegan, Noam, & Rogers, 1982; Lahey et al., 2011). This model has been a starting point for understanding the ways white faculty and staff members assigned what was meaningful in their lives, such as whether they had integrated or not integrated critical social justice into their professional work at the university. Kegan's perspective on adult learning through the third, fourth, and fifth orders of consciousness offered a way to analyze white faculty and staff development in the context of their individual learning as college educators who have operated in a historically white system.

While all three adult orders of consciousness were represented in the research sample, I used the fourth order characteristics to suggest the grouping of participants as practicing or not practicing critical social justice. Kegan (1994) believed that in order for adults to be able to meet the modern demands of life that they needed to reach the fourth order to have properly framed the problems, to have generated potential solutions, and to have acted upon them in a way that could be sustained by the person who had done the thinking, acting, and additional reflecting. One assumption I explored in the study was the idea that white faculty and staff who achieved the fourth order of consciousness or higher were better able to practice critical social justice in their work than those who were still in the third order of consciousness or were not fully transitioned into the fourth order.

In his 1994 work Kegan further elaborated on what fourth order meaning-making structures sounded like when individuals reflected on their life experiences. Specifically, Kegan listed fourth order thinking examples within the categories "in the work setting, adults as learners, psychotherapy, and partnering" (p. 302-303). A more detailed list is available in Appendix A. These examples were tangible indicators of fourth order meaning-structures that included but were not limited to:

- Be self-initiating, self-correcting, self-evaluating (rather than dependent on others to frame the problems, initiate adjustments, or determine whether things are going acceptably well).

- Be guided by our own visions at work (rather than be without a vision or captive of the authority's agenda).

- Take responsibility for what happens to us at work externally and internally (rather than see our present internal circumstances and future external possibilities as caused by someone else).

- Examine ourselves, our culture, and our milieu in order to understand how to separate what we feel from what we should feel, what we value from what we should value, and what we want from what we should want.

- Perceive our standards as based on our own experience (rather than upon the attitudes or desires of others).

- Transform our energies from manipulating the environment for support into developing greater and greater self-support.

- Learn to stand on our feet emotionally, intellectually, economically.

- Learn the psychological myths or scripts that govern our behavior and re-author them (rather than just use insight for better understanding of why the script is as it is). (p. 302-303)

An additional application of Kegan's work to this study was in my use of the subject-object relationship concept to articulate in what ways a white faculty or staff member had transitioned into or out of the fourth order as it pertained to practicing critical social justice. The subject-object relationship has given structure to the analysis I applied to process the data collected in this study (Kegan, 1994; Lahey et al., 2011).

Lastly, the Social Maturity Model was applicable to white faculty and staff in higher education because Kegan's model was developed using predominantly white, college-educated participants. While the sample with which Kegan conducted his research would have generally presented a problem from the critical approach, in this instance, the

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homogeneity of the sample made Kegan's work more applicable to my study than if he had secured a more diverse group of participants. I assumed that my focus on white faculty and staff in higher education meant I would work with participants who were more likely to be educated with graduate degrees and occupy an upper socio-economic status – similar to Kegan's participants (Kegan, 1994).

Exploring the fourth order in the college environment.

Kegan (1994) referred to the fourth order of consciousness as the time of *self-authorship*, or the time when individuals developed and acted upon their own system of personal authority that balanced their values and experience with relationships. It was the time when individuals created their own meaning and purpose in the world by having self-directed their interests for personal benefit and the benefit of others. Although Kegan's work was based extensively on participants who were predominantly white, college educated, and wealthy, Kegan did not explicitly discuss how the orders of consciousness unfolded during the college years. It was Marcia Baxter Magolda (2001, 2004) who applied the Social Maturity Model to the development of college students during the undergraduate years. Baxter Magolda conducted a 17-year longitudinal study that had 70 participants, at the age of 18 and were in their first year of college, who completed annual interviews over five years, one for each year of college and one for the year after they had graduated. Thirty-five of the original participants remained engaged in the study all the way up through the 17th year of interviews. Those participants who remained in contact for most of the length of the study were involved through the age of their mid-30s (Baxter Magolda, 2004).

Baxter Magolda's (2001, 2004) analysis of the interviews suggested that the undergraduate years were most likely to be a time for students to begin or complete their

transition into the fourth order of consciousness as they developed the capacity for self-authorship. Participating students consistently expressed themes such as the need for "listening to one's voice" and "exploring one's values, processing information gathered from the external world in prior years, envisioning a path, and proceeding down that path" (Baxter Magolda, 2001, p. 3). The issues that students worked through were worded in the context of making career choices, generating purposeful relationships, and taking steps in college to prepare for establishing families after graduation. Students began their college careers often having operated in the third order of consciousness and then having developmentally worked through the relationship-focused perspective "[of] 'how *you* know' to 'how *I* know' and in doing so began to choose their own beliefs" (p. 119) as they settled into the fourth order of self-authorship.

Fourth order transition in undergraduate years: Learning Partnerships Model.

Baxter Magolda (2001, 2004) used her longitudinal study to conceptualize a challenge and support model to guide college educators and senior administrators in promoting students' transition into the fourth order of consciousness. The Learning Partnerships Model was formed from participant responses and earlier research from Kegan (1994) that argued for the careful maintenance of a transitional environment where young adults would be provided the scaffolding they needed to be confident in making their own decisions outside of the influence of others. At the same time, the transitional environment should have prompted students to encounter resistance narratives that served as motivating factors to develop a sense of voice without being overwhelmed by the magnitude of reshaping their belief structures.

The Learning Partnerships Model (Baxter Magolda, 2001, 2004) had three educational assumptions that, when applied collectively, appropriately challenged college students to work toward the fourth order of consciousness: knowledge was complex, ambiguous, and socially constructed in a context (epistemological), an internal sense of self was central to effective participation in the social construction of knowledge (intrapersonal), and expertise or authority was shared among learners and teachers as they mutually constructed knowledge (interpersonal). Integrating these assumptions into the higher education experience was not enough to constructively encourage college students to transition out of the third order and into the fourth. The assumptions only helped to clearly define the problem for students, educators, and senior administrators. Baxter Magolda proposed the three principles of the Learning Partnerships Model as complementary support to the challenges posed by the assumptions. The three principles of the model were: validating learners as knowers, situating learning in learners' experience, and defining learning as mutually constructing knowledge.

Relevance of Learning Partnerships Model to this study.

The implications of the Learning Partnerships Model for my focus on the development of white faculty and staff as practitioners of critical social justice in higher education was three-fold. First, emphasis on navigating the fourth order of consciousness in college suggested it would be helpful for faculty and staff to employ the Learning Partnerships Model to support college student development toward self-authorship – but there was no guarantee that they had progressed out of the third order and into the fourth order. The work of Kegan (1994) and Baxter Magolda (2001, 2004) suggested that not all faculty and staff needed to have achieved the fourth order of consciousness to have engaged

students as learners and constructed knowledge together. Still, I found it reasonable to assume that *some* faculty and staff have operated at the level of self-authorship in order to have increased the likelihood of students continuing their development. Teaching faculty and staff about the Learning Partnerships Model would be fruitless without questioning how many of those college educators have themselves reached the level of self-authorship.

Second, Baxter Magolda (2001, 2004) used her longitudinal data to consider obstacles to implementing her model. Introducing and maintaining the Learning Partnerships Model across an entire campus would have likely created resistance narratives that challenged long standing institutional organization and the individual belief systems of faculty, staff, and administrators. Baxter Magolda (2001) suggested that while the majority of college educators have had no trouble accepting the first assumption of the Learning Partnerships Model, that knowledge was socially constructed, the educational efforts inside and outside of the classroom struggled to reflect the assumption that knowledge should be mutually constructed. Baxter Magolda said:

> Perhaps a more deep-seated reason for the dominance of teaching-centered pedagogy is educators' lack of trust in students' ability to learn and know. The assumption that students cannot engage in knowledge construction until they have memorized all the foundational content of the discipline suggests that learners have no relevant experience or knowledge to bring to the learning enterprise. (p. 236)

This perspective was echoed in Wildman's 2004 case study narrative on the five year process of having implemented the Learning Partnerships Model at a large public university in the eastern part of the US. As the director of the faculty and staff development center on that campus, Wildman was heavily involved in the design and implementation of the Learning

Partnerships Model. He noted that the competing messages and assumptions about student learning were hidden in policies, procedures, and organizational structures of the university. These inexplicit messages often created resistance narratives that made it difficult for faculty, staff, and administrators working on the project to debate them as helpful or hindering to the institution's mission. The following passage from Wildman (2004) articulated some of the locations of resistance where policy and individuals interacted:

> …*Old designs run deep*. Indeed, they are embodied in the classroom where knowledge is *delivered*, in the curriculum practices where requirements are *checked off*, in the space utilization policies where time is *parsed out* in small manageable chunks, in the textbooks where knowledge is carefully *scripted and decontextualized*, and even in the organizational structures where disciplines can be *isolated* and protected within their own departments. (p. 250-251)

The resistance narratives that Wildman described seemed innocent enough as general conflict, but I argue that he was in fact describing some of the "locations of dominance" that Frankenberg (1993, p. 6) had written about in her study on critical whiteness. While the Learning Partnerships Model was not created specifically for fostering critical social justice, it depicted concepts meant to validate the knowledge of all people, including commonly marginalized groups. Additionally, the concepts within this model called for the creation of equitable ways of generating knowledge and meaning in a community – yet another aspect of critical social justice. The obstacles to implementing the Learning Partnerships Model as a way to achieve self-authorship in the fourth order of consciousness was a relatively unexplored "location" of resistance narratives that I have considered in my work with white faculty and staff as critical social justice practitioners.

The third connection between Baxter Magolda's (2001, 2004) research and this study was that the assumption that not all faculty and staff have reached the fourth order of consciousness suggests that the Learning Partnerships Model was applicable to thinking about the recruitment, hiring, orientation, and professional development practices for college educators. Participants in Kegan's (1994) research yielded the original assumption that one-half to two-thirds of adults never progress beyond the third order, and this was with a sample of highly educated individuals. Baxter Magolda's (2001, 2004) research suggested no inclination for altering that estimate, either. The three assumptions and three principles of the Learning Partnerships Model were additional markers for consideration in my study for how white faculty and staff practiced critical social justice. Had the participants integrated the concepts of the Learning Partnerships Model in ways that practiced critical social justice? Had they encountered these concepts in their own development as educators?

By having applied the Learning Partnerships Model, I identified three questions that I considered when analyzing the participant interviews. First, how did white faculty and staff individually foster self-authorship in students? Second, what resistance narratives occurred at the systematic level when concepts of the Learning Partnerships Model were introduced as a way toward practicing critical social justice? Third, how did white faculty and staff continue their own development into self-authorship if they had not already done so?

Overview of Critical Theory

This section expands upon the application of critical theory and its subsets to demonstrate the conceptual framework of the study for how I understood the issue of white faculty and staff who have practiced or not practiced critical social justice in higher education. The coupling of constructivist theory with critical whiteness study has emerged

from a literary stroll through the basics of critical theory, white identity development, critical whiteness studies, and research on multiple dimensions of social and personal identities. I focused on these topics because they were a basis for understanding systematic oppression through the culture of whiteness in higher education while also having considered how other social identities interacted with whiteness. The dichotomy of privilege and oppression on an individual basis versus a systematic one has been a way to understand if and how white faculty and staff were able to function as critical social justice practitioners.

The history of critical theory originated in Greek philosophy in addition to other ideological contributors such as Immanuel Kant and Karl Marx. As its name suggests, critical theory used criticism to identify contradictions that existed within systems and structures (Leonardo, 2009). Critical theory focused on the "function of criticism and its ability to advance research on the nature of oppression and emancipation" (p. 14). Critical theory questioned how what was supported as the most valued in individuals and society was constructed by those in power, such as white faculty and staff, while the powerless were oppressed through personal and cultural dehumanization. This theory challenged the status quo by critiquing how meaning was derived in social and cultural practices (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Freire, 1970/2010; Headley, 2004; Helfand & Lea, 2004/2007; hooks, 1994; Leonardo, 2009; O'Brien, 2004/2007; Wise, 2012; Yancy, 2004), such as the values and assumptions underlying the social justice training and development of faculty and staff in higher education. The ultimate goal of critical theory was to inspire changes toward an equitable society (Paul, Graffam, & Fowler, 2005).

The critical perspective has challenged researchers to be cognizant of how our own data collection and analysis represented an act of domination over those being studied. For

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me, this meant I need to have reflected and adjusted for the power I have had in manipulating the portrayal of white faculty and staff in my research. Additionally, I assumed critical theory suggested that white faculty and staff should be challenged on the assumptions they have made about the best way to educate college students. Critical theory unveiled the idea that knowledge, such as knowledge I used as a researcher or the knowledge that white faculty and staff used to guide their educational practices, was still no more than a social construction of how to think about and act upon education (Carspecken as cited in Noblit, 2005; Clark & O'Donnell, 1999; Frankenberg, 1993; Friere, 2010; Hallam, 2004/2007; hooks, 1994).

Critical theory made the historical components of racism tangible in the structural organization of higher education in the US and within the individual acts of white faculty and staff who were expected to educate students about social justice (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007; Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Freire, 1970/2010; Hallam, 2004/2007; Helfand & Lea, 2004/2007; hooks, 1994; Hornak & Ortiz, 2004; Johnson, 2001; Jones & Abes, 2013; Leonardo, 2009; McLaren, 1999; Obear, 2013; O'Brien, 2004/2007; Ouellett, 2010a; Patton, 2011; Pope, Reynolds, & Mueller, 2004; Quaye, 2013; Renn, 2011; Reynolds & Pope, 1991; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012; Wise, 2012). White faculty and staff who have strived to be practitioners of critical social justice should still have been closely examined in the ways they interacted with the historically racist system of higher education. The next sections of my literature review explain how systematic racism has connected to individual beliefs and acts, such as those of white faculty and staff, to a maintained a system of white supremacy that knowingly dominated people of color under the guise of colorblindness (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Freire, 1970/2010; hooks, 1994; Jones & Abes, 2013; Leonardo, 2009; Obear, 2013;

O'Brien, 2004/2007; Wise, 2012; Wise, 2013; Yancy, 2004). Ultimately, this study

attempted to answer the question of whether it was possible for a white faculty or staff

member to truly have become a critical social justice practitioner or if they were granted

status as "good" white people because they were willing to talk about whiteness without

following through on lasting change to end the privilege and power of whiteness.

Argument for a critical whiteness framework.

Critical whiteness studies fall within the realm of critical theory and has specifically

analyzed whiteness by focusing on the behaviors and thoughts of whites. This area of study

was different from mainstream literature in critical theory because it brought the privileged

identity of whiteness to the center of the analysis rather than centering on marginalized

identities. In my review of critical whiteness studies, I found it being used primarily as a

reflective tool for whites to do individual work toward becoming anti-racist (e.g., Bonilla-

Silva, 2014; Clark, 1999; Clark & O'Donnell, 1999; Frankenberg, 1993; hooks, 1994;

Johnson, 2001; Leonardo, 2009; McLaren, 1999; Obear, 2013; Wise, 2012; Wise, 2013).

Reflection on whiteness has not always led to an increased understanding of it or the ability

to counteract the privilege and domination that occurred in systems such as higher education.

This was because critical whiteness studies focused on the individual, thus relying on how

each person constructed their ways of making meaning as the catalyst for changing the

domination that was caused by white supremacy. The individualism that critical whiteness

studies promoted was problematic because it looked for individual reflection to have

counteracted the large system of racism in the US that was being re-affirmed by others who

had acted to maintain racism, along with other forms of oppression. Ending racist structures

would take more than the individual reflection of whites and the hope that such reflection led

to change. That critical whiteness studies focused on individualism was itself a perpetuation

of norms based on historical ideals (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Headley, 2004; hooks, 1994;

Leonardo, 2009; Wise, 2012; Yancy, 2004) of a white-supremacist-capitalistic-patriarchy

(hooks, 1994).

In this study, I purported that critical whiteness studies could and must do more than

having fostered literary reflection – critical whiteness should have been a framework for

actively questioning and identifying the embodiment of privilege and oppression in the hands

of white faculty and staff. I used a framework of critical whiteness to inform my

methodology and method to incorporate the consideration of white privilege *and* white

supremacy so that the symptoms and causes of discrimination could be acted upon and

changed (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Freire, 1970/2010; Hallam, 2004; hooks, 1994; Leonardo,

2009; Yancy, 2004) – not just reflected upon. I did this by having connected the meaning-

making structures of white faculty and staff as practitioners of critical social justice to the

social, cultural, and political "locations" (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 6) in which white supremacy

occurred. To have changed the current locations of white domination would have required

the introduction of new elements of social, cultural, and political behaviors that could have

challenged the historical ways that whiteness operated in the US. Understanding white

faculty and staff who were or were not practicing critical social justice was a potential

avenue to challenging current locations of whiteness in higher education. As a framework to

this study, critical whiteness applied the reflective pieces of whites working toward anti-

racism and made it into a more public location where whites and people of color could have

analyzed and acted on dismantling white supremacy together. If critical whiteness remained

only an area of study, it would run the risk of remaining a whites-only topic that further

perpetuated the colorblind racism that scholars of color like Bonilla-Silva (2014), hooks (1994), Leonardo (2009), Yancy (2004) and others have worked to change. Similar to the feminist movement having needed the inclusion of men and masculinities to work toward gender equality (hooks, 2004; Roberts-Cooper, Voyles, Zee, & Manukyan, 2015), the progress of overcoming racism could be supported if whites sought the awareness and action needed to have undone whiteness as an identity and system of oppression. A critical whiteness framework challenged whites to have reflected and acted in their current role as race-based oppressors while having looked to people of color for guidance on what an anti-racist identity of whiteness should have looked like (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; hooks, 1994; Leonardo, 2004).

Four frames of colorblind racism.

What has been white supremacy in the context of higher education? Images of skin heads and the Ku Klux Klan have represented only one aspect of white supremacy and its traditional forms of racism. These extreme manifestations of racism have been on the spectrum of race-based oppression, but there have been many other forms of it. The US system of higher education supported the domination of the white-supremacist-capitalistic-patriarchy (hooks, 1994) through a subtle racism that hid its existence from whites through claims of colorblindness (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Headley, 2004; Helfand & Lea, 2004/2007; hooks, 1994; Leonardo, 2009; O'Brien, 2004/2007; Wise, 2012; Yancy, 2004). An examination of colorblindness in higher education was important to my research study because it framed the environment in which I wanted to understand how white faculty or staff operated as practitioners of critical social justice.

As a critical whiteness researcher, Bonilla-Silva (2014) described colorblindness as modern day racism that was broken down into four different types: "naturalization" "cultural racism" "minimization of racism" and "abstract liberalism" (p. 74). These types of racism were meaning-making structures that described how whites interpreted and acted upon the information they received every day about privilege and oppression. Bonilla-Silva's articulation of the four frames of colorblind racism came from two data sources. The first source was the 1997 Survey of Social Attitudes that included a convenience sample of 627 college students in which 451 of the participants were white and hailed from three different universities from different parts of the US. A ten % random sample of white students were contacted for an interview after having indicated on the survey that they were willing to participate in the additional stage of the study. The second source of Bonilla-Silva's data came from the 1998 Detroit Area Study that surveyed 270 black and white Detroit metropolitan-area residents and interviewed 84 of those participants in more depth. Of the 84 interviews, 66 were white and 17 were black.

Naturalization as racism.

"That's the way it is" (Bonilla-Silva, 2014, p. 85) has been a common statement whites used to defend colorblind racism when operating through the naturalization frame. Naturalization was further characterized by an idea of coincidence or natural tendency for racial segregation, such as whites' expressed preferences for friendly and intimate relationships with others of the same race. Racially segregated housing communities have been another example of naturalization because it assumed that living locations were based solely on the desire to live with one's "own kind" (p. 86). Naturalized racism neglected current and historical social practices of banks, realtors, and sellers that promoted

segregation. When whites talked about the normalcy of living in white neighborhoods and schools they referred to a "consequence of a white socialization process" (p. 87).

In higher education, I have witnessed naturalization in how white faculty, staff, and students explained racial segregation on their campuses. These encounters included the universities I have worked at, as well as whites with whom I have interacted during professional and student leadership conferences. Naturalization has been used in blanket statements such as "it makes sense that they would be more comfortable that way" "those are the things that mainly interest them" and "they will come and ask for help if they need it." These statements have been used by whites to explain the clustering of people of color or a lack of their presence in facets of the university. Specifically, these comments normalized why students of color selected certain majors and courses, attended certain campus events, joined certain student organizations, built relationships with certain faculty and staff, and made use of certain campus support services. By having "naturally" codified the segregation patterns of people of color in the university, white faculty, staff, and students relieved themselves of the responsibility to have more deeply questioned and acted upon their observations.

For this study, I considered how white faculty and staff who were critical social justice practitioners had interacted with the naturalization frame of racism. My assumption was that white faculty and staff who practiced critical social justice would have subjugated naturalization by having questioned the blanket statements that resulted from the frame and had acted to change them. Questions might have included: why have people of color seemed to only feel comfortable in certain situations? What had I, as a white faculty or staff member, done to have increased their choices for comfort at my institution? How have I

known what people of color were interested in at my institution? Could there have been

other factors that motivated where they dedicated their time? How did I know that they knew

how to seek out the support services they needed? Was there a reason I had not reached out

to them instead of waiting for them to come to me or my department? The line of

questioning that a critical social justice practitioner could have used to overcome

naturalization should also have incorporated an analysis of the segregation patterns of whites

at the university. I assumed that a practitioner of critical social justice would have deepened

their level of understanding and ability to have resolved oppression on their campus when

they considered naturalization from multiple angles. During this study I contemplated how

my participants had overcome or interacted with naturalization.

Cultural racism.

The cultural racism frame in Bonilla-Silva's (2014) work highlighted how whites had

denigrated cultures of color by having seen them as operating at a deficit when compared to

white culture. In this frame, white culture was set as the standard for success for all; cultural

values and behaviors that fell outside the bounds of what was normal was deemed obstacles

to people of color having achieved success. Phrases such as "if they would only try harder"

"they are looking for a handout" and "their priorities are just different than those who meet

their goals" (p. 88-89) have reflected ways that whites assumed innate cultural flaws of

people of color based on "lack of effort, loose family organization, and inappropriate values"

(p. 88). Cultural racism was a revitalized form of biological racism where people of color

were assumed to be genetically inferior and a separate species from whites (Bonilla-Silva,

2014; Leonardo, 2009). Under the frame of cultural racism, racial inequality has been

blamed on people of color because their upbringing has taught them undesirable strategies for success or resulted in a lack of motivation.

In higher education, the cultural racism frame was evident in the standards set for students to have been successful academically and socially. White cultural values of individualism (Bonilla-Silva, 2014), objectivity (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Hallam, 2004/2007; hooks, 1994), and polite classroom discourse (Hallam, 2004/2007; hooks, 1994; O'Brien, 2004/2007) have held a higher status than collectivism, subjectivity and passionate expression (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; hooks, 1994; Leonardo, 2009; O'Brien, 2004/2007). People of color may have been granted access to attend college, but this has not altered higher education's emphasis on teaching the foundations of the white-supremacist-capitalistic-patriarchy (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Hallam, 2004/2007; hooks, 1994; Leonardo, 2009; O'Brien, 2004/2007; Wise, 2012). Cultural racism on a college campus has elevated the white cultural values I have listed above and encoded them in the common language of higher education in terms such as scholarly, academic, professional, critical, and effective communication. In order to survive, faculty, staff, and students of color have been pressured to adopt white cultural norms to gain access to the illusion of academic success in exchange for having disavowed their cultural selves. For people of color, academic success as defined by whiteness was an illusion because thinking and acting more white-like could not overcome whites' supremacist beliefs that have been symptomatic of cultural racism. As whites have assumed that people of color were culturally inferior and must change in order to have become as valuable as whites, they simultaneously granted themselves the entitlement that whites were always better than people of color. On campus, this entitlement was what allowed whites to believe that faculty, staff, and students of color were there only because of

affirmative-action practices. Whites have ignored that people of color have met the same qualifications as white faculty, staff, and students to be admitted to the university in their respective roles (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; hooks, 1994).

Whites in education have touted meritocracy as the top determinant for academic success (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; hooks, 1994; Leonardo, 2009; Wise, 2012); however, entitlement from cultural racism was entwined with meritocracy in a contradictory way. The contradiction – that no matter how well people of color performed in academia they would never be valued for those accomplishments because whites who used the cultural racism frame assumed that the existence of people of color was without merit the moment they came into contact with their inferior cultures at birth. No matter how people of color changed to demonstrate their academic worthiness, whites who used the cultural racism frame remembered where people of color came from before they were "brought up" to the level of education based on white norms (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Leonardo, 2009). Consider the following example of cultural racism in the classroom that I have witnessed as an instructor, a student, and have had recounted to me by other instructors and students. When a white student receives a grade that has been lower than a student of color there were frequently expressions that the professor, whether white or a person of color, graded the student of color on an easier scale. In that moment, the white student failed to consider that a student of color received a higher grade because the student of color worked harder. The cultural racism frame allowed whites to justify the belief that white effort was equated with greater merit whenever compared against a student of color (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; hooks, 1994; Leonardo, 2009).

Cultural racism has also made an appearance in the campus conversations and plans for improved support services and retention efforts for students of color. These initiatives have represented cultural racism in a subversive way because they have used caring to hide assumed cultural inadequacies of those they have been helping. White faculty, staff and administrators have not been racist because they cared about helping students of color. It has been the *reasons* they wanted to help that has perpetuated colorblind racism on an individual basis and on a systematic one. Recall my earlier point that cultural racism in higher education pressured people of color to abandon their cultural connections in order to become more scholarly, or rather white-like, in their thinking and performance on campus (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; hooks, 1994; Leonardo, 2009). A mentor program or tutoring service geared toward improving the retention of people of color was problematic when it required students to reject their current ways of knowing academia and to adopt the white-preferred ways of building relationships and creating knowledge as the only way to have been successful (Clayton-Pederson, Parker, Smith, Moreno, & Teraguchi, 2007; Pope, Reynolds, & Mueller, 2004). Remember that, prior to starting college, the ways of meaning-making for people of color helped them achieve academically in order to have been accepted into or hired by the university. But again, white entitlement justified the assumption that the cultures of people of color has prevented them from achieving the same quality of scholarship that would have merited earning a college degree or being employed by the university unless they adopted white cultural values (Bonilla-Silva, 2014).

A mentor or tutoring program can have rejected the cultural racism frame if it has encouraged the integration of cultures of color as a way to strengthen students' connection to the university. Integration should not become one sided by pressuring people of color to

become more white-like. Integration should have combined cultures of color with white culture so that each was strengthened by the other and an entirely new form of scholarship was created. Academia has been enriched by making space for cultures of color instead of the cultural abandonment people of color have been encouraged to undertake in order to achieve white-preferred ways of success (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Clayton-Pedersen et al., 2007; hooks, 1994; Leonardo, 2009).

I considered the ways that participants handled, worked with, or worked through cultural racism. What strategies had participants used to handle the frames of racism? Had they perpetuated them or were they able to create space for multiple ways of knowing that did not provide whites an unfair advantage (Clayton-Pedersen, et al., 2007; Hallam, 2004/2007; Helfand & Lea, 2004/2007; O'Brien, 2004/2007)?

Minimization of racism.

The third frame of colorblind racism was what Bonilla-Silva (2014) referred to as minimization. In this frame, whites have defended systematic oppression with the argument that because life for people of color was not as bad as it used to be then it meant that racism had either ceased to exist or was not serious enough to influence the chances people of color had for success. Common phrases of whites using this frame has included accusing people of color of "playing the race card" or being "hypersensitive" (p. 77). Whites have used the minimization frame when they told people of color they were being overly sensitive in voicing the oppression they experience while ignoring the ways that economic, political, social, and educational systems gave "voice" to the ways whites have thought and felt about people of color as inferior to whites.

On campus, I have observed that minimization of racism was a frequent response whites have to efforts people of color made to alter higher education to have better supported and equitably integrated people of color into the institution. When whites have pushed back on people of color using minimization, it has followed a predictable line of arguing:

Because you're allowed to even enter a college classroom,

Because you don't have to sit in the back of the classroom,

Because you're not being lynched, beaten, imprisoned, sterilized, or raped,

Because you can use the same bathroom, fountain, and work out facilities as me,

Because you're allowed to look at me when you speak to me,

Because you have a multicultural center on campus,

Because...

Then you should be happy with the way things are now!

You don't have a right to be upset about...

Being asked to speak for your entire race,

Being told that you are too aggressive, angry, loud, or passionate,

Being told that you are lazy, unmotivated, or not smart enough to be in college,

Being subjected to racist jokes and then told "I didn't mean it that way"

Being questioned and criticized for why "your people" are sitting together,

Being told that you are imagining the exclusion of your culture from the courses

being taught, the staff and faculty being hired, and the traditions on campus,

Being...

And the list goes on. In its simplest form, the minimization frame has been the idea that people of color had no right to be upset, dissatisfied, or to question anything that whites or

their systems did *because* whites allowed people of color *to be*. In this meaning-making system, whites believed that as long as people of color were allowed to be alive then it was impossible for racism to still occur. If racism did occur, then it was at an insignificant level. Minimization allowed whites to deny the existence of systematic racism while claiming that instances of overt racism had a minimal impact on the lives of people of color as a group. National news media coverage of incidents such as the murder of James Byrd Jr. (Texas) and the beating of Rodney King (California) in the 1990s, as well as the more recent murders of Trayvon Martin (Florida), Michael Brown (Missouri), Eric Garner (New York), Tamir Rice (Ohio), and the sentencing of Marissa Alexander (Florida) has represented symptoms of the systematic racism in the US. The most recent US presidential election of Donald Trump has further highlighted the power of the minimization frame, not because Donald Trump's stances have been anything less than blatantly discriminatory but because national media coverage of why voters supported him has followed a theme of appreciation that he spoke bluntly. Voters have downplayed how Donald Trump's comments have negatively affected people of color and other marginalized identities, even when he verbally encouraged his supporters to respond violently to non-supporters (Jacobson & Tobias, 2017). Through minimization, whites have considered these incidents to be coincidences of violence that may or may not have been race-based; if actions were motivated by race then whites have assumed these incidents rarely happened.

Abstract liberalism as racism.

The final frame of colorblind racism that Bonilla-Silva (2014) articulated was called abstract liberalism. This frame was heavily intertwined with the previous frames because it offered an ideological basis for racism that was then defended by and mixed with the other

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frames. Abstract liberalism used concepts of political liberalism, such as equal opportunity, and economic liberalism, such as choice, to justify racially oppressive systems and to protect white privilege and supremacy. Choice was tied to individualism because choices, such as whether to integrate schools, depended on the individual deciding to do so. Likewise, equal opportunity connected to individualism by supporting the idea that no one group should receive preferential treatment over an individual. This line of thinking glossed over the group-based inequalities that occurred leading up to the moment when one equal opportunity was seemingly offered to a person of color. Whites who used the abstract liberalism frame to defend racial systems may have said phrases like "no one should be forced to integrate" (Bonilla-Silva, 2014, p. 81). This line of reasoning ignored the ways that people of color were forced to accept low quality financing, housing, education, health care, pay, and access to jobs at significantly higher rates than whites (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; hooks, 2009; Leonardo, 2009; Wise, 2012).

The abstract liberalism frame connected to my research through the tenet of individualism, which was central to achieving academic success in higher education in the US. Similar to the previous frames, I have considered how abstract liberalism was used or not used by white faculty and staff in their efforts to be critical social justice practitioners.

My ventures into critical whiteness studies have, thus far, produced a picture of systems of colorblindness and how individuals, such as white faculty and staff, may have interacted with those forms of racist oppression. Bonilla-Silva's four frames of racism described how white faculty and staff encountered systematic oppression in their work. It lacked a closer look at how whites acted upon their racial identities on a personal basis. A

model of white identity development offered more detail on the individual behaviors of whites based on the development of their racial identity.

Helms' White Identity Development Model.

Studies of critical theory opened scholarly doors to researchers who wanted to take a closer look at the influence of whiteness on the thoughts and behaviors of whites. In 1984, Helms published the White Identity Development Model that supported the cultivation of a healthy white identity through the "abandonment of racism and the development of a non-racist white identity" (Helms, 1990, p. 49). Helms' work was the most commonly referenced white identity model I encountered in the critical literature. Helms' theory offered a starting point for understanding the behaviors of white faculty and staff in my study. Likewise, I paralleled Helms' requirements for the achievement of a positive white identity to my definition of a critical social justice practitioner. For white faculty and staff to leave behind their racism required some level of awareness of social justice issues. If racial awareness found a foothold in the meaning-making structures of a white mind, then Helms' call for the creation of a "non-racist white identity" (p. 49) seemed a logical next step toward a white person advocating for social justice.

Helm's model of White Identity Development was broken down into two phases that each contained three stages. Progression through all six stages resulted in an "evolution of a positive white identity" (Helms, 1990, p. 49) that Helms argued was the desired goal for all white people; however, there was no guarantee that every white person reached the final stage. Progression into the next stage depended on the ability of the white individual to increasingly "acknowledge racism and [the] consciousness of whiteness" (p. 53). This theory raised the concern of whether white faculty and staff in higher education were functioning as

privileged individuals who were cognizant of racism in their work with students and if they were moving toward an increased awareness of their whiteness.

Contact stage.

Phase one of Helms' model was concerned with the first process of moving toward a healthy white identity – the "abandonment of racism" (Helms, 1990, p. 49). The first stage, *Contact*, occurred when a white person benefited from racism occurring at individual and systematic levels without the white person being fully aware. The Contact stage also included the first direct contact the white person had with a person of color, or at least the first contact with the idea that people of color existed. The white person was unable to recognize they had a racial identity of whiteness because it was the norm practiced within main-stream culture, policies, and procedures. Over time, the white person in the Contact stage could not help but recognize the differences in how people of color were treated in comparison to whites (Helms, 1990).

Disintegration stage.

The second stage, *Disintegration*, described the white individual as experiencing internal conflict between their personal values versus the realization that people of color were treated "immorally" by white people (Helms, 1990, p. 58). The white person in this stage further acknowledged that their desire to feel a sense of belonging with other whites meant they must treat people of color in ways that contradicted what the white person had been taught about respecting human kind. Values such as "freedom and democracy… love and compassion… dignity and respect" (p. 58) were questioned in how the white individual applied those concepts to people of color.

Reintegration stage.

The third stage of phase one, *Reintegration,* was characterized by the white person believing that people of color had earned their differential treatment because their efforts were second-class to the superior performance of white people. A person in the Reintegration stage viewed the advantages they received as justly deserved because they have worked harder than people of color. The white person's "guilt and anxiety [from previous stages] were transformed into fear and anger toward [people of color]" (Helms, 1990, p. 60).

Pseudo-Independent stage.

The fourth stage signaled the beginning of the second phase of Helms' model where the white person started to develop a non-racist white identity – *Pseudo-Independent*. In this stage, a white person questioned their previous assumptions that differences between whites and people of color resulted from white superiority. The white person identified ways that they perpetuated racism but struggled with changing their behavior. This confusion arose because although the person "no longer has a negative white identity consciousness, neither does she or he have a positive one… The person usually has no visible standards against which to compare and/or modify himself or herself" (Helms, 1990, p. 61). The Pseudo-Independent white person poured their energy into undoing racism by placing the burden of change on people of color. Often without realizing it, the white individual in this stage shifted responsibility for solving racism to people of color by setting goals for success based on white norms. The Pseudo-Independent person was unable to "recogniz[e] that such criteria might be inappropriate and/or too narrowly defined… cultural or racial differences are likely to be interpreted by using White life experiences as the standards" (p. 61). As the

white person used white norms to serve as the benchmark for non-racist solutions they were actually problematizing the cultures of marginalized racial groups (Helms, 1990).

Immersion/Emersion stage.

Next was the fifth stage of white identity development, called *Immersion/Emersion*. During this part of identity progression, a white person sought out accurate information about people of color and discarded prior assumptions of cultural dysfunction. The white person chose to be "immerse[d]" (Helms, 1990, p. 62) in narratives of white people who have realized the ways they previously ignored their role in white privilege by condoning racism. These narratives helped promote a psychological "catharsis" (p. 62) in the Immersion/Emersion individual that allowed them to purge their negative values surrounding people of color. New cognitive structures emerged within a white person in a way that was "akin to a religious rebirth" (p. 62). Consequently, a person in this stage stopped trying to change people of color to make racism disappear in exchange for have tried to get white people to alter their behaviors that supported racism (Helms, 1990).

Autonomy stage.

The final, and sixth, stage of Helms' model was referred to as *Autonomy*. A white person who progressed to the most complex level of identity development "no longer feels a need to oppress, idealize, or denigrate people on the basis of group membership… because race no longer symbolizes a threat" (Helms, 1990, p. 62). The Autonomy person was open and eager to learning about various cultures on an individual and group basis. They used their new-found information and experiences to "abandon institutional racism as well as personal racism" (p. 66). The white person adopted a non-racist identity that considered

other forms of oppression that created increasingly complex ways for racism to continue (Helms, 1990).

Relevance of Helms' White Identity Development Model to this study.

Helms' White Identity Development model described the behaviors that white people displayed alongside some internal challenges that were worked through during each stage. These descriptions were important because they helped define what I looked for in my participant pool to increase the likelihood that I interviewed individuals who were practitioners of critical social justice. Since critical social justice included awareness and advocacy, I sought participants who were described by other people as exhibiting behaviors from the last phase of Helms' model. The last phase included the three stages that Helms denoted as the process for developing a non-racist white identity – also the part of the model that I linked to advocacy for social justice issues. I did not pursue potential participants who displayed behaviors from the first phase of Helms' model since they were likely unable to have been aware of *and* advocated for issues of social justice.

As previously referenced, Helms' model mainly provided a description of individual responses of whites but provided limited detail of what cognitive structures would have created those behaviors. Multiple white people can have behaved similarly but do so for different reasons because of varied meaning-making structures (Kegan, 1994; Kegan, Noam, & Rogers, 1982; Lahey et al., 2011). The contrast of behaviors and thoughts represented between the White Identity Model and the Social Maturity Model made them a logical pairing as a way to more clearly understand how white faculty and staff worked as critical social justice practitioners.

Coupling Helms' white identity model with Kegan's work offered one roundabout view of how practitioners of critical social justice thought and acted, but it was not the only complete view. Helms' description of the final stage of white identity development, *Autonomy*, indicated an awareness of overlapping levels of oppression that connected with various forms of racism. This led me to look for other models for understanding the construction of white faculty and staff social identities that could have incorporated multiple categories.

Critical Whiteness

Critical whiteness was a subset of critical theory, and it questioned the formation of power structures that placed race in a social hierarchy of superior and inferior interactions that were socially constructed. The US racial hierarchy has placed whites at the top; critical whiteness focused on the development and practices of whiteness by having brought the experiences of white people to the forefront of what was being examined (Frankenberg, 1993; Jones & Abes, 2013; Quaye, 2013). The purpose of placing whiteness on center stage was to call out the ways that white culture was "nameless" because it was disguised as more familiar societal expectations (Frankeberg, 1993, p. 191) such as professionalism and academics in higher education.

Research conversations on critical whiteness.

In 1993, Frankenberg conducted a year-long critical study where she interviewed white women of varying ages about their understanding of how whiteness and racism were experienced and reproduced in their daily lives. Frankenberg's work defined whiteness in the US as "a location of structural advantage" "a place from which white people look at ourselves, at others, and at society" and "a set of cultural practices that are usually unmasked

and unnamed" (p. 1). She further pinpointed cultural whiteness in the context of its familiarity for the participants. Frankenberg identified that participants' demonstrated a general blindness and denial of how they perpetuated racism in their daily lives through relationships and within systematic structures surrounding concepts of community, education, housing, and work.

Frankenberg (1993) concluded that research into cultural whiteness was necessary to complement and support the work being done in the realm of critical theory where research attempts to give space for sharing the experiences of people from marginalized groups. She argued that leaving the practice of whiteness as undefined would perpetuate a dualistic view of culture and thus prevent any overlap, interaction between, or transformation of marginalized practices and dominant ones. Frankenberg also discusses the problematic benefits that cultural dualism gave white people:

> Viewing Whiteness as 'no culture' has the same double-edged effect on the question
> of identity as it has on that practice: White individuals at times view themselves as
> 'empty.' Yet at other times as the center or norm (the *real* Americans). Naming
> Whiteness and White people in this sense helps dislodge the claims of both to rightful
> dominance. (p. 234)

The dualistic nature of white people getting to choose their status as either the empty victim or the perfect standard that others should strive to resemble has allowed them to continue the reproduction of oppression of others from any vantage point.

Frankenberg (1993) went on to describe corporate culture and academia as examples of environments where white culture operates as the primary foundation for how people were expected to behave and interact within those locations. Although Frankenberg's research

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focused upon the cultural manifestations of whiteness, she also acknowledged the intricacies

of how gender and social class contributed to the experiences of the white, female

participants she interviewed who all engaged in discrimination while also being oppressed.

Participants' accounts highlighted the ways that higher education was based on the

"unmarked cultural practices" of being "White, American, and male" (p. 234).

Finally, Frankenberg (1993) cautioned future researchers about easily identifying past

examples of white domination in favor of ignoring some of the more subtle oppressive

practices because the latter was capable of inflicting just as much violence against people

from marginalized groups.

> Care must be taken not to confuse the traces of *past* subordination with the *present*
>
> subordination of other communities and their cultural practices. Engagements with
>
> 'white ethnic' heritage that either romanticize the past or evade race privilege in the
>
> present continue to 'deculturalize' and therefore 'normalize' dominant cultural
>
> practice. (p. 234-235)

Frankenberg's work argued for the value of placing whiteness at the center of research for

the purpose of naming oppressive cultural practices that would otherwise have been ignored

as non-racial and non-oppressive. Specifically, Frankenberg's discussion of cultural dualism

and the need to differentiate between past and current white practices implicated the US

higher education system as a "dominant location" of whiteness.

As a current example of dualism on a college campus, I thought of the creation of

multicultural centers that have been meant to foster inclusion and understanding between

dominant and marginalized groups (Pope, Reynolds, & Mueller, 2004). From my

professional experience I have witnessed these multicultural centers becoming safe havens

for students from marginalized groups, as they should be. Meanwhile, students, staff and faculty representing the dominant culture of whiteness have been allowed to continue operating on campus as they have always done. The dualistic nature of the multicultural center has given white faculty and staff a convenient way to set boundaries of where marginalized cultures have operated on campus (Patton, 2011; Renn, 2011) without ever threatening the academic, or white, practices of the institution that originally created the need for multicultural centers to exist. Through my study I explored the understanding that white faculty and staff had of and the ways they interacted with dualistic practices of whiteness on campus.

The other concept from Frankenberg (1993) that held practical relevance to my study was the possibility of how white faculty and staff to used past examples of white dominance, individual and systematic, as a means to have ignored, rejected, or made light of present acts of domination. Such examples were echoed in the collection of critical whiteness narrative essays edited by Clark and O'Donnell (1999) where higher education professionals were asked to explore their journeys of white understanding on an individual and systematic level. Even in my own career I have encountered white faculty and staff, and ashamedly caught myself, responding to concerns of discrimination raised by people from marginalized groups by responding with the ways that things have improved over the years as justification for why they should be okay with the current state of things. My response in these situations mirrored the earlier passages about the minimization frame of racism put forward by Bonilla-Silva (2014).

This minimization has been problematic for a couple of reasons. First, in higher education this response did not respect or support students as knowledge creators who were

capable of self-authorship. By having highlighted all the changes that have been made, my white educator colleagues and I have implied that students were not intelligent enough to be aware of or to understand the ways that discriminatory practices affected them. In this way, we ignored the Learning Partnerships Model that called for all perspectives to be allowed to contribute to the community development of knowledge and experience (Baxter Magolda, 2001, 2004). Second, referring to past changes that have been made on campus shifted the responsibility of creating an equitable environment away from white faculty and staff and onto the nameless system of policies and procedures as if whites were all really just victims of a mindless machine. I believe this kind of behavior was what Frankenberg (1993) referred to when she referenced white people getting to choose when whiteness remained invisible and nameless as an act of domination. I wanted to further explore how cultural whiteness in higher education allowed white faculty and staff to choose when white meant imposing a certain standard of performance upon students versus when white faculty and staff chose for whiteness to represent a system of which they had no control.

Multiple perspectives of critical whiteness: Not just about race.

I want to emphasize that critical whiteness has not been just about race. The literature on critical theory and critical whiteness alluded to the multidimensional nature of how race interacted with many aspects of lived experience (Clark & O'Donnell, 1999; Dill & Zambrana, 2009; Espiritu, 1994; Frankenberg, 1993; hooks, 1994; Jones & Abes, 2013; Jones & McEwen, 2000; Pope, Reynolds, & Mueller, 2004; Quaye, 2013; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). The personal narrative by white educator McLaren (1999) offered a succinct explanation of the multi-faceted aspect of critical whiteness by describing it as

having emphasized "the selective tradition of dominant discourse about race, class, gender, and sexuality [that is] hegemonically reproduced" (p. 35).

Even in conversations about class and gender, white culture was often the invisible force that drove expectations about what was deemed as the most appropriate ways to have displayed and thought about class and gender. For example, campus conversations meant to have made space to support the learning of women in academia were usually only talking about addressing the needs of white women. In one critical study, Zambrana and MacDonald (2009) interviewed 300 Mexican American women, 100 African American women, and 100 non-hispanic white women who had earned higher education degrees from various ranges and disciplines during the late 1960s to the mid-1980s. The researchers explored how the experience of Mexican American women differed from other women in college "due to ethnic, racial, and class discrimination resulting from educators' stereotypic expectations of lower ability and performance by Latino students" (p. 82). Their findings suggested that Mexican American women were more likely to not feel supported by the staff and faculty they encountered (55 %), followed by African American women (29 %), and non-hispanic white women (18 %). Mexican American and African American women reported experiencing racial discrimination in their interactions with educators and peers in addition to gender discrimination (68 % and 77 %, respectively). Most of the participants from all groups in the study believed that completing educational degrees was harder for minority women than for non-hispanic white women to do so (nearly 90 % for African American and Mexican American women and 75 % for non-hispanic white women). Based on their literature review and participant interviews, Zambrana and MacDonald concluded that the lack of support for Mexican American and African American women in higher education has

stemmed from faculty and staff having tried to address the needs of all three groups solely

from a one-dimensional understanding of the feminist perspective. "Identity, understood as a

multidimensional category rather than a unidimensional one, challenges the applicability of

the feminist model as a paradigm to understand the experiences of all women" (p. 91). When

the feminist movement began (and still present today) the paradigm pulled from the

experience of white women and lacked consideration of how the experience of being a

woman varied based on the combination of race, gender, and class status (hooks, 1994;

Zambrana & MacDonald, 2009).

In higher education, white faculty and staff presumed that the white experience was

where every person started from when considering how opportunities had been made

accessible to the campus population (Dill, 2009; Dill & Zambrana, 2009; hooks, 1994;

Zambrana & MacDonald, 2009). These hidden and nameless presumptions of white

experience as the standard for everyone suggested that white culture imposed itself upon

most, if not all areas of social identity that was experienced on an individual, group, and

systematic basis. So while I believed that the perspective of critical whiteness was necessary

in my focus on white faculty and staff, this perspective did not seek to neglect the influence

of multiple dimensions of identity and social constructions in higher education. I considered

the ways that cultural whiteness was used as a baseline for how white faculty and staff

understood their work as social justice practitioners when addressing the needs of students.

Concepts of multiple identities.

To reiterate, identity was comprised of social and personal components, but what

were those components and how had they equated to an identity? For this, I turned to the

work compiled by Deaux (1993) that built upon a literature review of identity from the fields

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of psychology and sociology, in addition to self-conducted cross-sectional and longitudinal studies that looked at the identity experiences of adults and the identities of hispanic students in higher education. Deaux suggested that past identity research over-simplified identity by separating it into social and personal aspects that operated independently of each other. Deaux called for the consideration of the interconnectedness of the social and personal aspects of identity, as well as the structure, function, and context that each layer of identity fulfilled for an individual.

Social identities were described as the "roles *or* membership categories that a person claims as representative" (Deaux, 1993, p. 6), such as being white or a parent. Jones and Abes (2013) added that social identities were more likely, but not always, to be visible to society at large and that these identity categories were sometimes be imposed by others. For instance, a person who had one black parent and one white parent may have identified as bi-racial. Or, the person may have identified as being only black because of their experience of society having identified them as black more often than as white. Examples of social identities that have not always visible to others included sexual orientation, parental status, and religion. A person's sexual orientation may not have been as easily socially categorized if a partner was not seen interacting with the person. A person may not have been acknowledged as a parent unless a child was around. Finally, a person's religious affiliation may not have been easily discernible unless the person was seen at a service or had worn clothing or other jewelry that symbolized affiliation. All of these count as examples of social identities because a person had to claim membership of a group that the community at large had determined was significant to interacting with others within society through public policy and socially acceptable behaviors.

Personal identity was described as "traits and behaviors that the person finds self-descriptive, characteristics that are typically linked to one or more of the [social] identity categories" (Deaux, 1993, p. 6). This definition referred to descriptors such as kindness, honesty, or courage that people were likely to describe as consistent personality traits that they carried through all of their interactions in life. Jones and Abes (2013) further suggested that these characteristics represented the center or core of someone's personal identity and as such could not have been easily seen by passerby on the street. Personal identity was meant to have indicated more about people on an individual basis, and not so much on a group basis, where as social identity was more likely to be applied to expectations about someone else.

Deaux (1993) cautioned that although social and personal identities could be defined separately, they were actually closely linked. "Personal identity is defined, at least in part, by group memberships, and social categories are infused with personal meaning" (p. 5). This infusion could have led two people with identical personal identity descriptors and identical social identity memberships to have behaved and talked about themselves in very different ways. Deaux suggested that these differences in behavior and conversation should have been analyzed by considering the hierarchical priorities of the identities in their meaning-making structures, what purpose or benefit was fulfilled for the individuals by identifying with these social groups, and what was the historical and present context of how both identity types interact with the environment and other groups. These three considerations have given space for individuals to articulate how experience and personal value systems supported their understanding of their own identities.

Deaux's (1993) consideration of identity through its interactions with function, structure, and context was only a basic blue print for defining how identity was constructed and maintained throughout a person's life. The interrelatedness of the individual with the group and environment suggested that a perspective of multiple dimensions was needed to explore the varying degrees to which these concepts could have interacted.

Deaux's (1993) work showed the idea that multiple dimensions extended beyond socially constructed identities of class, gender, race, and sexuality. Constructivism and critical whiteness implied that the world was a complex realm derived from personal experience, socially constructed categories, various ways of meaning-making to organize a value system, and personal traits that were not as easily visible or described by social constructions of society. These multiple dimensions combined, conflicted, set free, and constrained the sense of identity of every person (Baxter Magolda, 2001, 2004; Clark & O'Donnell, 1999; Dill & Zambrana, 2009; Frankenberg, 1993; Kegan, 1994; Quaye, 2013; Zambrana & MacDonald, 2009).

Intersectionality as Part of a Conceptual Framework

Through the work of Kegan (1994) and Baxter Magolda (2001, 2004) I have explained how the theoretical foundation of my study explored the individual development of white faculty and staff in higher education. Then, through critical whiteness I have connected individual interactions to the creation and perpetuation of oppressive white cultural practices that operated systematically. In this next section, I have woven the individual development of white faculty and staff into the socially constructed system of higher education via the structure of my conceptual framework, and by having covered more recent work completed by Jones, Abes, and McEwen for their Reconceptualized Model of

Multiple Dimensions of Identity, or RMMDI (Abes, 2009, 2012; Abes & Jones, 2004; Jones & Abes, 2013; Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007; Jones & McEwen, 2000).

Defining intersectionality.

Before going into the RMMDI in detail it has been important to explain the concept that tied together the ideas of identity, systems, and experience: intersectionality. Intersectionality was the point where layers of identity overlapped with system practices and the physical environment to manifest into a lived experience for an individual or group (Crenshaw, 1991; Dill, 2009; Dill & Zambrana, 2009; Jones & Abes, 2013; Jones & McEwen, 2000; Museus & Griffin, 2011). The earliest reference I found that used the term intersectionality was in work done by Crenshaw in 1991 through her article on violence against women of color. Similar to Zambrana and MacDonald's (2009) study on the experience of Mexican American women in college, Crenshaw (1991) believed that gender alone could not explain the rates of violence committed against women of color. By adding the dimension of racism alongside that of sexism, Crenshaw offered a more comprehensive analysis for the higher occurrence and severity of violence against women of color as compared to white women. Since then, intersectional analysis has most frequently been used by researchers to explore the lived experiences of marginalized groups because it sought to account for individual, group, and systematic interactions (Jones & Abes, 2013). A benefit of intersectionality was that it allowed for the academic world of knowledge construction, identity, and meaning-making to have been integrated into everyday living to generate practical strategies for bringing about social change (Dill & Zambrana, 2009). Such integration created campus climate conversations that sparked tension narratives, or cognitive dissonance, among faculty, staff and students. Campus conversations that discussed issues

from multiple perspectives had a greater chance for developing anti-discriminatory solutions to oppressive work (Jones & Abes, 2013).

Conceptual framework: Critical whiteness, self-authorship, critical social justice, and intersectionality.

The framework shown in Figure 1 shows how I have considered the identity of individual white faculty and staff to intersect with the systematic oppression occurring in higher education and how that overlap has manifested into lived experience of either having the agency to practice critical social justice or not. Critical whiteness has remained as the overarching perspective for how I estimated the levels of self-authorship of the white faculty and staff, the types of oppressive policy operating in higher education, and the manifestations of practicing critical social justice as lived experience of participants.

Lens of critical whiteness

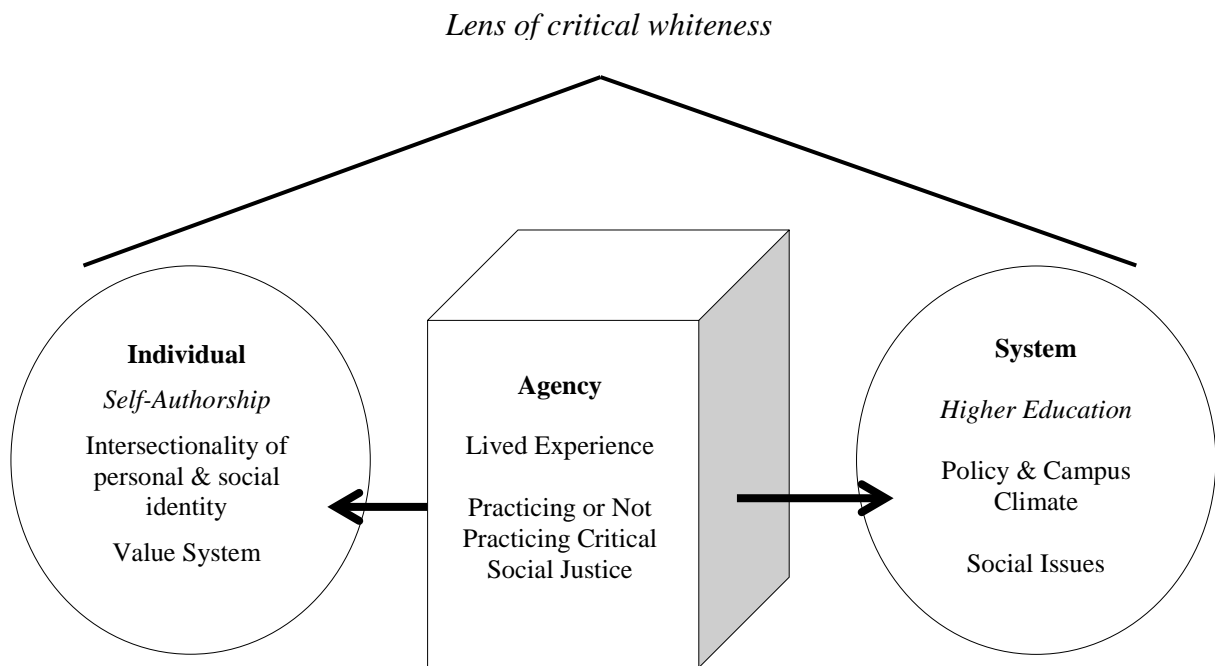| Individual	Agency	System
Self-Authorship	Lived Experience	*Higher Education*
Intersectionality of personal & social identity	Practicing or Not Practicing Critical Social Justice	Policy & Campus Climate
Value System		Social Issues

Figure 1. Conceptual framework for understanding white faculty and staff as critical social justice practitioners in higher education.

My ability to conduct this study centered on my attempt to do the intersectional analysis –

enter the RMMDI (Jones & Abes, 2013).

Intersectional analysis in the conceptual framework: RMMDI.

Jones, Abes, and McEwen explored the construction and lived experience of identity

(Abes, 2009, 2012; Abes & Jones, 2004; Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007; Jones & Abes,

2013; Jones & McEwen, 2000) in a direction that was valuable to conducting intersectional

analysis in the context of this study. In developing and refining the RMMDI, as seen in

Figure 2, they conceptualized how personal and social identities interacted with systematic

oppression and lived experiences of people from marginalized groups who were attending

colleges in the US.

The upper right hand corner of the RMMDI represented the individual's sense of self

and how they identified themselves on person and social levels. The middle image of the

RMMDI represented the meaning-making filter of outside influences that effected how

individuals understood their sense of self. The tighter the filter then the less likely the

individual was to allow outside influences to shape them, thus having made sense of self

more stable but also potentially stagnant.

The looser the filter, then the more influence external interactions had in shaping how

the individual thought about sense of self. A filter that was completely open to messaging

the sense of self would mean that the individual was their environment. The individual

would have no way of distinguishing their sense of self from the outside world. A healthy

level for the meaning-making filter was viewed as one that would have been balanced

between being opened and closed so the individual could have grown by engaging with

contextual influences without being overwhelmed by them. The external interactions were

indicated by the arrows in the bottom left of the image (Jones & Abes, 2013). Future

sections of this chapter provide more detail to the design and functioning of the RMMDI.

Self-Perception of Multiple Identity Dimensions, such as race, social class, sexual orientation, gender, religion, ability

Meaning-Making Filter
Depending on complexity of development, contextual influences are filtered to a greater or lesser extent.

Contextual Influences, such as peers, family, norms, stereotypes, sociopolitical conditions
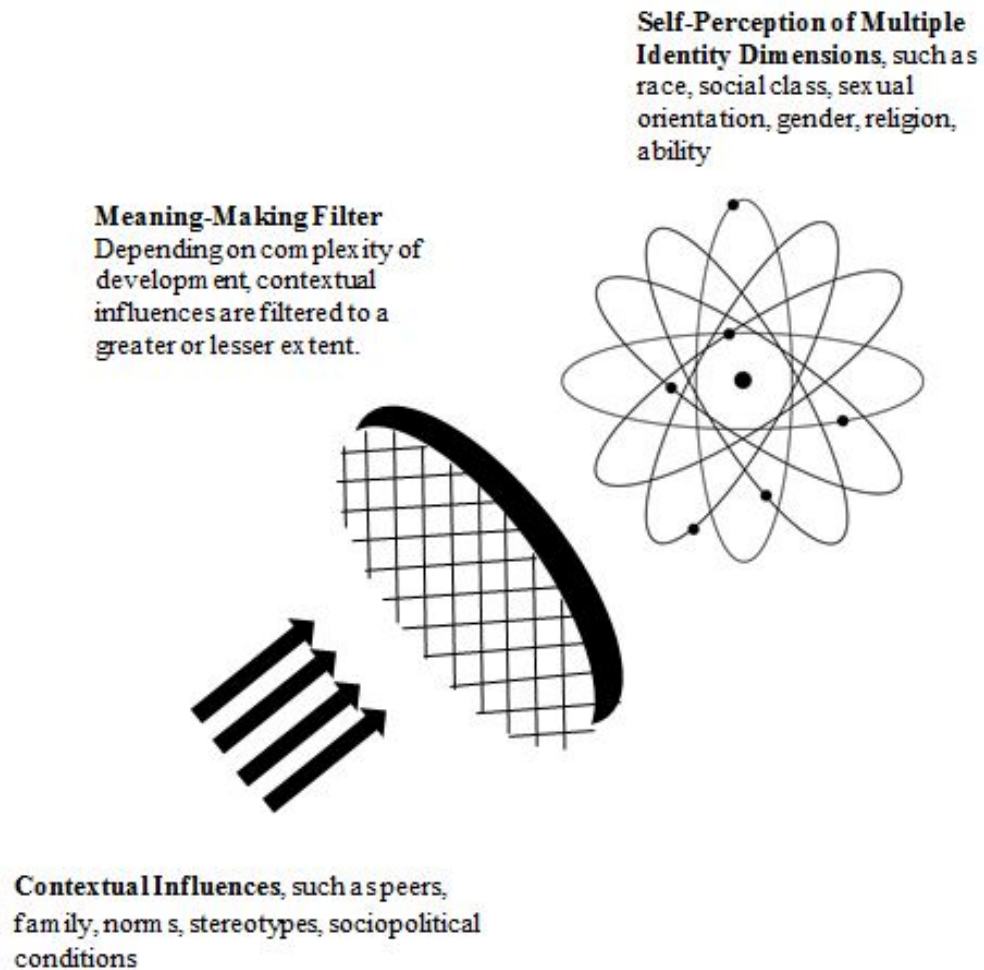
Figure 2. Reconceptualized Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity. Image from *Identity Development of College Students: Advancing Frameworks for Multiple Dimensions of Identity* by Jones & Abes, 2013, p. 105. Replicated with permission from the publisher. Copyright ©2013 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc. All rights reserved.

The looser the filter, then the more influence external interactions had in shaping how the individual thought about sense of self. A filter that was completely open to messaging the sense of self would mean that the individual was their environment. The individual would have no way of distinguishing their sense of self from the outside world. A healthy level for the meaning-making filter was viewed as one that would have been balanced between being opened and closed so the individual could have grown by engaging with contextual influences without being overwhelmed by them. The external interactions were indicated by the arrows in the bottom left of the image (Jones & Abes, 2013). Future sections of this chapter provide more detail to the design and functioning of the RMMDI.

The RMMDI was not stagnant; it was designed to reflect the shifting nature of living life. Jones and McEwen (2000) explained it as a model that was "a fluid and dynamic one, representing the ongoing construction of identities and the influence of changing contexts on the experience of identity development" (p. 408). However, the RMMDI was only a cross-section of identity at one given moment – the ever changing nature of experience and identity was only apparent when the RMMDI was used to analyze a person's identity several times over a longer period.

Exploring the four themes from early work on the RMMDI.

The earliest formation of the RMMDI, called the MMDI, came from an article that Jones' (1997) published based on her dissertation when she completed a grounded study on how 10 college women defined themselves through multiple identities associated with race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, and other dimensions. Her research questions explored how the women defined themselves, how their experiences created identity meaning for them, how they experienced being different from others, and whether there were certain

aspects of their identity that played a more primary role in helping them define themselves. Jones' initial study yielded four themes in identity construction and experience that fueled the ongoing development of the RMMDI. The themes were relative salience of identity, multiple layers of identity, braiding of gender, and contextual influences on the construction of identities.

Identity salience.

The first theme that Jones (1997) identified was the relative salience of identity. In this context, identity salience referred to how prominently an experience became valued by someone in respect to their social identity (Jones & Abes, 2013). For Jones' (1997) participants, an aspect of their identities played a larger role in their understanding of themselves, or became more salient, when they experienced feelings of difference in relation to how that particular social identity category compared to other individuals. "The experience of difference influenced each participants' sense of self and prompted identity salience. That is, when difference was keenly felt, identity was shaped" (Jones & Abes, 2013, p. 70). Each experience of difference also prompted participants to better understand and judge how the salient identity took shape in their lives in instances where the identity might have otherwise remained invisible. Identity salience emerging through the experience of being different led Jones and McEwen (2000) to conclude that oppressive systems built upon a social identity were more likely to create an environment of familiarity for people most privileged by the system. Thus, privileged individuals were less likely to experience moments of difference that could result in their privileged identity becoming more salient, or more discernible by them. For me, this raised the question – in what ways had white faculty

and staff demonstrated self-authorship as practitioners of critical social justice when they were working in an environment that privileged their race and education?

Multiple layers of identity.

The next theme that Jones (1997) identified as relevant to the construction of the RMMDI was multiple layers of identity. The participants in the study discussed strategies they used to navigate discrepancies between their environment, social policies, external identities and internal identities. Jones and Abes (2013) shared this about the participants' understanding of layers of their identities:

> Many of them were quick to point out that their outside identities were easily defined by others (for example, race, gender) and included labels and prevailing stereotypes, whereas their inside identities were more complex and hidden from view, and represented qualities of character and personality (for example "smart" "responsible" "happy" "caring"). (p. 72)

The reference to inside and outside identities was similar to the definitions that Deaux (1993) proposed for personal identity and social identity, respectively. For white faculty and staff, what were their perceptions about understanding the internal and external aspects of their social and personal identities? The understanding of the multiple layers of identity made me wonder to what extent white faculty and staff perceived they were defined by external forces in the institution? Were they concerned about how those external forces defined them? How closely did those definitions align with how they viewed themselves and the work they did surrounding critical social justice? These were some of the questions that drove my decision to use the RMMDI to conduct an intersectional analysis.

Braiding of gender.

Another theme that Jones (1997) identified in her preliminary analysis of her grounded study was the braiding of gender. All 10 participants, also women, identified gender as a prominent aspect of their identities; however, descriptions of how they understood gender were always intertwined with other aspects of their social identities. "Gender was an important identity dimension but not central in and of itself" (Jones & Abes, 2013, p. 73). The theme of braiding and gender prompted to Jones (1997) and later researchers to have created the RMMDI with the capacity for participants to acknowledge one or more aspects of their identities as being present and intertwined in all other aspects of their internal and external selves. In reference to my study, I considered if one dimension of identity would have emerged as consistently salient for white faculty and staff or if there would have been greater variation among the group?

Contextual influences.

The last theme that Jones (1997) identified that helped build the RMMDI dealt with the contextual influences on overall identity. This theme was similar to Deaux's (1993) support of viewing identity in context of the environment, other identities, history, and value systems. Jones (1997) determined that identity components were inseparable from their context, even when participants sometimes viewed an aspect of their identity that was only definable in one way because Jones observed unseen ways context was playing into participants' level of awareness. Additionally, Jones noted that:

> The dimensions of identity that were least salient to the individual were those to
> which the participant was least connected, were taken for granted, and represented

un-reflected aspects of privilege. Difference was experienced as those dimensions of

identity not privileged became more salient. (p. 74-75)

When considering privilege and non-salient aspects of identity, it was important to look at

the ways that context may have encouraged privilege to remain hidden. Likewise, context

may have increased the likelihood that differences were more noticeable and identities had

become more salient. But how, if at all, did context determine identity salience in situations

where privilege and difference were combined? What context could help make privilege

experienced by white faculty and staff come to the forefront?

Since the MMDI's initial creation from Jones' (1997) work, it has been continuously

studied (Abes, 2009; Abes, 2012; Abes & Jones, 2004; Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007;

Jones, 1997; Jones & Abes, 2013; Jones & McEwen, 2000) and reformatted to yield the

Reconceptualized Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (RMMDI) (Abes & Jones,

2004; Jones & Abes, 2013). The primary components of the model included self-perception

of the multiple layers of identity, contextual differences, and the meaning-making filter

(Jones & Abes, 2013).

Self-perception of multiple identities in the RMMDI.

The part of the RMMDI that represented self-perception of identities was the oldest

or original piece of the framework from when Jones (1997) first began exploring identity.

The multiple-layers were best understood by referring back to Deaux's (1993) definitions of

personal identity and social identity. In the RMMDI, personal identity was called the *core*

and was more likely to refer to traits like honesty or self-determination; the internal sense of

self. The core was surrounded by varying levels of salient social identities like race and

gender; the external sense of self. The self-described points of social identity moved closer

or further away from the core depending on how salient the social identity was. The core was "made up of internally generated characteristics that were important to [participants] and less susceptible to external influence" (Jones & Abes, 2013, p. 82). While this statement implied that the core remained relatively the same it was important to remember how identity salience brought social identities to the forefront of total identity conception and closer to being considered part of the core.

Identity salience opened the door for the core to be altered through the experience of difference which could have moved some identities closer to the core or farther away from the core's center. Some identities could also have occupied both positions of personal and social identity, causing a type of overlap. For example, individuals may have considered their religion to have been a personal identity that influenced all other areas of their lives. Meanwhile, experiences of their religion being either different or privileged in the realm of social identity could have caused religion to become more salient, thus more embedded in their core, or less salient and less connected to their core (Jones & Abes, 2013). This potential overlap of a privileged identity having simultaneously occupied a place of core identity and having become less salient and more removed from the core had interesting implications for how white faculty and staff experienced their whiteness and education. I have explained more after detailing the remaining parts of the RMMDI.

Contextual influence and meaning-making capacity in the RMMDI.

The contextual influence and meaning-making capacity pieces of the model were not part of the original MMDI but emerged from ongoing research (Abes, 2009; Abes, 2012; Abes & Jones, 2004; Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007; Jones & Abes, 2013; Jones & McEwen, 2000) as a necessary piece to understanding identity salience in relation to how individuals

perceived the multiple layers of their identities. By introducing context and meaning-making into the RMMDI, Jones, Abes, and McEwen pulled from the research done by Kegan (1994) and Baxter Magolda (2001, 2004) as a way to maintain "multiple layers of social identity development and [to additionally consider] multiple domains of development" (Jones & Abes, 2013, p. 97) as represented by the orders of consciousness. Specifically, the RMMDI was designed to consider the identity and meaning-making development of college students. Transitioning from the third order of consciousness into the fourth order, or self-authorship, was the underlying focus to understanding identity salience during the college years.

Jones and Abes (2013) offered this explanation for the relationship between meaning-making and contextual influences in the RMMDI:

> Contextual influences, such as peers, family, social norms, and campus climate, are drawn as arrows moving toward identity. Meaning-making capacity is drawn as a filter, similar to a screen, between context and [multiple layers of] identity. How context moves through the filter depends on the permeability of the filter, and the permeability depends on the complexity of the person's meaning-making capacity. (p. 104)

College students who were closer to achieving self-authorship would have a tighter filter for contextual, or external, influences to move through. Any contextual influence that was allowed through the filter would have been analyzed more critically and compared against the college students' internal value systems to have determined its impact on identity salience. In contrast, students who had yet to develop from having been subject to object of their relationships and surroundings would have a more permeable filter, and the contextual influences would have remained more intact as they passed from the realm of external

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influence to internal influence on identity. Or, as Jones and Abes (2013) bluntly put it "unfiltered, context *is* their identity" (p. 106). For example, students who were in the third order of consciousness could have interpreted campus messages about hetero-normativity as a belief they held because of the contextual influence – it would have passed through their meaning-making filter without being applied to their personal values or behavior. The students could have assumed they were heterosexual because they perceived that everyone else was the same. But in the fourth order of consciousness, students would have filtered, or compared the messages of hetero-normativity to their internal value systems and personal behaviors to have determined how the message shaped their identity salience (Jones & Abes, 2013). The end result might have been that a heterosexual student in the third order of consciousness was unaware that other orientations existed and the student may have failed to see the unearned privileges that heterosexuals have. Alternately, a heterosexual student in the fourth order could have considered that other experiences of sexual orientation existed and saw some of the ways that heterosexuals received privilege.

Using the RMMDI to explore identity of white faculty and staff.

In 2004, Abes and Jones conducted a constructivist study with 10 self-identified lesbian college students, who self-selected to join the study, to see how the RMMDI could be used to understand their experiences. Narratives were collected from each participant in regards to contextual influences and meaning-making capacity, in addition to asking them to fill out their self-perceived identity component of the RMMDI. While the cross-sectional study helped the researchers fine-tune their understanding of how contextual influences passed through the meaning-making capacity filter of the RMMDI, it was the follow up that

Abes conducted over the four years that followed (Jones & Abes, 2013) that had implications for my study.

Jones and Abes (2013) conducted two more interviews with eight of the 10 participants to gain a longitudinal understanding of how meaning-making development influences identity development and identity salience. Participants demonstrated a progressive movement toward more complex meaning-making systems that the RMMDI was able to represent in a helpful way. Even as the students progressed out of college, the model still provided new understanding of their development in achieving self-authorship. The participants continued to use the RMMDI to explain and describe their experiences that indicated they had higher levels of identity salience and a balanced meaning-making filter as determined by their progress toward self-authorship. This continued progression after college supported my use of the RMMDI with white faculty and staff, who had all attained some level of a college degree, meaning the RMMDI offered an understanding of their identity and meaning-making development. Why not monitor their development into later adulthood as they have continued to work in the college environment that the RMMDI was designed in?

As a result of the follow up interviews, Jones and Abes (2013) also identified a possible symbiotic relationship between contextual influence and identity. While the RMMDI only showed context influencing identity, Jones and Abes called for further data collection and analysis of individuals who had reached more complex levels of meaning-making in order to understand the ways that identity could have equally shaped context. Compared to the college students that Jones, Abes, and McEwen (2007) have studied, I assumed that white faculty and staff were more likely to have achieved a fourth order of

consciousness and would be in a better position for their identities to shape the oppressive contexts of the higher education system. However, the privilege of white faculty and staff in terms of race, education, or other identities may have complicated their progression to a higher order of consciousness or caused unforeseen expressions of identity and meaning-making development within the RMMDI that was equally worth exploring.

Applying Critical Whiteness to the RMMDI and the Subject-Object Interview

In using the RMMDI, Jones, Abes, and McEwen (Abes, 2009, 2012; Abes & Jones, 2004; Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007; Jones, 1997; Jones & Abes, 2013; Jones & McEwen, 2000) used cross-sectional and longitudinal studies, along with the collection of narrative data similar to Kegan's subject-object interviews (Lahey et al., 2011), to have explored identity development alongside the development of meaning-making structures (Baxter Magolda 2001, 2004; Kegan, 1994). But having the tools of the RMMDI and the subject-object interview were not enough to address the complexities I wanted to explore with white faculty and staff as practitioners of critical social justice in higher education. Theoretical framework was also needed in order to determine what types of a meaning-making filter should have been focused upon in the RMMDI and what types of questions should have been asked in the interviews (Jones & Abes, 2013). And so re-entered my application of critical whiteness as the lens to have viewed my entire conceptual framework. Where Figure 1 showed the exploration of the intersectionality of white faculty and staff within higher education, it was with the RMMDI and subject-object interview that I analyzed the intersectional nature of how they made meaning between the two. Critical whiteness was used as the lens through which social identity and the contextual influences of the higher education system were analyzed; critical whiteness focused the subject-object interviews.

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Chapter 3: Methodology, Methods, and Data Collection

This chapter connects constructivism and critical whiteness to explain my use of narrative interview as the methodology that informed the methods of my study. Afterwards, I have provided detail about my research site, participant selection process, interview protocol, analysis, and validity. My data collection relied on the subject-object interview (Lahey et al., 2011), the RMMDI activity (Jones & Abes, 2013) and a field journal that I maintained throughout the study. For data analysis, I used the interview scoring guidelines designed for the subject-object interview (Lahey et al., 2011). For the RMMDI data and field journal I categorized and connected analytical strategies as defined by Maxwell (2005) for coding qualitative data.

Narrative Research as Methodology

Participants in this study were asked to discuss the potentially sensitive topic of how they navigated white privilege while striving to have been critical social justice practitioners. While they used theoretical lexicon to explain some of their perspective, the essence of their meaning-making structures were shared via personal examples – storytelling. In qualitative research, storytelling was also known as a form of narrative interviewing (Creswell, 2014; Glesne, 2011; Jovchelovich & Bauer, 2007; Mattingly & Lawlor, 2000; Sandelowski, 1991), and I used a narrative approach to gather first-hand information about participants' meaning-making structures and social identities.

I chose a narrative methodology because of its emphasis on connecting stories to meaning-making structures of individuals (Mattingly & Lawlor, 2000) and social groups (Jovchelovich & Bauer, 2007; Sandelowski, 1991). Narratives have operated internally and externally, suggesting that people have engaged in a dialogue of storytelling as a way to

facilitate the creation, operation, and maintenance of their own meaning-making structures (Sandelowksi, 1991). Storytelling has served as a process to express and develop a meaning-making system (Jovchelovich & Buaer, 2007; Mattingly & Lawlor, 2000; Sandelowski, 1991) that paralleled the basic concepts of constructivism that were covered in the previous chapter. Structures have been made whole, transformed, and regulated by the act of internal narratives, or reflection on experiences (Fosnot & Perry, 2005; Piaget, 1970). Adaptation was addressed by the individual choosing which internal and external narratives to use based on the stories that had been the most viable for achieving their goals (Fosnot & Perry, 2005; Lincoln, 2005; von Glasersfeld, 2005). External storytelling, or telling a story to others, provided the avenue for the individual to conceptualize the values they assigned to their environment (von Glasersfeld, 2005). Next, the story of the constructed environment guided how individuals interacted with their surroundings and then created new internal stories to process the resistance narratives they encountered (Fosnot & Perry, 2005; Lincoln, 2005; Piaget, 1970; von Glasersfeld, 2005). Stories were for more than entertainment, they were a way for "lives to be understood, revealed and transformed *in stories* and *by the very act of storytelling*" (Sandelowski, 1991, p. 163). For instance, Kegan (1994) looked for stories to estimate what order of consciousness each of his participants had reached in the Social Maturity Model. In Kegan's interviews, participants were asked to tell about a time in recent months that they experienced one of the conflict-oriented emotions provided to them to choose from. Their storytelling allowed Kegan to consider how each participant used their meaning-making structures to explain their resistance narratives.

My purpose for using a narrative methodology was to take a closer look at the social identities and meaning-making structures of white faculty and staff as a supposition for how

those individuals experienced the social culture of being a practitioner of critical social justice. Further, narrative research sought to overcome the historically positivist "strategies that separate authors from their texts and mask the narrativity of science" (Sandelowski, 1991, p. 161). In light of the science of academic and scholarly success, for which white faculty and staff in higher education served as gatekeepers (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Dill, 2009; Dill & Zambrana, 2009; Frankenberg, 1993; hooks, 1994; Leonardo, 2009; McLaren, 1999; Zambrana & MacDonald, 2009), narratives were an appropriate path to consider in what ways the white faculty and staff participants understood their own ability to narrate the educational experiences of their work environments. In reviewing the interview transcripts I considered whether participants presumed their narratives were objective or if they could identify the bias of their own social identities in their story telling. Participants who shared their narratives as strictly objective may have been hiding white supremacist views underneath seemingly logical ways (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; hooks, 1994; Leonardo, 2009).

Personal storytelling in critical research was primarily used to bring voices of marginalized identities to the forefront of social justice conversations (Glesne, 2011; Mattingly & Lawlor, 2000; Sandelowski, 1991). Similar to my use of critical whiteness studies as a theoretical framework that operated in the reverse of traditional critical theory, so too does my study apply narrative methodology in a non-conventional way. Usually, critical narratives illuminated marginalized voices for the sake of emancipation from oppression; instead, I have attempted to draw out critical whiteness narratives as a means of identifying privileged tools of storytelling among white faculty and staff in higher education. In what ways, if any, had white faculty and staff participants used their privilege to determine which stories they told about their social identities and their work as social justice practitioners?

History and philosophy has been written by those socially in power (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Freire, 1970/2010; hooks, 1994; Leonardo, 2009). The power to write past or current events as they pertained to higher education could be controlled by white faculty and staff through their narratives. I explored if white faculty and staff participants used their privilege to choose when they were silent about their own stories to hide unflattering narratives of themselves. Did they use their privilege to share personal narratives in order to dismantle systematic oppression, and thus, destroy future opportunities for them to use that privilege because equality had been achieved? Was it possible that participants used their privilege to put forward stories that portrayed themselves as a good white person only to the extent that their support of critical social justice did not require them to give up their power? The various and unpredictable ways that my participants operated as storytellers made my use of narrative as methodology an appropriate focus for the study because it allowed them to control the original story (data) being put forward before I analyzed or guided it in another direction based on my own bias.

Narratives also provided a less stressful way for participants to talk directly about the sensitive topic of oppression from a highly privileged, white identity (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Frankenberg, 1993). According to Jovchelovitch and Bauer in 2000 "story-telling involves intentional states that alleviate, or at least make familiar, events and feelings that confront ordinary everyday life" (para 3). I used narrative interview to allow my participants, as racially privileged individuals, to talk about efforts to practice critical social justice in a format that was more comfortable to them.

Personal narratives went beyond the value of stories as the sole way to have analyzed the direct content of what was said and instead offered an alternative interpretation to the

narrative research reporting that was commonly found in the literature (Glesne, 2011;

Jovchelovich & Bauer, 2007; Mattingly & Lawlor, 2000; Maxwell, 2005; Sandelowksi,

1991). Rather than just a content analysis of interview data, narrative responses:

> Need to be rescued from efforts to standardize and scientize them and [instead] be
>
> reclaimed as occasions for storytelling. Because lives are understood as and shaped
>
> by narratives, narrative approaches to inquiry parallel the ways individuals inquire
>
> about experience and, in a sense, naturalize (or remove some of the artifice from) the
>
> research process. (Sandelowski, 1991, p. 162)

Through narrative methodology I attempted to portray a natural explanation of participants'

meaning-making structures as white faculty and staff striving toward the practice of critical

social justice. The social construction of whiteness has had real, negative consequences that

have been normalized in the US system of higher education. These narratives have tangible

repercussions, and the efforts to undo them lose power to generate new understanding and

positive change if such stories have been forced to fit into the traditional content analysis

(Mattingly & Lawlor, 2000; Sandelowski, 1991) that has bolstered the white-supremacist-

capitalistic-patriarchy (hooks, 1994). I used loosely-structured interviews to place my

participants as storytellers of their own meaning-making structures to highlight the personal

ways that white supremacy was navigated by these white faculty and staff. The two

interviews for each participant were designed with the end goal of crafting a thematic content

analysis report (Glesne, 2011; Maxwell, 2005). By first focusing on participants' narratives

as a way to learn an aspect of how they saw their social identities I was better prepared to

have taken them through the more conflict-focused second interview using Kegan's subject-

object interview method. By having a better understanding of my participants through their

own stories in the first interview I lessened the ability of my reflexivity to shape the subject-object interview in a way that misrepresented the meaning-making structures of my participants. As the researcher it was important for me to acknowledge the presence of my own narration, or reflexivity, of the participants' stories. Inevitably, I used some of my own experiences to frame the narratives of the white faculty and staff participants when I analyzed their stories. Traditional positivist methodology touted the ability of and the preference for the researcher to have remained objective (Glsene, 2001; Maxwell, 2005; Sandelowksi, 1991). Contradictory to positivism, narrative methodology required the admonishment of researcher-as-storyteller and advocated for the value of storytelling to report qualitative data (Glesne, 2011; Mattingly & Lawlor, 2000; Sandelowski, 1991).

Narrative Interview as Method

In its basic form, storytelling in a narrative interview has included a beginning, middle, ending, place in time, assigns an order of details to help the listener make better sense of them, and has the storyteller taking action (Jovchelovich & Bauer, 2007; Mattingly & Lawlor, 2000; Sandelowski, 1991). Additional indicators of a story were metaphoric descriptors that highlighted important moments of the story or dialogue between characters (Mattingly & Lawlor, 2000). These were the components of storytelling that I attempted to draw out of my participants.

I used multiple data collection methods in the form of narrative interviews to increase the likelihood of rich data to analyze (Creswell, 2014). Constructivism has acknowledged the existence of many realities and ways of deriving meaning and purpose in the world (Lincoln, 2005). As such, I used two types of narrative interviewing to explore how the multidimensional identities of my participants manifested in their higher education

environment. I conducted a subject-object interview (Lahey et al., 2011) with each participant and each participant completed a self-described assessment of their multiple dimensions of identity using the RMMDI (Jones & Abes, 2013). The interview format was a continuation of the narrative questioning that Kegan (1994) used to develop the Social Maturity Model and that Jones and Abes (2013) used to develop the RMMDI.

I kept an ongoing journal of my personal experiences of doing the study as a way to highlight my reflexivity, or storytelling, as a white college educator. This third component of narration was in an effort to lessen the opportunity of my whiteness to remain hiding, nameless (Frankenberg, 1993), throughout the process. A discussion of my journal is in chapter 5. The structure of the interviews and journal allowed for storytellers, as participants and researcher, to have offered our own content in understanding the dynamics of power and privilege in higher education and how those dynamics intersected with our value systems and social identities during the study.

Participant Logistics

Location of study.

The research site was a large, public university located in the southeastern region of the US. The university, henceforth referred to as Southeast University or SU, was a predominantly white institution that enrolled 20,000+ undergraduate and graduate students. It offered a range of bachelor's, master's, doctoral and professional degrees (SU, 2013).

I chose this site for two primary reasons. First, the campus employed a predominantly white faculty and staff, and second, the institution was in the process of implementing a diversity initiative that made the majority of the staff, faculty, and students strongly aware of the university's plan to be known as a diverse and inclusive community

(SU, 2013). These two factors were important because I required access to white faculty and staff participants who were working at an institution where they had practiced critical social justice in a variety of ways. The focus on the diversity plan at SU suggested that faculty and staff were more likely to be encouraged to be social justice practitioners in comparison to institutions without a diversity plan that were in the process of implementation. Through recruitment, hiring, policies and procedures, academic curriculum, programming, and other initiatives there was a recurring message of support for the practice of critical social justice at SU. The diversity plan made SU a promising site for locating white faculty and staff who already were, or were striving to be, critical social justice practitioners.

Snowball sampling.

I interviewed participants who exhibited traits that I believed meant they were likely to be a white faculty or staff person who practices, or strives to practice, critical social justice. This type of participant selection has been referred to as purposeful selection and was useful when gathering information on a topic that could not have been understood as well through quantitative analysis (Maxwell, 2005). Snowball sampling was useful when the topic under exploration was difficult to pre-identify in participants or was of a sensitive nature (Browne, 2005; Glesne, 2011), such as my topic of whiteness in college faculty and staff. Specifically, participants were selected through snowball sampling, a process I accomplished by communicating with a diversity officer from SU who was knowledgeable about campus diversity initiatives and any white faculty and staff who worked with these initiatives. Through snowball sampling I relied on an already existing network of a few participants as a way to gain access to more potential participants for the study (Creswell, 2014; Glesne, 2011).

Snowball sampling allowed me to focus my data collection on participants who were more likely to be social justice practitioners than if I had chosen a different method, such as random or stratified sampling. Even with snowball sampling there was no guarantee that my participants' approach to social justice issues would yield anyone I would have interpreted as a critical social justice practitioner. The overarching goal of this study was to generate a critically constructive perspective on how a white social justice practitioner looked, talked, thought, and acted within the college environment. Snowball sampling was commonly used when the potential sample size was small or difficult to access. Snowball sampling was also used when the research topic called for in-depth knowledge of each participant rather than for surface-level knowledge from many participants (Creswell, 2014; Curtis, Gesler, Smith, & Washburn, 2000; Glesne, 2011; Maxwell, 2005; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). As previously stated, I did not know how common critical social justice practitioners were among the white faculty and staff ranks. Nor had I been aware of an in-depth body of knowledge that described and defined what a white educator who practiced critical social justice looked like and thought. Without a clear vision of how to identify which white faculty or staff were practicing critical social justice I relied upon other individuals who were already embedded in the workings of the SU campus to point me in the direction of people who were most likely to meet the needs of my study.

By soliciting recommendations for participants from people within the existing social justice network I increased the likelihood that participant narratives were more believable than if I asked participants to self-identify as practitioners of critical social justice. The narratives of self-identified participants would have lacked credibility because it would have been difficult to know if the information was strictly an internal narrative a participant

created to have made themselves appear as a good person or if their responses represented

the behaviors they used to communicate their narrative externally to campus constituents. By

having the diversity office recommend possible participants I had some assurance that

participants' interview narratives were reflective of how they made meaning and behaved

when they were not engaging in a study (Curtis et al., 2000; Maxwell, 2005; Miles,

Huberman & Saldaña, 2014). There were multiple potential points of diversity initiatives I

could have used to obtain participant names. The diversity officer contact who provided

participant names to me was the second person I reached out to at the institution. The first

contact I made was the chief diversity officer on the campus; this person was hesitant to

assist because they were unsure if they could recommend enough faculty and staff who met

my criteria. I then turned to a former colleague who worked at the site location for another

opinion on what other diversity-focused office would be best to approach. Based on the

recommendation of the colleague I contacted a diversity office that dealt frequently in

campus programming and asked to speak with a diversity officer who was engaged in various

outreach with students, staff, and faculty. This contact agreed to assist me.

A disadvantage of snowball sampling was the homogeneity that resulted from

selecting participants in the same critical social justice network (Maxwell, 2005). Since all

of my participants worked on the same campus under the same diversity plan, it was not

surprising that they shared in similar experiences or referenced (usually unknowingly) each

other in their story telling. While participants shared similar experiences, the data analysis

suggested they had differing meaning-making structures. From the constructivist

perspective, homogeneity of participants' value systems was unlikely because participants

expressed doing some of the same things but provided different reasons for why they took

those actions (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007; Baxter-Magolda, 2001; Jones & Abes, 2013; Kegan, 1994).

Participant selection.

While a goal of this study was to generate a description and definition of a white faculty or staff member operating as a critical social justice practitioner, I still imposed some estimation of what I believed such a practitioner may have looked like. For this, I turned back to the definition of critical social justice from Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012). Critical social justice encompassed the knowledge of social justice issues *and* the act of advocating for and enacting change that equalized oppressive power structures. Thus, a practitioner of critical social justice would have demonstrated knowledge of the issues, advocated for change, and taken steps to have brought about those changes.

At SU, I assumed that critical social justice practitioners were visible on campus through their interactions with the office of diversity. The office of diversity provided a variety of services to the entire campus and surrounding community via a research center, seminars, training workshops, consulting, programs, initiatives, scholarships, publications, webcasts, mentoring, conferences, and campus organizations, to name a few. The office of diversity facilitated the commonly known diversity initiative of the SU campus; it was reasonable to have anticipated that critical social justice practitioners would have been known in some capacity by the staff operating the office of diversity and its services.

Through the contact I established in the office of diversity, and I acquired the names of five potential participants. From there, I contacted potential participants and requested their consent for participation in the study. See Appendix B for the protocol I used to communicate with the diversity officer; Appendix C shows what I used to contact potential

participants and when I shared the nature of the study. Appendix D shows the consent form I used for participants.

Sample size and defining participant demographics

The sample size of this study was based on the need to collect in-depth information from each participant while preventing the sample from being too homogenous, thus providing a limited amount of variable experiences in the data. I sought five faculty and five staff but ended up with four faculty and five staff for a total of nine participants. I continued my efforts to recruit a tenth participant all the way through my second visit to the campus when I conducted the last second interviews, but I was unable to secure an additional participant. There was not sufficient reason to interview a long list of participants because the purpose of this study was to formulate an introduction to understanding the meaning-making structures of white faculty and staff as opposed to producing a focused, step-by-step developmental model. Without a clearer picture of what a white faculty and staff member who practiced critical social justice might have looked like, it was an inefficient use of time to interview as many participants as I could recruit. Jones and Abes (2004) took a similar approach when they conducted narrative interviews with 10 lesbian college students because it allowed them to dedicate quality attention to the collection and processing of the complex stories they gathered. The original 10 participants gave them a starting point to develop a more concise research design to handle a greater number of participants so they could begin to test the assumptions of their model. There were other studies that have used 10 or fewer participants in narrative interviews to understand meaning-making structures and multiple dimensions of identity. A researcher, Wolgemuth, conducted a single-participant narrative inquiry on identity concepts of masculinity and heterosexuality (Wolgemuth & Donohue,

2006). Another study published in 2014 by Calhoun and Taub used narrative interviewing with 22 male staff members in student affairs. In their study, Calhoun and Taub sought to identify connections between participants' identities as men and their experiences within student affairs. Similar to these studies, the narratives I gathered were better understood through smaller sample sizes that allowed me to consider participant meaning-making structures at a deeper level as opposed to surface-level understanding that could have resulted from processing too many participants.

Pursuing a split between faculty and staff participants was warranted by the cultural and organizational differences in how educators from these two groups have traditionally operated in the university system. Although faculty and staff groups have both taken part in the education of students and the operation of the institution, the experiences and academic paths they have traveled could have been noticeably different. While there were exceptions, faculty were frequently represented in the literature as educating formally in the classroom and staff were often presented as educating informally outside of the classroom (Ahren, 2008; Arcelus, 2008; Frost, Strom, Downey, Schultz, & Holland, 2010; Keeling, 2004, 2006; Magolda, 2005; Pace, Blumerich & Merkle, 2006; Procopio, 2010). My review of the literature on faculty-staff dynamics and my experience working in higher education led me to assume that these two groups were likely to have practiced critical social justice in different ways. Without a sampling of faculty and staff participants I would not have been able to draw further conclusions about this assumption of cultural differences having possibly shaped the way faculty and staff practiced critical social justice.

Accreditation standards have encouraged educators in the college system to have earned at least a master's degree (Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2013;

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New England Association of Schools and Colleges, 2011; North Central Association: Higher Learning Commission, 2013; Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, 2010; Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, 2011; Western Association of Schools and Colleges, 2012). The expectation in the accreditation literature referred directly to teaching and administrative faculty; however, there were seminal works by the two largest US student affairs organizations, ACPA and NASPA, which successfully argued for the consideration of student affairs staff as educators alongside faculty. These foundational documents included *Learning Reconsidered* (Keeling, 2004), *Learning Reconsidered 2* (Keeling, 2006), and the *Student Learning Imperative* (ACPA, 1996) – all of which made the philosophical and practical argument for student affairs staff to operate as educators who have guided student learning outside of formal classrooms. My support of staff as educational partners to faculty has been grounded in my work as a student affairs staff member and my desire to see purpose in my work, but my perspective has also come from observing how staff members provided students with their expertise in managing personal skills that connected to their academic, social, and psychological well-being.

I focused my sampling on the academic affairs and students affairs divisions of the university, as opposed to business affairs, because I was interested in participants who had consistent weekly interaction with students. White faculty and staff who did not have regular contact with students were not a focus in this study because their impact on education was more likely to be behind the scenes. My priority was to understand, first, how white faculty and staff acted as critical social justice practitioners in relation to the direct education of students.

Overview of participants in the study

Through snowball sampling, I recruited participants to engage in a subject-object interview and an RMMDI activity. The subject-object interview and the RMMDI activity each lasted 45-75 minutes, and they were conducted over the course of two separate meetings with all but one participant. For this one participant I conducted both interviews back-to-back over 90 minutes because of a schedule change. I opted to fit both interviews into the one meeting I was granted by the participant rather than completely lose the participant in my study.

My contact from the diversity office recommended five white faculty and staff members who they believed practiced critical social justice. Upon contacting those recommended white faculty and staff to request their participation in my study (of which four of the five consented), I then asked those individuals if they knew of other white faculty and staff whom they perceived as critical social justice practitioners. The second round of recruitment yielded eight more potential participants, of which five agreed to participate, thus bringing the total number of participants to nine.

Within the nine participants the following demographics were represented: there were four faculty and five staff; participants had worked at SU for anywhere from one to 30+ years; ages of participants ranged from the mid-twenties to the early-seventies; the faculty group was older with an age range of early forties to the early seventies as compared to the younger staff group with an age range of mid-twenties to early thirties; all four faculty had earned a doctoral degree and all five staff had earned a master's degree.

The specific demographic breakdown of the participants was as follows (all participants have been given a pseudonym here and throughout the research reported;

identifying details in interview excerpts were altered to provide greater protection for the identity of participants): 1) Anne was a woman in her early 30s, had her master's degree in leadership development, and had worked at SU as a staff member for six years; 2) Bruce was a man in his mid-20s, had his master's degree in counseling, and had worked at SU as a staff member for almost two years; 3) Charlotte was a woman in her early 30s, had her master's degree in student affairs, and had worked at SU as a staff member for six years; 4) Chris was a man in his early 40s, had his doctorate in one of the STEM fields, and had worked at SU as a faculty member for more than 15 years; 5) Collin was a man in his early 30s, had his master's degree in student affairs, and had worked at SU as a staff member for over one year; 6) Helen was a woman in her early 70s, had her doctorate in the liberal arts, and had worked at SU as a faculty member for over 10 years; 7) John was a man in his mid-60s, had his doctorate in the social sciences, and had worked at SU as a faculty member for over 30 years; 8) Karmen was a woman in her early 30s, had her master's degree in counseling, and had worked at SU as a staff member for almost two years; and 9) Tammy was a woman in her early 40s, had her doctorate in one of the STEM fields, and had worked at SU as a faculty member for over 10 years.

Ethical Considerations and Protections

Potential participants were told they had been identified by other campus constituents as a white faculty or staff member who demonstrated they were knowledgeable about social justice issues and supported social justice through their work on campus. Potential participants were not told if they had been nominated by the diversity office or other participants.

The participant consent form, found in Appendix D, was sent to participants electronically in advance of the first interview. When a participant met me at the first interview, I briefly reviewed the consent form before I asked the participant to sign to indicate their consent. Participants were given a paper copy of the consent form at the start of the first interview.

Participant information was kept confidential throughout the study. The research team was aware of what individual participants said but the write-up of the analysis, findings, and discussion was stripped of obvious identifying information. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym in how they were referenced in the transcripts and in the write-up. Specific references to people, locations, or events were changed into more generic terms to protect the identities of those referenced while also retaining the general meaning of the participants' comments.

Participants were reminded before and after each interview that they could cease participation in the study or refuse to answer any question at any time. Further, I encouraged participants to contact me if they wanted to withdraw any statements they had made. Only one participant (Anne) chose not to answer a question during the second interview. I moved on to another topic during that interview. At the end of the interview I processed more with the participant about how results would be reported with a pseudonym, as a grouping, or with generic terms substituted for identifying information. I let the participant know that I could strike any comment from the transcript; the participant did not request that I do so. No participants requested that any information discussed in an interview be rescinded.

Data Collection and Analysis

Demographic information, found in appendix E, was collected prior to interviewing participants. The RMMDI activity was conducted in the first interview and the subject-object interview was conducted in the second meeting; interviews occurred during February and March in 2016. I selected the RMMDI activity for the first interaction to allow participants to have more control over information they shared about themselves and to put them at greater ease during the study to provide more honest narratives. The RMMDI activity was a way for participants to warm-up in articulating their identities and to begin thinking about social justice stories in greater detail in preparation for the subject-object interview. Lastly, the subject-object interview was more appropriate for a second meeting when rapport had already begun to form between the participant and me as the interviewer. Rapport was important because the interview asked for details about tension and conflict – all in relation to a topic that was already difficult to discuss for some participants.

The original plan was to have two weeks between the first and second interview with each participant. However, when I visited SU for the first round of interviews I had confirmed only six participants: Anne, Charlotte, Chris, Helen, John, and Tammy. The interviews with Bruce and Karmen were conducted over two consecutive days when I made my second visit to the campus to complete the second interviews with the previously listed five participants. The ninth participant, Collin, completed both interviews back-to-back on the same day.

Throughout the study, I made note of observations, ideas, and reflections in my field journal. Reflection in the journal took place immediately before and after most of the interviews and continued in the months during transcription of participant interviews and the

analysis of those transcripts. This analysis of data on the basis of individual participants and collectively at the end of the study allowed me to consider the different ways that my participants and I constructed meaning, via storytelling, around the topic of practicing critical social justice in higher education (Glesne, 2011; Maxwell, 2005).

Subject-object interview.

My use of the subject-object interview was based on the guide created by Lahey et al. (2011) that emerged from Kegan's efforts in 1982 and 1994 to theorize meaning-making development. The process for the subject-object interview continued to be honed through additional research studies. The manual was written after having completed more than 200 subject-object interviews with a variety of participants from studies that extended outside of Kegan's original work. According to Kegan and Lahey in their most recent book in 2016:

> The subject-object interview has been used all over the world, across all sectors, over the past thirty years. It discriminates developmental movement between, and within, the levels of mental complexity with a high degree of interrater reliability. (p. 289)

The subject-object interview provided a basis for understanding how participants thought about their thinking related to social justice advocacy at work. The guide outlined the script for preparing for the interview, conducting the interview, and analyzing the interview, as seen in appendices F, G, and H. Questions in the interview asked participants to explain their decisions and thought process surrounding different stories of tension, or conflict, that participants experienced in relation to their internal value system and their relationships with others.

My use of the subject-object interview required me to prepare for how to interact with participants and how to analyze the interview material consistently and effectively. I

conducted practice interviews with three research assistants; this helped me hone my interview technique. The subject-object interview manual (Lahey et al., 2011) stipulated that interview evaluation sheets should be scored by two interpreters to be compared against one another for inter-rater reliability. In 1983, Goodman tested the inter-rater reliability of the subject-object interview method by having two reviewers score 27 interviews soon after the interviews had been completed. Goodman found there was complete agreement between the two scores 67 % of the time and that the scores were within one-fifth of the same score 82 % of the time (as cited in Lahey et al., 2011).

For this study, the second rater was a faculty member who was familiar with Kegan's Social Maturity Model and learned how to score the subject-object interview specifically for this study. The second rater and I consulted over the phone and via e-mail communication several times prior to and after the interview process with participants. The second rater and I consulted on the scoring of our first participant transcript to ensure we were approaching the scoring process similarly. After scoring the first participant transcript, the second rater and I did not consult with each other again until after we had both scored all of the subject-object interview transcripts. During the initial comparison of scores the second rater and I agreed on three out of the nine participants and were within one scoring demarcation of each other on three more of the nine participants. The remaining three participants were scored within a range of two to four demarcations of each other. The discrepancy of scoring on six of the nine participants was the result of the raters translating their notes into a tangible score using a different threshold. After referring back to the subject-object interview manual further, the raters identified how one of the raters was incorrectly translating their notes into a

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final score. Upon more discussion the second rater and I came to unanimous agreement on the scoring of all nine participants.

RMMDI activity.

The RMMDI activity involved explaining the concepts of multiple dimensions of identity to participants before having asked them, individually, to indicate their own identities on the pre-made diagram depicting core traits and social memberships as shown in appendices I and J. Participants were asked to explain why they drew their identity snapshots in the manner they did and if there were specific experiences that prompted them toward or away from certain depictions of their multiple dimensions of identity (Jones & Abes, 2013). The application of the rest of the RMMDI, specifically the meaning-making filter and the contextual influences occurred during the analysis where I estimated their identity salience based on participant explanations of why they indicated their identity dimensions in such a way.

Further analysis of the RMMDI activity was done through what Maxwell (2005) referred to as categorizing and connecting analytical strategies. Categorizing, or coding the data, was a way of looking for patterns that could be broken down and arranged into various themes that aided in the development of a conceptual framework that surrounded the issue being explored. Some of the themes I looked for, alongside any others that emerged from the data, included principles of critical social justice (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012) and the Learning Partnerships Model (Baxter Magolda, 2001, 2004). My thematic analysis also considered the concepts of constructivism and narrative story. Essentially, I reviewed the data to see how the information followed patterns of meaning-making structures and story-making.

Whereas categorizing as an analytical strategy breaks down data into smaller pieces, connecting strategies to look for contextual connections between the data was also necessary (Maxwell, 2005). During analysis I considered the connections between the subject-object interview and the RMMDI activity of the participants as a means of exploring how the level of self-authorship of participants, or any other level they reached within Kegan's Social Maturity Model, intersected with participants' understanding of their multiple dimensions of identity in the higher education setting.

Field journal.

I maintained a journal throughout the process of the study to collect my thoughts and feelings about the project. These writings were reviewed continuously during the study alongside the analysis I did of the subject-object interviews and the RMMDI activities. My goal was to identify ways that my own bias as a white staff member in higher education influenced the stories I constructed about white faculty and staff as practitioners of critical social justice. Just as I sought to bring issues of white culture to the forefront of how white faculty and staff worked in higher education I also worked to make visible my own manifestations of privilege as a white person and as a researcher. The analysis of my journal was similar to the categorizing and connecting of strategies that I used while analyzing the interview transcripts of participants (Maxwell, 2005).

Trustworthiness of data.

In qualitative research it has been problematic to put forward the idea of validity as truth because the topic under scrutiny was based on social constructs (Glesne, 2011). There was no clear definition of what it meant to be a white faculty or staff member who practiced critical social justice. Whiteness and social justice concepts were constantly shifting as they

were altered and internalized by the meaning-making structures of the white faculty and staff interacting with those concepts. Instead, I addressed validity through the idea of trustworthiness, as in how much others can believe that what my participants and I shared was an accurate representation of our experience as we understood and made meaning of it. Some validity was lost the moment that participants and I recounted our narratives because written and auditory tales could never fully recreate the experiences that were shared. However, I worked to maintain a high level of trustworthiness through triangulation of data, negative case analysis and clarification of researcher bias (Glesne, 2011; Maxwell, 2005).

Triangulation of data was a means of using more than one interaction to collect data from participants and to consider more than one theoretical perspective in analyzing the data (Glesne, 2011; Maxwell, 2005). My use of the subject-object interview and the RMMDI activity offered two distinct ways of collecting data from my participants. Further, my use of narrative methodology and method was designed to build rapport with participants so they felt more comfortable sharing how they understood their social justice work. My theoretical framework also provided a varied perspective through the Social Maturity Model, the Learning Partnerships Model, white identity development, and the RMMDI. These theories and models assisted me in examining data from multiple angles, and thus, presumably, yielded a fairer representation of the collected narratives.

For negative case analysis I reviewed the data for narratives that contradicted themes I found in the analysis (Glesne, 2011; Maxwell, 2005). As the over-arching storyteller of my research findings, it was imperative for me to share narratives that helped me define white faculty and staff as social justice practitioners *and* to share those narratives that confused the image I constructed. These counter-narratives were equally beneficial to my research goals

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because of the long term outcomes that came from carefully sifting through how my participants made sense of practicing critical social justice rather than rushing to a conclusion that would misrepresent what was happening with their meaning-making structures.

Clarification of researcher bias meant I actively reflected upon my reflexivity as I proceeded through the study (Glesne, 2011; Maxwell, 2005). I started this process through the epilogue of my dissertation and continued to reflect and test my assumptions in my field journal. The final write up of my dissertation includes an analysis of my field journal in addition to the themes I pulled from participants' narratives.

Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

I collected the interview data and thematically analyzed it across four categories based on the concepts explored in Chapter 2: the Social Maturity Model, the RMMDI, the frames of colorblind racism, and the Learning Partnerships Model. I have provided reminders for the ideas surrounding each category when it was focused upon in the analysis to assist readers in processing the information. The Social Maturity Model was discussed before the other primary levels of analysis because I found that considering participants' placement within the model helped me better understand the themes in the other categories and the groupings of how participants exhibited certain themes.

Key Components of the Social Maturity Model

Kegan's (1994) Social Maturity Model provided five levels, called orders of consciousness, to describe the cognitive meaning-making structures of people that spanned from birth until death. The last three orders of consciousness were relevant to the analysis because of their presence in adulthood, of which all nine participants were adults.

As a reminder, the third order of consciousness was characterized by a self-awareness of basic personal values and desires that can have been weighed against the needs of others when there was an already existing relationship. The third order individual may have chosen to put the needs of others first while believing there was no other choice when the person was subject to others' needs (Kegan, Noam, & Rogers, 1982).

The fourth order of consciousness was identified when a person had begun prioritizing values, or as Love and Guthrie (1999) put it, constructing "values *about* values [that] provide a means for choosing among values when they conflict" (p. 72). The prioritization of values allows the fourth order adult to self-regulate their meaning-making

system, thus allowing them to cognitively grow beyond the stalemate of values and shared realities they were subject to during the third order (Fosnot & Perry, 2005; Kegan, 1994; Love & Guthrie, 1999).

The fifth order was characterized by the awareness of multiple systems operating simultaneously and often in naturally contradictory ways. Fifth order individuals were comfortable with positioning themselves between both ends of the spectrum. They accepted natural contradictions were going to occur. The dichotomy of the spectrum had not caused the person's thinking to collapse because the fifth order adult instead focused on analyzing the relationship that tied both options together in a contradictory way (Kegan, 1994; Kegan, Noam, & Rogers, 1982; Love & Guthrie, 1999).

Finally, transition between each order of consciousness was gradual and unique to the reflection and experience of each person. Each order had a cognitive challenge that our meaning-making structures had adapted to in order to develop into the next order. Kegan referred to the transition between orders of consciousness as the subject-object relationship and designated the challenge of each order as that which we had been subject to, while overcoming a challenge of each order indicated that to which we were object. When we were subject to interactions in our environment we were unable to see the system that governed the cause of our tension; the cause, let alone an alternative solution, was invisible to us. To be subject meant we could not have reflected upon the situation as something we controlled. We had assigned responsibility for our feelings and behaviors to external influences and were unable to see that those feelings and behaviors were a result of our meaning-making structures (i.e. the way we process our experience). Development through each subject-object relationship included three areas: having an internal belief about the environment,

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choosing to act on that belief in the environment, and re-evaluating the original belief to determine if the belief (and its resulting action) should be maintained or altered based on thinking about the experience. The subject-object relationship was not just concerned with individual beliefs or actions but with how those beliefs and actions related to each other in supporting a person in reaching a goal (Kegan, 1994; Kegan, Noam, & Rogers, 1982; Lahey et al., 2011).

Findings and Analysis with the Social Maturity Model Lens

The subject-object interview conducted with the participants was only a snapshot of how they were thinking at the time. Meaning-making structures were in flux as new interactions with the environment tested current cognitive structures or influenced the building of new ones even as participants were interviewed. Distinguishing between the transitions of each order of consciousness was not exact; however, the manual on conducting subject-object interviews provided guidance for indicating the nuances of the "disequilibrium" (Lahey et al., 2011, p. 26) when participants evinced more than one order of consciousness.

   Scoring the subject-object interview.

To illustrate the scoring options for the interviews, the letters "X" and "Y" will stand in for the numbered stages with X indicating a less developed order of consciousness and Y indicating a more developed order of consciousness. A score with one number meant the participant shared evidence of only one type of meaning-making structure throughout the interview and was thought to be in cognitive "equilibrium" (Lahey et al., 2011, p. 26) as indicated with just an X or just a Y score. A participant who seemed in transition between two orders of consciousness with "the older structure being transformed and newer structure

just emerging – [were] designated X/Y or Y/X depending upon which structure seem[ed] to be ruling" (p. 26). For example, a score of 3/4 meant that 3 was ruling how the participant's thoughts were organized; a score of 4/3 meant that 4 was ruling. In a split score, the X/Y or Y/X meant that both types of orders of consciousness organized how the participant thought about their interactions with their environment (Lahey et al., 2011).

The X/Y or Y/X scores represented a general half-way point between two orders of consciousness, but participants also shared meaning-making patterns that represented disequilibrium that was not as organized as the structures of two orders operating at once. The subject-object interview scoring provided a further distinction between "positions in which only one structure was organizing experience but either signs of the new structure's emergence [were] present X(Y) or vestiges of the old structure remain Y(X)" (Lahey et al., 2011, p. 26). A score of X(Y) or Y(X) meant the structure of the first order listed was responsible for organizing how the person thought about their experience and agency while only remnants or hints of the structure of the second order listed was operating in a weakened state. From least to most developmentally complex the scores were ordered as "X, X(Y), X/Y, Y/X, Y(X), Y" (Lahey et al., 2011, p. 26). I scored participants in this study within the third, fourth, and fifth orders; the demarcation of possible scores, from least developed to most developed, were:

"3, 3(4), 3/4, 4/3, 4(3)

4, 4(5), 4/5, 5/4, 5(4), 5" (Lahey, et al., 2011, p. 27).

The interviews were scored using a summary of each type of meaning-making structure when the participant exhibited that structure three or more times. For example, a score of 4/3 meant the participant made at least three statements at different points of the interview that

represented a third order structure (indicated by the 3) and at least three statements that represented a fourth order structure (indicated by the 4) (Lahey et al., 2011).

There was a possibility that a meaning-making structure presented in a participant's cognition was not referenced during an interview or was referenced minimally; however, the second rater and I could not score a participant on what we thought they did not get a chance to say in the interview. We have only scored what the participant referenced multiple times during the conversation and trusted that the variety of topics covered in the interview provided us a broad enough view of how the participant's meaning-making structures were consistently organized at the time. Since the meaning-making structure operated continuously within a person, evidence of the same level of development was assumed to manifest in a participant regardless of the topic being discussed (Kegan, 1982; Kegan, 1994; Lahey et al., 2011).

Once the presence of an order of consciousness was identified at least three times in the transcript, the second rater and I then moved our analysis into looking for evidence that the participant was or was not exhibiting the next level of developmental thinking. If there was no evidence, or not enough evidence, to support the participant having reached a higher level of thinking then the previous score for which there was evidence was assigned to the participant. Generally, the order of consciousness was easiest to identify based on what participants could not do (what they were subject to) rather than what they could do (what they were object to).

Bruce: 3(4).

The subject-object interview score for Bruce was a 3(4), indicating his experiences were organized using third order thinking while elements of fourth order structures were just

beginning to emerge. Bruce demonstrated development at least at a third order understanding because he consistently weighed his personal values and needs against those of others and was able to put the needs of others before his own. Third order thinking was seen in the following excerpt when Bruce reflected on how he should work on social justice issues after colleagues of color had indirectly questioned his dedication to such causes:

> A few folks said to me directly afterwards that "Because you weren't [at the student protest] and you do a lot of things for social justice for the department that some people are questioning if you are fake." And so with that I felt the guilt and anger piece (*in reference to guilt and anger written on the index cards for the subject-object interview*). The guilt was why did I not know to be there?... Is all the work that I've done undone by one moment of me making a mistake and then I felt some of that, like – I think anger and guilt, once again, comes with a lot of the whiteness piece, I'm very upset that I'm being called into question right now when I feel like I've done a lot. So, was it self-righteous, yeah, but I was very angry that peers didn't tell this to me directly but they were still critiquing about whether or not I was there based on my presence in that space…. I'm trying to continue to do [social justice] work but do it more in a way… I don't want to say humble, but doing it in a more constructive way where I work with people as opposed to van-guarding an idea and helping people hop on board.

Bruce acknowledged that his views on doing social justice work were perceived differently by his colleagues and had accepted that in taking future action he wanted to consider how other people would think and feel about his efforts. In that moment and others in his interview, Bruce showed he was object to, or able to take responsibility for, how emotions

guided his actions. Bruce identified the discomfort of his or others' feelings, and he made the decision to prioritize the value of social justice advocacy above the value of avoiding psychological discomfort by working "with people" instead of only "helping people hop on board." Bruce further demonstrated his ability to hear other points of view beyond his own when he talked about how a student's critique of a men's group on campus made him question his efforts with another men's group:

> [The student] was saying that it's toxic for men to talk about ways to become better men and healthy masculinity because healthy masculinity's a lie and there's no such thing as that, which that's a valid point. And she said "Yeah, any kind of male-only group is inherently problematic because it just reinforces patriarchal norms and that men won't be able to fix masculinity, only females can help" like females are needed in those spaces to help dismantle that, and I think I was sad because I [work with another group of men] and so in that moment I was like, *man,* am I making it worse? And it wasn't anger, I wasn't mad at her for saying that, but I felt like, I was intensely bummed out that I had this idea of myself doing really good and important work in trying to challenge the folks in that space, but in reality then I was like wait – am I just making the problem worse by reinforcing that men can fix men and we have the agency to do that, we don't need females to do that?... So I think since that comment I'm now being more critical of how do I find more, not to say scathing, but more critiques of patriarchy by women? How do I be aware that I am missing that female perspective?... I think I've move past sad because that was the initial thing and I now understand [the student] has a really good point.

Bruce expressed disappointment when the student pointed out to him that his approach to the men's group may not have been as productive as Bruce thought, but he was primarily concerned with incorporating the student's perspective into how he moved forward (indicates at least third order), even if he was unsure of how to do so. Again, this example highlighted how Bruce understood how his emotional response to the student's critique caused him to reconsider his own views (object to how his emotions motivated him to think or respond).

Bruce's consideration of others' emotions and opinions also explained his reasons for not moving forward on his good intentions, a trait associated with third order thinking because it meant that others determined Bruce's reality rather than Bruce choosing his reality from an internally generated set of values about his experiences (Kegan, 1994; Lahey et al., 2011). Bruce made several references to this concept – allowing his feelings and actions to be determined by what others wanted, including halfway through the interview when Bruce stated "I define my self-worth on how other people define it, which is a problem."

When I asked Bruce to describe his interactions with the colleagues who questioned his social justice work since the incident had happened several months before, he replied:

> I don't think I've interacted with them much, and some of that comes from me being
> very self-conscious and being very closed – and not wanting to – trying to find that
> balance of how – to – why – balance my own self esteem… I talk less confidently
> about things or I try to make myself seem smaller when interacting with them so I
> don't come across as arrogant or pompous… Generally in dealing with women of
> color I try to make myself smaller in that space, but then I ask myself is that me
> trying to placate them or am I being condescending by assuming that I need to do
> that? I don't know. It hasn't directly changed my relationship but it does change how

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I view myself in that space, and it does change how I go about things in terms of

enacting change for social justice and being an initiator, I think.

When Bruce admitted he avoided his colleagues because he was self-conscious he was

referencing something he was still subject to, or unable to take responsibility for, working

through the tension – which was how his sense of purpose was tied to the emotions others

felt about him. In other words, Bruce had reflected on what emotions were at play in his

interactions with his colleagues, and even understood how he connected those emotions to

his feelings of self-worth – but he struggled to respond to the issue in a productive way.

Rather than having generated self-worth from his ability to align his actions with his value

system (fourth order) by talking with his colleagues or finding other ways to move past the

challenge to his self-esteem, Bruce had decided to ease others' discomfort and sacrifice his

own self-esteem by avoiding interactions with those who questioned his commitment

(subject to a third order challenge). I asked Bruce what was his long-term plan in reference

to interacting with his colleagues and determining his role in social justice work on his

campus, to which he responded:

> I don't know… I know, I'm very mindful of retreating (*said apologetically)*. It is an
>
> inherently emotional response and so part of me needs to just get over that. Part of me
>
> needs to get over my pride and continue to be engaged in certain things… Right now
>
> I'm at the place where I just need to refocus how I do that. So drawing back
>
> completely and going inside of myself – that's, to be frank, childish and I understand
>
> why I feel that way, but I need to move through that.

Again, Bruce was subject to, or unable to take responsibility for, finding solutions to how the

situation with his colleagues had made him feel about himself and how those feelings had

effected his ability to engage in social justice advocacy. Bruce wanted to change his

approach to social justice work and how he interacted with his colleagues but could not have

articulated how he would do so beyond the need to "refocus" – a reflection that would have

suggested a stronger case for fourth order development. Bruce repeatedly voiced a desire to

have made changes in the other experiences he shared during the interview but inconsistently

took action on those new realizations, such as with the men's group. In another example,

Bruce discussed his struggle to confront a professional peer's statement that a neighborhood

was not a quality one because of the people seen walking through the area:

> I saw the moment to say "Hey, this is a thing." But once again I was affected – it was
>
> peer to peer. If it was with the students, no question, it's my duty to help make you a
>
> better person. But since it was my peer I thought "You mean poor people? Black
>
> people? People of color? Old people?" And I didn't, and I let it go because I didn't
>
> want to ruin the afternoon. I wanted to let it go.

Bruce further detailed that he wanted to engage in a conversation with his peer about

unpacking stereotypes but lacked the ability to have made his actions congruent with his

thoughts, which was something he needed to overcome in order to be considered operating

within a developed fourth order structure. The awareness of the incongruence that Bruce

mentioned more than once in his interview was what warranted the emerging piece of fourth

order thinking in his score of 3(4). He had felt psychological discomfort over not

challenging his peer's comment in the previous excerpt; Bruce followed that excerpt with a

further statement:

> I always struggle, not always, I sometimes struggle with the fact that everything is a
>
> choice. Nothing is prescribed. Nothing is fate. I will never be perpetually good at

[social justice advocacy]. I will never be perpetually bad, it's moment to moment. I have an opportunity to make a choice or not. Sometimes I do but there are other times where I don't have to acknowledge [that it is a choice I make].

Bruce understood he had a choice in how to think and respond to the conflicts he shared in the interview, which suggested he was close to crossing into fourth order; however, the lack of understanding what those choices could have been placed Bruce's score at a 3(4) rather than a 3/4. At a different point of the interview, Bruce referenced a moment when he challenged a male student's comment about masculine stereotypes and the internal struggle Bruce felt afterwards that pointed to the emergence of fourth order structures for Bruce as opposed to a more developed fourth order structure:

[The student] said to me "That's not the kind of – that's not what we do."

And I'm like "Who's 'we'?"

[The student said,] "You know, it's not a dude thing."

And I said "What are dude things?" And previously, I would've just gone back, and I didn't want to lose capital. And in that moment I didn't want to lose the masculinity that I had in that moment, that "You get it, I get it" but in that moment I chose to investigate and say "What does that mean?"

He chose to shut down and he said "You know what it means."

And I said "No, I don't." In that moment, I could have – in the old way I would've said oh, no! I'll connect with him through what he knows and I'll meet him where he's at and have a conversation. But I was proud of myself because I at least made him think about what does he mean by that statement, and we still had a meaningful conversation because I had that authority [to call the meeting], that power. But that

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was one of the first times where I actually chose to give up that masculine social

capital to challenge and unpack that. And it felt really bad.

Bruce felt conflicted over how his choice to follow his value system related to social justice

issues had made him personally feel bad, which suggested a third order structure was ruling

how he processed the experience. A developed fourth order meaning-making structure

would have likely resulted in Bruce's acknowledgement of the discomfort the student felt in

the conversation but minimal negative effect on Bruce's own feelings about himself. When I

asked Bruce why he felt bad in that situation he said:

> Because I – because that used to be my ticket in. I used to use male capital to be in
>
> student affairs and be the guy who talked to other guys. And to have to give that up,
>
> it made me change and it was hard. It is one of the few times where I had to
>
> actively… engage someone… I'm inherently tied up in the idea that I want you to
>
> view me in a good light because you're going to – unless I – because with my
>
> dominant identities of being an approachable, young, heterosexual, white male you
>
> are going to think I'm "good people" until I give you reason not to. And to actually
>
> give that up and say that, you are going to think that I am a jerk, or that I don't get it,
>
> or I'm rude, or I'm gay, or something in that capacity. They're going to think
>
> something negative because I chose to challenge them in that moment. And I think,
>
> it's congruent with who I want to be but it was incongruent with who I am right now.
>
> It just felt really bad. It felt different kinds of bad. That's my intellection – I know I
>
> did the right thing but still knowing that that person has a negative view of me now,
>
> and I could've avoided that, that's tough. But I know I did the right thing. I don't do
>
> that as often as I'd like.

In this instance and others throughout the interview, Bruce's intense psychological discomfort over what others thought of him and how that had dictated most of his decisions made a ruling third order structure most likely. Had Bruce articulated more instances of having mad decisions based on a value system that was self-generated rather than determined primarily by outside opinions then a 3/4 or 4/3 score would have been more likely. Based on what was shared in the interview, Bruce's meaning-making structures were represented most accurately with a 3(4) score (Kegan, 1994; Lahey et al., 2011).

Collin: 3/4.

The subject-object interview score for Collin was a 3/4, indicating his experiences were simultaneously organized using third and fourth order thinking with a third order structure that had ruled more often. To understand the subject-object score for Collin it was easiest to consider how he consistently processed his experiences in a fourth order structure before having highlighted the ways that structure functioned secondary to a third order structure.

To demonstrate a moment when Collin felt angry in relation to a social justice issue in his work environment, Collin spoke about a group of faculty, staff, and students who had met to decide on an optional text for their students to read. The group deliberated their final decision based on a previously narrowed-down list of titles. Collin's first choice was a book that focused on racial tension; however, other members of the predominantly white group preferred a book that had a focus that was different than race. What follows was the part of Collin's debate that best demonstrated how his meaning-making structure made sense of the discussion:

Some of the other folks of the committee had a little pushback for a couple of reasons, but the one that I heard, maybe, it was this one young, white male who said "Haven't we already dealt with this race issue?" That's what I – the issue I heard raised and I, mentally, saw myself flipping the table (*Collin dramatically puts hands on table and motions to flip it over*) and thinking, dude, *no*, of course we haven't had – what do you mean "haven't we?!" And an older white faculty woman, faculty member, kind of supported that and was like "You know, are students really ready to talk about this?"

And I'm like "Students are talking about this. Students of color are talking about this." And I remember feeling really angry about it and kind of dismissed…

When I asked Collin why he felt angry and dismissed he replied:

I think I've seen the benefit of the veil being taken off of my eyes and realizing [racism] is huge, this is a big deal… A lot of people aren't recognizing it and I don't think I'm projecting, I don't think I'm taking on other people's emotions. I'm really starting to see why this is so – why people would be brought to protest, not just silently or in person or sitting in, but to do things that sometimes turn outrageous; setting things on fire, breaking windows. Because you're just not being heard. It was such a small moment, and maybe I'm used to being heard as a white male in the room…

The tension Collin experienced was based on a threat to his value system of addressing racism (fourth order) as opposed to feeling conflicted that his personal worth was questioned because others did not agree with his view point (which would have indicated third order thinking). Collin reflected a concern that he might have projected others' feelings about

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addressing racism (third order) but he internally concluded that his emotions were in fact his own (fourth order) (Kegan, 1994; Lahey et al., 2011). Also, Collin reflected upon and questioned (became object to) the systematic "psychological and cultural myths and scripts" (Kegan, 1994, p. 303) that had previously governed why he thought people of color protested – yet another indication of fourth order thinking.

Collin had continued to experience personal tension when his value system was challenged during the book discussion (fourth order), which was different than if the conflict had come from him questioning his self-worth because of others' opinions (third order). Another example of Collin's frustration when his value system was challenged became evident when Collin discussed an incident of vandalism on campus:

A [Black Lives Matter] bulletin board was taken down. Someone, in big marker, wrote "all lives matter" and stuff like that. [I was] just feeling like, again anger around people don't get it. How can we best educate even though we – I think we do a lot. It's still going to be quite the culture to combat… Why don't you get it?... I'm trying to reach out to us folks of privileged identities to be a part of something, to learn a little something. Because I sense the benefit and the change in awareness that I have had doing the work, not just knowing better but doing better.

Again, Collin's concern was focused on why people with privileged identities did not prioritize the value of social justice the same way he did. Collin was subject to, or unable to respond to, why other privileged people did not follow the same system of values as he did; however, he was object to, or able to take responsibility for, understanding that other's actions in this case were not a direct reflection of his personal being simply because they did not agree with him (fourth order). If Collin were operating only within a third order way of

thinking then perhaps the source of tension would have stemmed from him questioning his own self-worth as opposed to the distress from others not having followed his system of values. As compared to Bruce's frequently stated insecurities and indecisiveness about his self-esteem (a 3(4) score), Collin had demonstrated a more consistent level of confidence in his self-worth and ability to contribute to his interactions with his environment (a 3/4 score) (Kegan, 1994; Lahey et al., 2011).

Although Collin shared instances of having thought about and acted upon a value system centered on social justice advocacy (fourth order), he had still sought validation from others and expressed insecurity when he referenced he had "a fear of looking dumb" at other points during the interview (third order). More than once, Collin referenced that he sought validation from others as to whether he was thinking or acting appropriately in response to social justice values. As one example, he talked about looking to his colleagues for guidance:

> I can tap [my colleagues] on the shoulder and say "Hey, did you hear this happened? Can I tell you about this thing I'm angry about?" so they can get angry, too. And then I feel validated. I guess yeah, I heard that right. Hopefully I can see how they would respond. I know that they're people who are way better than I am, are much more well-versed in how to respond to these – these things that happen, so utilize them.

Collin's reflection placed needing to know his colleagues' views and seeing how they responded ahead of his ability to have responded in those situations based on his own feelings, which made the beliefs that guided his actions, in this and more instances, dependent on the views of others – a third order trait. That Collin's internal value system could not be acted upon without first being deemed relevant by external forces, such as how

his colleagues responded, meant that third order was likely ruling over a fourth order meaning-making structure (thus a 3/4 score). Specifically, Collin's ability to think about and act upon an internal set of social justice values depended on his fourth order self to have first consulted with his third order self on what other people had thought before having taken action (Kegan, 1994; Lahey et al., 2011).

A further indicator of instability in Collin's internal value system that surrounded social justice had come up when he reflected on what he had accomplished to support social justice advocacy, such as when he said:

I don't know if I've done anything yet. My hope is to continue to do some self-work because one of my fears, and I think students feel this too, this is the sense I get and some of them have said it outwardly, there's a real fear of looking dumb. And feeling like I can't contribute. For me [experiencing the fear of looking dumb is] because I don't have some of the experiences and I shouldn't be the one that's up there.

Collin communicated additional uncertainty in keeping a self-maintained value system when he later stated:

I'm at a place where I'm starting to feel a little more worn out… I'm starting to think that about 80% of [being an advocate] is doing more of the self-work and 20% of it is finding those opportunities to do things with students? And is the reason of making that change because I found a lot of intrinsic value in change?... I don't know… I don't know how – maybe this gets back to the identity piece, but I don't know how long I will want to be in higher ed[ucation] in general, so I wonder – there are probably folks in circles who are really about the [social justice] work, and I am too,

but they're going to continue with it in some way, and I'm questioning – do I

continue with it?

Just as a third order thinker may have found motivation in having maintained conflict-free

relationships, so too, would a fourth order thinker have found motivation in the maintenance

of an internally generated value system that a person was free to have lived out in their daily

experience (Kegan, 1994). Collin's expressions that he had felt "worn out" from doing social

justice work, was unsure if he had "done anything yet" and (most importantly) wondered if

he would "continue with it" suggested that Collin's values governing his behaviors were

unstable and did not provide the necessary motivation to have sustained his cognitive need

for meaning-making at a full level of a fourth order structure (Kegan, 1994; Lahey et al.,

2011).

The presence of a durable value system was the defining component of a fourth order

meaning-making structure (Kegan, 1994). A score of 3/4 seemed the most accurate

representation of Collin's subject-object interview because it seemed the best representation

of his meaning-making structures. It was unlikely that fourth order thinking could have ruled

how Collin processed experiences and had decided to act upon them without a stable, self-

generating value system (Kegan, 1994; Lahey et al., 2011).

In summary, even though Collin articulated moments of having acted upon a value

system, he was unsure as to whether that system was his own. This uncertainty was evinced

by his need to for others to have validated his values or to have shown him "how they would

respond" when he had felt his value system was violated. To borrow from Collin's own

words – he was able to usually "do better" but could not entirely trust himself to "know

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better" in having decided how to cognitively process what he had experienced (Kegan, 1994; Lahey et al., 2011).

Helen: 4/3.

The subject-object interview score for Helen was 4/3, meaning that Helen's meaning-making structures had fourth and third order thinking that had operated simultaneously with fourth order ruling. Helen spoke clearly and consistently about her values and connected that value system to the specific actions she had taken, regardless of what others thought. *Every single one* of Helen's narratives focused on her having decided to act to maintain her value system based on ethics, such as when she set up to tell her first story about a time she was angry:

> [The situation] involves students in the way students are treated in things, so I don't
> know if this directly connects with social justice but it certainly connects to a time, an
> incident connected to the issue of ethics, which I connect to social justice. And it
> connects to fair treatment, which I also connect to social justice.

In this instance and throughout the interview, Helen's ability to have named her values in connection to responding to social justice issues was a strong marker for fourth order thinking. Her values were clearly self-defined and did not need validation of others, as seen when she discussed an interactive session she co-presented to honor a departing colleague who had dedicated their work to social justice.

> We talked about [our colleague's] own commitment to social justice in our field and
> we talked about the idea of thinking about what it would mean to do something, like
> really thinking about social justice. I called it a democracy… it was so interesting
> because the students in the room basically shifted the dialogue away from thinking

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about notions of democracy and went right to the notion of social justice and

assumed, somehow, that some kind of discourse of democracy didn't matter. And I'm

sitting there thinking to myself *really?!* How do you think you're going to achieve

social justice if you're not paying attention to the kinds of democratic processes that

have to happen?

Participants in the room had not connected with Helen's take on social justice, yet she

continued the presentation and elaborated on the concepts of democracy that she believed

were vital to achieving social justice based on her internal value system (fourth order). Helen

showed her ability to have defined her own value system again when she stated "Ethics for

me is not necessarily rule following, it's a process of interpersonal interaction." Not only

had Helen self-generated her values, she also followed through on them at other times, such

as when a faculty member had attempted to pass off a graduate student the faculty member

was advising:

 I got an email about [the student] from a person who is acting as her advisor saying

how difficult and troublesome [the student] was and that this person, who is a senior

faculty member and just got a distinguished professorship, doesn't have time to deal

with [the student] and that another professor hadn't bothered to turn back the comps

[the student] had taken months ago. That makes me angry. I'm not furious, but it

makes me angry because it's unjust and [the student] should be treated better… I'm

meeting with both of our deans and the three of us have decided on some rules that

have to be taken into effect and are for the student to have a better time and be more

successful. [The student] is insecure and does have struggles but once you admit a

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student to a program it's our obligation to see that that student finishes. I think that's

an ethical matter for me, too.

Again, Helen's value of ethics motivated her to have taken action (fourth order) in a situation

that Helen could have allowed to pass without her interference and despite the extra work

that solving the situation had added to Helen's workload.

But Helen's thought processes also indicated some third order meaning-making

structures still functioned in how she had made sense of her experiences. Helen

demonstrated she consistently took action to create an environment around her that supported

her value system (fourth order); however, she expressed resentment toward people she

thought were responsible for making her have to choose to act on her value system. For

example:

I don't like to have to take a stance where I know someone's going to be mad at me…

I don't like to be in situations that are unpleasant with other people. But sometimes

you have to be, and in this case because this is my job at the University, I have to do

this, and because of the ethical commitment.

A fourth order structure would have likely required Helen to have taken responsibility for her

emotions in regards to the choices she had made. She shifted the responsibility of her

emotions onto those she believed would have been mad at her and allowed her reality of what

it was like to have taken a stance to be determined by the emotions of others (third order). In

another example, Helen conveyed she was frustrated about politics within her department:

One of the reasons [our program] split was because the two senior people who have a

lot of power and have had a lot of power in this building, one took one and one to the

other… And I've always been caught between them, so that does influence my

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notion of success because I've always been a second-class citizen here, in my eyes, between the two of them. They have been very powerful and both of them are my colleagues, and we get along, better or less, better depending on them.

The last line of the excerpt indicated Helen's belief that getting along with her colleagues had depended on them; she had not taken responsibility for her role in the interactions and used her colleagues to justify her feelings of having been a second-class citizen. This suggested that Helen was subject to her relationships, which would have been a third order construct.

Helen indicated she processed her experiences through a third order structure when she had made multiple references to the inner turmoil she felt when she took action to uphold her value system. Initial discomfort in anticipation of, during, or soon after conflict would have still been possible under a fourth order structure. What made Helen's thinking more likely a third order process was that the inner conflict, of various emotions, would last for weeks or months after the interaction occurred. For instance, in reference to follow-up Helen had done to resolve the issues between the faculty advisor and graduate student she said:

I'm not furious, I'm not obsessing. But I'll tell you I'm a little obsessing. I'm not sure if you're this kind of person, but I don't handle conflict well. This could blow up, I'm clear that this has to be done. And I'm not good at making these kinds of decisions, and I don't like conflict much. I've had to practice and think about the specifics of how going to write the memo and the kinds of things I'm going to say…

Helen first stated she was not obsessing about the issue but then admitted she was obsessing, to the point that she had to think carefully about how she communicated her decisions. Her classification of her thoughts and preparations as having been obsessive told of a third order structure that needed to come to terms with Helen's emerging fourth order value system and

the corresponding actions in response to those values. Helen's inner conflict as third order thinking had not threatened her self-worth, which made it structurally different from Bruce's reflection of inner conflict.

To summarize, Helen's subject-object interview was scored as a 4/3 because her self-generated values and consistency to have acted upon them pointed to fourth order thinking. The lingering emotional turmoil Helen experienced as a result of having acted on her value system reflected that a third order meaning-making structure still functioned. A fourth order structure was deemed ruling because Helen's value system and having acted to uphold those values had not faltered, despite the negative emotions that sometimes accompanied having taken a stand. The non-ruling third order structure had sometimes delayed Helen in taking action or had left her with negative emotions that she attributed to having been caused by the actions of others. But she had still taken action and had not indicated that she would stop future behaviors to uphold her values.

Charlotte, Karmen, and Tammy: 4.

The subject-object interview scores for Charlotte, Karmen, and Tammy were all a 4, which indicated their meaning-making structures had operated with a consistently defined value system that they had acted upon, took responsibility for how they internally processed conflict, and had understood complexity of the system around them (systems thinking). While each of these three participants managed external conflict in their lives, they had not spoken about or given indication that they were self-conflicted. The lack of internal struggle made a transitioning meaning-making structure between the third and fourth orders or between fourth and fifth orders unlikely. The scores of Charlotte, Karmen, and Tammy had not included elements of third or fifth order thinking because there were minimal or no

narratives in their interviews that pointed to other meaning-making structures having

operated alongside a fourth order structure (Kegan, 1982; Kegan, 1994; Lahey et al., 2011).

All three participants shared experiences that suggested a defined value system that

they had acted and reflected upon and that they reflected upon in a self-authored voice. For

example, Charlotte talked about a staff meeting where she had spoken about an on-going

issue in the department that Charlotte felt the resolution of the situation had been stopped

several times and would continue to be pushed back. Charlotte stated:

> I feel like I've said this [issue] is what I'm thinking about and just kind of feeling that
>
> now that I've put it out there [during staff meeting] it'll be easier to bring it up. "I
>
> kind of have been thinking about that, remember? I've been noticing this discrepancy,
>
> can we talk about that?" So just putting that out there as "I'm wondering about this
>
> and are you thinking about it?"

Charlotte's ability to have spoken up at the staff meeting showed her capacity to give voice

to her value system based on her own standards. Charlotte's decision to "put it out there"

even when past history had made it unlikely that she would get an immediate result was

based on her value of responsibility to do what she could in the situation (fourth order).

Like Charlotte, Karmen's values were voiced frequently in situations where the

desired outcome was not a sure thing. In that example, Karmen shared her thoughts on

having advocated for students when unclear policies had potentially harmed the student with

whom she was working. Karmen said "I make my voice heard. I make sure that I tell that to

the people that need to hear my voice, whoever it is." She later added that "What I try to

remember is that me being an unconditionally supportive person is meaningful and

purposeful in and of itself." For Karmen, having made sure her voice was heard was part of

her value system in her work. She understood that her values could only come to fruition if she had taken action but also knew that she was not guaranteed an outcome that supported the rest of her value system when she spoke up. Despite the uncertainty of what Karmen could not control, she had found purpose in her work based on her own set of standards, a distinctive fourth order trait.

Tammy had also acted consistently within her defined value system (fourth order) during a presentation to faculty on the topic of techniques for connecting with students in the classroom. After Tammy shared a statement she used with her students about visiting her office hours, a male faculty member interrupted Tammy to state he had not wanted to connect with his students. Tammy shared:

 I just looked at him and I said "Well then that's not the kind of statement *you* would present." And his colleagues then said "Why would you even say that?!" They made light of the situation and I said to him "But the worst thing to say is to say to students 'you are *not* welcome, *don't* come to my office hours.' We would rather you say nothing." And I moved on. I felt proud of myself for sticking to what my goal was.

Even though the male faculty member had directly challenged Tammy in front of people she followed her value system without feeling her self-worth was violated (fourth order). I asked Tammy if she would have responded differently in the situation if some of the other faculty members in the room had not responded negatively to their colleague for interrupting her. Tammy further reflected:

It's just a matter of some people aren't ready to hear this and they'll just think I'm talking about this fluffy, ridiculous stuff and will associate it with being feminine in some way. And that's fine. But I don't want to be antagonized. I don't treat people

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like that even when I disagree with them, and I don't want to be treated like that. If it had been silent I would have kept going. I definitely wouldn't have been so derailed that I couldn't move on. I probably would've said the same thing.

In this excerpt, not only did Tammy uphold her self-generated value system based on what she wanted to discuss with the group, she had also taken responsibility for how she internally processed the conflict. She recognized she did not "want to be treated like that" and had chosen to move on (i.e. "and that's fine") rather than having placed responsibility on the faculty member for having made her feel that way. Tammy's actions and reflections pointed to a developed fourth order meaning-making structure.

Charlotte, Karmen, and Tammy demonstrated fourth order thinking in another way – through their understanding of systems thinking. This meant they understood how the various parts of the rules, procedures, social norms, resources, and actors related to each other and operated to maintain the status quo. Systems thinking was another key component of a fourth order structure because it was a level of understanding the participants needed to live out their value system; to have generated standards for how their values interacted with the larger system of values around them (values about values). For Charlotte, systems thinking came out when she shared what she would have wanted her director to say when she questioned him about operational challenges the department faced from having two priorities:

> [I wish he had talked about] the struggle focusing on prevention versus intervention as he continues to hire more people to help with the intervention stuff, because I think that's the time that he has spent divided, because he likes the one-on-ones and the crisis stuff… That has really held our department back in some ways because he

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wants to do that instead of the envisioning and planning and budgeting and the director-level things that he should be doing. I think I would've liked for him to have some self-reflection and acknowledgment that it's something he has struggled with, or maybe something that he's made tough decisions on every day like "Am I gonna work with this student or am I going to work on this job description that we need to fill out the staff? To move our vision forward?" …And so I think I would've liked self-reflection on his own job and to be able to say "What I learned is, and here's what I will talk about to the new staff when I hire them and train them."

Charlotte's critique identified multiple parts of the work that needed to be accomplished in the department (planning, budgeting, prevention, intervention), and she articulated how those parts were connected. Charlotte's ability to see the areas of her department's system that were being neglected further showed her fourth order meaning-making structure through systems thinking.

Karmen also showed she understood the related levels within a system when she talked about what actions were needed to change the harm being done to the students who needed advocacy:

And this is why I feel like this (*refers to index card that says "angry"*). This is why people go into policy, this is why people go into law, this is why people go into becoming representatives in our government because there is so much stuff that's fucked up, that needs – there needs to be change on a higher level.

Karmen realized that while advocating for students was meaningful (stated in her earlier excerpt), it had not prevented students from having needed advocacy. Instead, only a change in the rules of the system could have altered the experience of her students by having brought

all elements of the system into a more aligned value system. Again, the ability of Karmen to have named pieces of the system, such as policy and law, suggested a developed fourth order structure.

Tammy communicated her fourth order systems thinking when she talked about how she wanted to use the attention she received from the university and media to support her adjunct faculty colleagues in getting the recognition and access to resources for their good work.

> I was featured [by a national media outlet], that was a good thing that was my work… but it turned out the University hired a publicist… and we can say I was in the right place at the right time… I felt like I went from someone who was so nervous the first time I did an interview to, okay, I get how this goes I've done this so many times now… So just the other day I met with a group of lecturers who are… like I am, in a sense of the same status of this hierarchy within each department. There is culture and context within each department… I have met most of [these lecturers] which is why I went over there to reach out and to listen to them… [And I said to them,] "What I can offer is I understand how that whole publicity thing works now and I'm here to ask you to share with me what you do, too, so that I can share with them."
>
> …This is a new role for the college and a new role for me.

Tammy demonstrated systems thinking when she connected her personal experience of having worked with public relations to how the university worked and related that to how other faculty could have navigated the system (fourth order). I asked Tammy how she thought she had been in the right place at the right time versus one of her colleagues who also did good work. Tammy replied:

I had the research that came out, right, so there's a paper along with it and so that's where the initial publicity came from. And so all those articles spiraled, came from – that came from work that nobody else had. And we're not paid to do research, right, so you wouldn't expect most lecturers to have research like that. I did the work, I collaborated with networks that I had professionally outside of the University and we were able to smartly sell it to the administrators.

Tammy used her professional network to access the system of publicity to get the word out about her research. Her response indicated systems thinking because she comprehended how to connect her work, professional network, on-campus administrators, the media, and faculty colleagues into one system (fourth order).

The last part of the meaning-making structures I wanted to highlight for Charlotte, Karmen and Tammy was in how they had taken responsibility for, or were object to, how conflict and relationships had made them think and feel. Charlotte spoke of a time when she confronted an employee who had attempted to back out of attending a program he had committed to doing. It turned out that the employee had not communicated the full situation to Charlotte:

I was really aware of the dynamics of trying to give someone feedback and supervise them with what I feel was appropriate, and I did the best I could with the information I had at that time. And he was receptive and we still have a good relationship. But I was kind of aware of, why didn't he tell me the truth? …On the one hand I want him to feel comfortable to tell me what's really going on but also I have an employee – he is an employee, he doesn't have to actually tell me about all his commitments and all what's going on.

Charlotte had taken responsibility to reflect on whether she could have handled the situation differently after she realized there was pertinent information the employee withheld from her. In that reflection she re-affirmed her decision to have confronted the employee regardless of whether she had all of the information beforehand because of her values on how to supervise. Further, Charlotte had not indicated that she felt personally violated, that she did not have all the facts, or could have ended up regretting the way she responded – she even went so far as to have chosen to accept that her employee did not have to tell her everything. She took responsibility for how her own thinking about supervision and relationships made her feel as opposed to believing that the employee was responsible for her need to reflect on how the incident happened. Charlotte was able to psychologically stand firm on her values that guided her response to her employee, which was another fourth order trait.

For Karmen, taking a fourth order stand was evinced in how she spoke about dealing with the anger and frustration that came up when advocating for her students and when things had not always gone well:

> What I didn't do [is] I didn't express my anger. I expressed the reason why whatever the problem was a problem. And so that's usually what I do. I don't respond in an emotional way, I respond in an effectual, logical way and make sure that whoever needs to hear that that they *100% hear that,* and that's all that I can do, really… I have emotional responses outside of those things, like with coworkers or others outside of that setting. But in that setting where I'm advocating for someone it doesn't do them any good, and it draws attention towards me. And I wouldn't want the [student] to think that they needed to take care of me because I'm supposed to be taking care of them.

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Karmen had taken responsibility for, or was object to, her choice to process her emotions outside of the advocacy setting, and she identified consequences of what could have happened if she had expressed her anger while she served as an advocate. Despite her anger, Karmen had not blamed others for how she felt or for her decision to have processed her emotions in other settings. Karmen "stood on [her] own feet emotionally" (Kegan, 1994, p. 303) when she had taken responsibility for having chosen to not express emotion in the advocacy meetings and to have instead processed her experience elsewhere (fourth order).

Just as Charlotte and Karmen realized they had a choice in how they responded to conflict in their lives without it consuming their mental energies, so too, had Tammy demonstrated a similar meaning-making structure. Tammy reflected further on the faculty member who had interrupted her presentation:

It was just – he's just a difficult person, certainly was not warm and fuzzy. I'm not sure if – in my mind, I can easily say that's *his* stuff, he clearly has other things going on. This is a change [in how some people teach]. People are not being blindsided by it, they know that there are changes in higher education and teaching. And when he walked into that meeting anyone, anybody could have been presenting. It wasn't personal to me, and I can leave it at that.

Mentally, Tammy was able to step out of the situation and had examined the perspective of the faculty member without claiming to have known all the reasons why the faculty member responded as he had in her session. Further, Tammy's evaluation of the faculty member ended with her choice that she had been able to "leave it at that" where "that" was the discomfort that had come from her having been challenged during the presentation. Tammy had taken responsibility for, or was object to, how her own meaning-making structure had

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placed the value of her goal in the presentation over the need of continuing to be concerned about why the faculty member had responded in a negative way (fourth order).

Charlotte, Karmen, and Tammy showed they had developed into fourth order thinking because they had consistently articulated their value systems, acted upon those values, taken responsibility for what they thought and felt about their experiences and conflicts, and they had understood what was needed to effect the systems that operated around them. They were different from earlier participants discussed because they processed conflict that pertained to their value system without having allowed the conflict to consume their internal energies.

Anne and Chris: 4(5).

The subject-object interview scores for Anne and Chris were a 4(5), which indicated that their meaning-making structures had operated firmly at a fourth order level while fifth order elements had just begun to emerge. Similar to the previous three participants (Charlotte, Karmen, and Tammy) Anne and Chris had demonstrated consistent narratives about their values and had taken responsibility for how they thought and felt about the conflict in their lives. The emergent fifth order meaning-structures for Anne and Chris came across in two areas. First, they had shared intimacy with those around them for the benefit of others and had connected with them between systems that were in conflict. Second, they had expressed internal conflict over their fourth order selves in a fifth order way that was related to how they had viewed the systems around them.

Anne shared various instances when she had made decisions based on an internally-generated value system and standards that she had set without regard to what others thought. For instance, Anne spoke of the need to know when to "play the game" of institutional

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politics but indicated she had often chosen to focus on what was best for students even when she knew senior-level administrators had not always like what she had done:

> It's okay not to [play the game of social norms] and I think that goes back to the social justice work of – I think a lot of times I'm not asked to do things because, and I've been told by other people who don't work here anymore, that I'm a threat to administrators because I have an authentic and meaningful relationship with students and if I can have that, like "What is Anne doing?" That, you know, the idea that "What is she doing that students love her so much and that students connect with her so much?" …I do my job for the students, not for the administration, and I think that kind of living in both worlds and more so in the student realm, that has held me back professionally.

Anne's value system of authenticity with students had been maintained even though it had cost her professional opportunities. Her standards for behavior had been dictated by her internal values as opposed to the external desires of administrators who used a lack of professional development as a consequence when Anne had not fallen in line with their way of doing things (fourth order).

Chris shared about his value system in reference to having advocated for student success on campus when he said his primary role was to "be the adult in the room." When I asked for clarification Chris stated:

> It calls on my parenting skills and my leadership skills, from all the different years of working with students to figure out is this a crisis because it's really a crisis, or is this a crisis because the student, in their mind, has turned it into a crisis? And after evaluating that, figure out who do we need, which hands do we need on deck? Now I

need someone from counseling and psychological services. Do I need someone from financial aid or do I need academic advising? The last thing I want to do is give the student a run around and send them all over the place. Sometimes I'll physically walk them to where they need to go or I will call somebody in our office to walk them out to their office and then I delegate the authority and say "Okay, circle back with me so that we can kind of summarize where we are with the next steps that we take moving forward."

Sometimes it's really critical where a student says "I thought about committing suicide."

And I say "Pack up your bags, let's walk across campus." I pick up the phone, call my contact over there and I say "I'm bringing one in." You just do what you have to do.

Chris' value system was visible in how he processed helping students, such as determining if the situation qualified as a crisis based on his own standards and not those of the student. His value system allowed him to identify the best resources for the student and to have taken action in getting the student connected to those resources (fourth order).

Anne and Chris also demonstrated fourth order thinking in how they had thought about their own conflict. As was typical for a fourth order meaning-making structure, their thinking about and responding to conflict was based on their own choices rather than a belief that others had caused them to be that way. In one instance, Anne reflected the conflict she experienced when her partner, who had also worked at the university, was hospitalized after a mental health episode and Anne was unsure of whether she could have processed her emotions at work. Anne shared:

I didn't tell anyone at work when his episode happened. And I was conflicted, like

what were people – what would people say? What would people do? How would they

take this? How will they treat me? Mental illness is not a casserole illness. When

someone gets cancer the pink ribbons fall out, like everything is "Oh I'm so sorry, let

me bring food to your house. What can I do for you?" But people don't know how to

react to someone [who had a mental health episode]… And so I was scared. I was

sad. I didn't know how to move through those emotions in my work environment.

The level of distress Anne articulated was more severe than the turmoil of earlier

participants; however, the content of Anne's stress did not indicate a third order meaning-

making structure. A key difference in this instance, as compared to some of the third order

thinking that has been discussed with other participants, was *why* Anne was scared and sad.

Anne realized she needed to process her emotions of her partner having been hospitalized

and recognized that doing so in her work environment was not ideal because of concerns of

discrimination against her and her partner. Based on previous experiences of discrimination

that Anne referenced in other parts of the interview, Anne had a valid reason to go against

her value system of looking to co-workers for support as a part of authentic relationships.

This example indicated fourth order thinking because of the way Anne thought about and

took steps to resolve the conflict based on her value system. Anne had taken responsibility

for, or was object to, her need to have processed the powerful emotions that resulted from the

incident; she had found another outlet for processing her experiences. She had not blamed

her co-workers for what she later described as "not knowing what to do with her" to have

helped her process the situation (fourth order).

Fourth order thinking was indicated in Chris' narrative when he discussed how he had worked through obstacles in his efforts to connect students to campus resources they needed to be academically successful. Chris shared:

> Sometimes I fight, sometimes I win but I – I don't lay down, I don't want to dwell and live in the problem. I just want to move on to the solution. It doesn't, it doesn't do me any good to get angry and worked up over something that I can't control the outcome of, so I might as well just try move on… It's business, it's not personal. That's how I look at it. And I don't take it personally, and usually people give me a pretty coherent reason why they can't, why they can't help me out or help the student out. And we just move on, because in the future I'm going to need that person and I can't – I don't hold resentments. It's just not worth my time.

Chris' decision to have moved past situations he could not control was based on his own value system that getting angry was "not worth [his] time." He had not assigned responsibility for his feelings to the people who had told him they could not help. While his decision to move on appeared to have come from a desire to preserve his ability to work with those individuals in the future, the defining element of fourth order thinking in this example was that Chris had taken responsibility for, or was object to, prioritizing his value of helping students above the desire to have given the naysayers consequences. Chris had accepted that he had chosen to move on, not that others had forced him to do so. Similarly, his decision to not "lay down" was based on his understanding of his own way of thinking – again, something he had chosen to do and not something that others had forced him to do (fourth order).

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Before I share examples of fifth order thinking in the narratives of Anne and Chris, I first want to provide a reminder about key elements of fifth order thinking based on Kegan's work with the Social Maturity Model. Remember from chapter 2 the fifth order analogy about the glass tube with two holes at either end that represent separate value systems? Fourth order thinking would have only conceived of one system operating at a time, and it would have prompted a desire for one value system to govern all areas and people around them. In fourth order thinking, encountering two or more value systems (either end of the tube) would have enacted a desire to bring the two systems together under one system. But a fifth order structure would instead have focused on the glass tube that connected the two systems – it would not have required the structure of the systems to artificially change through external forces. Fifth order meaning-making would have allowed a person to seek connection with others in the tube as a way to have bridged understanding and human connectivity without requiring everyone to have the same value system. Another component of fifth order thinking was in the ability of the person to have understood how the two systems at either end of the tube were socially constructed, and thus, had prevented the people in those systems from holistically finding purpose in life. As a result, fifth order individuals found purpose in the human connection of experiences and processed through the imperfections of life. Fifth order thinkers also have worked to establish intimacy of shared processing about experiences with others as a way to have been psychologically whole (Love & Guthrie, 1999; Kegan, 1982; Kegan, 1994).

And now, back to fifth order indications that had emerged in Anne and Chris. Hints of fifth order-ness had come up in the way Anne and Chris shared intimacy in the form of vulnerability with whom they had interacted. I am not suggesting that oversharing on

personal matters itself was fifth order thinking. Again, *why* Anne and Chris showed

vulnerability with others pointed to the early emergence of fifth order meaning-making

structures. Being vulnerable was not for the benefit of Anne or Chris to get attention, to

make them feel better, or because of ego. Instead, it appeared that Anne and Chris talked

about difficult moments as a way to have supported their students in an effort to connect with

them in the glass tube between value systems effecting students' lives. For example, Chris

talked about comments he had made in class one day that had surprised students because of

his candor:

> I was saying the other day, I was rambling, students were asking me some question
>
> and it was a great question, and I answered this, this and this… and I stopped, and I
>
> said "That was about the most boring thing I've ever said in my life."
>
> *Interviewer: You said that in class?*
>
> *Yes,* I said that in the middle of class and I said "I think I may have wasted my life."
>
> This is one of those moments where the class laughed and I said "You know, *no,* I'm
>
> serious. Two weeks ago I was in [a third world country] building a house and singing
>
> songs with kids in a village, and here I am telling you about this material for class,
>
> like, in [that other country] I made a difference. Here, am I – am I making a
>
> difference? …I think I'm helping educate my students but it's also good for them to
>
> see that here's a guy who's [in his forties] and he's already had his midlife crisis, we
>
> think, and he's questioning how important this is. Like, it allowed them to see that we
>
> always still grow, at least I hope...

Chris had opened himself up to laughs and judgement of his students by having shared his in-

class epiphany out loud, not because he needed his students to help determine if he had

wasted his life or because he was not in control of what he said. Chris, unapologetically and without ego attached, allowed his students to hear his thought process for the sake of wanting students to see that their development did not end after they graduated from college. What students had ultimately thought of Chris was unimportant. Chris was more concerned with what students thought of their own lives and values; he already knew he was capable of working through what he thought and felt about himself (fifth order).

Anne also narrated ways that she connected with others by having been vulnerable about herself as a way to help her students gain perspective on their own lives (fifth order). In one example she shared how students had responded to her experience with mental health issues in her life:

> I remember the first time I told my story about my [partner] and like, being in a
> committed relationship with someone with a severe and persistent mental illness. And
> I had someone write me a note and she told me how she was so grateful for my
> sharing that because she felt – she also struggles with a severe and persistent mental
> illness and she saw because of our relationship she realized that she, too, could be
> loved and that she deserved love.

Despite have had past negative experiences of discrimination against her partner and her, Anne had still chosen to share a highly personal story with her students in the hope that it helped them in finding direction in their own lives (fifth order).

Anne further showed the early stages of a fifth order meaning-making structure in her ability to accept contradicting systems without needing them to have aligned into one way of thinking or operating. This was best articulated in the following narration:

In my office we have a student come in up in arms about a [student group] bringing

this really controversial speaker to campus. And I didn't really agree with the way my

colleagues handled it in terms of kind of swooping in to the rescue and like, yes, she

needed to be validated because she didn't agree with it, but also challenged of "Well,

why do you – what do you think about that? What do you think they hope to gain?

What could you gain from listening?" I think all too often we try to fix the situation

and validate our students with "Yeah, that's nuts. We shouldn't even entertain or go

through that on campus." But those people are on this campus, you know. They're

already here and I think, until we start engaging them and listening, there's no hope

for change.

In this excerpt, Anne's values appeared to have been in contradiction to those of the student

group bringing the controversial speaker to campus, as indicated by her reference to "yeah,

that's nuts." Still, Anne reflected the need to have considered seeing things from the other

perspective. Her comments of "those people are on this campus" and "they're already here"

suggested Anne understood the cultural system that was in operation to have allowed the

circumstances for the event to happen. Notice that she had not advocated for the group not to

come; instead she advocated for validation of the student having disagreed while still needing

to have been challenged by a different perspective. Just before that part of the interview,

Anne shared her own choice to interact with people, including her father, who were of a

different political affiliation than her and how she had gained understanding from those

interactions. She had not expressed wanting everyone to think the way she did, as would

likely have relieved the tension narrative of someone who was only operating with a fourth

order meaning-making structure. Instead, Anne wanted to search for ways to have connected

with different systems, or to have connected people in the tube portion between the ends of the glass tube (fifth order).

Chris' emergent fifth order meaning-making structure started to come through when he described conflict he had felt over his institution operating under a one-size-fits-all model for the students:

Parts of the system that I think are broken, the system is a one-size-fits-all system…

It's just there's not a lot of flexibility with it and students will pay for their sins of the

past for a really long time if they have a couple of bad semesters due to issues that I,

personally, feel most folks can't really comprehend… The system just doesn't take

that into account but it's still on paper. The kid who just decided to play PlayStation

and get high all semester and got straight Fs looks the same as the young man whose

brother was murdered and has mental illness because of it and got straight Fs…

In earlier parts of the interview Chris shared how he valued higher education and what the system could do for the betterment of individuals and communities as whole. But the excerpt above indicated Chris' tension between his value of higher education and how the university determined students' success. When I asked Chris how he wanted the system to be different he replied:

I would love for the system to be able to allow students to appeal – not that they don't

get a chance to appeal, but for the system to identify… "All right, you can get rid of

some of those grades by – you can appeal and say but this was the situation, can we

erase the semester?" And the University will do it, however, they erase the Fs but the

credit still counts as credits you have attempted, and down the road you can only

attempt so many credits and that's where you can get into trouble. I would love to see

them say "If we are going to erase it, then let's just pretend like it never happened."

Just, looking at students as students instead of just numbers – personal identification

numbers that come across the screen. Just, showing some humanity. That's what I

would like to see.

Chris' desired solution was not to have the system completely overhauled or to have it

conform solely to his personal value system of doing whatever it took to help students (which

would have been more likely with only a fourth order meaning-making structure). He was

not looking for perfection from the university system, was not looking for students to have

performed perfectly within that system, and he had not asked that the university allow

struggling students to graduate without meeting the same knowledge standards as other

students. Instead, Chris' solution focused on personal connection between university

personnel (those looking at the screen of personal identification numbers) and the students

who were struggling for circumstances beyond their control that detracted from their ability

to finish because the number of attempted credits would later catch up with them and cause

complications with financial aid or graduation requirements. The desire for personal

connection, or "showing some humanity" would have provided students a more holistic

relationship with the university that would have supported them finding their life purpose as

they processed through the imperfections of life – a reasoning and behavior that was

indicative of fifth order thinking. This example also suggested fifth order thinking because

of Chris' ability to have operated within the university system even though exclusionary

practices were a contradiction to his value system to do whatever needed to be done to

support students. The contradiction existed without his meaning-making structure having

reflected a desire for the university to conform to his value system. The acceptance of contradictory value systems that become connected was a key element of fifth order thinking.

Chris' fifth order structure was deemed emerging because although he spoke more than once about his reflections on contradicting systems he had not articulated consistent actions based on those realizations. Further, he shared examples of internal conflict that suggested his meaning-making structure was no longer satisfied with what he could accomplish in his current role even when he had followed his value system (acceptance of that would have been more indicative of fourth order). Thinking about and acting on his value system was no longer enough, but he was not entirely sure how to act upon his desire for "showing some humanity." Chris shared:

> I have definitely internalized the struggle of many patients – many a student, and I will wake up in the middle of the night thinking about the rightness or the wrongness of the broader, political world that we live in, and what we're getting right, what we're getting wrong in this country, and how we're building on the intellectual capital of our students. We're *not*. And that was something that I never woke up in the middle night thinking about. I didn't think about particular students and think, oh boy, that was one that I lost out on.

Chris' references to the "rightness or the wrongness" and similar comments suggested he was aware of multiple operating systems and was concerned with how "building on the intellectual capital of our students" could have connected those systems (fifth order). But his confession that such thoughts kept him awake at night meant his meaning-making structure was in conflict, likely between his fourth order structure and the emergent fifth order one. For Chris, fourth order thinking was providing the support for most of his beliefs and actions,

but the primary conflict Chris had spoken of in the interview suggested he had begun the transition to fifth order.

Anne and Chris shared multiple examples to support a fourth order meaning-making structure and they had partially articulated a fifth order structure. The solid indications of fourth order structures and the less developed fifth order structures supported the 4(5) score they received from the subject-object interview.

John: 5.

The subject-object interview score for John was a 5, indicating that his meaning-making structures consistently aligned with fifth order thinking. John demonstrated fifth order thinking in some ways that were similar to the open vulnerability and balancing of contradictions that Anne and Chris exhibited; however, John's reflection and behaviors on these matters were more clearly defined.

John's fifth order expression of vulnerability for the sake of human connection in the pursuit of psychological well-being came across in multiple ways. One way that John demonstrated that connection was in his sincerity and thoughtfulness as he answered my questions during the interview. John's answers in the interview were shared in a humble and genuine way that reminded me of the story Chris had told about admitting to his class that he wondered if had "wasted" his life. Just as Chris' telling of that narrative indicated he had been vulnerable in front of his students for their benefit and not because he could not work through the question on his own, so too, had John's answers come across for my benefit. There did not appear to have been a moment in John's interview where a question made him consider his experiences in a new light. Each answer John gave represented a part of himself or his experiences that he had already reflected on a great deal. Instead, I felt that John's

stories showed his willingness to connect with me and be vulnerable for my personal and academic benefit as his interview related to my dissertation research. The ability to have connected with others for the benefit of shared understanding between value systems that may or may not have contradicted each other is a fifth order trait.

Another way John reflected the vulnerability of a fifth order meaning-making structure was in the way he had thought about the contradictions in himself and in the systems around him. John was aware that his social identities and how he acted upon them could be in contradiction to each other, a fifth order trait. For example, John shared how his role within his department had changed over time due to the need to create a support network for students of color that had already existed "naturally" for white students at the university. The excerpt below included an understanding of how John saw his role and how he viewed the value of connection with students:

> I'm convinced our image and knowledge of the lone scholar image is actually a white person's construction that ignores how people are situated. So that everybody who ever got a PhD comes out of working with a lot of people over time, that they come out in a social class that they're attached to, but we don't talk about that because it's institutionally located. As a friend of mine would say with irony: "naturally" (*chuckles*) – right, you know? Nothing has to be made for that to be there for whites. For students of color, everything has to be made because it's not naturally there. So our view is that when we bring a student here our job is to create a whole relational set of peers. We think peers are more important than the faculty. Faculty support is in place, we have alums who we can tap… Whenever we go to meetings with alums we introduce current students so everyone knows how they're connected and who they

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can tap if they need something, and so that's kind of in the program. Our job is to make that place.

Interviewer: What is your role in making that place?...

Well I'm old enough now where my former students will introduce me to their students as "This is your grandfather." …Where I am in my career is the standard job of the academic with the young graduates, of course, is to continue to publish, mentoring… All I can. But my job now is convening them to be together, right? So when we go to the meeting I'll say "I'll be at X bar Saturday night." Almost all of them will come, though almost all come by to say hi, they're not there to talk to me. And my job is, particularly, to hand them off to the grad students so that they get to see the next generation and connect with them. I'm the convener at that point… People come to me because of the lineage. They see my past, with the people I've worked with in the past, and I know some of them say they want to join me. It's not so much to join *me,* it's to join *them,* and I have former students and current students send me new students and they say "This person should be joining us."

John identified himself as the "convener" in an academic "lineage" for two reasons that both indicated a fifth order structure. First, John assumed the role of convener as a response to non-white students who had not benefited from the "natural" support networks that white students had to succeed at the university. John's meaning-making structure allowed him to identify the contradiction of support structures within the university and he found a way to have developed a self-sustaining network of peers for students of color to have access to the same level of support as white students. John had created a space for students to connect with each other while remaining connected to the contradictory culture of the university (fifth

order). Second, John's role of having brought the students together to meet one another showed an understanding that the students gained more in their journey by having interacted with each other than if they had learned just from interacting with John. Again, the emphasis on helping the students become connected with each other rather than a focus on John indicated a fifth order structure that created space for the students and helped them interact with a system that had not supported them the same way as other students.

John shared multiple instances that referenced making connections among people or systems within the university in order to have bypassed contradictions even as he supported change that would have undone those contradictions. His comfort with responding to contradictory systems without his cognitive self being distressed continuously further indicated a fifth order meaning-making system. For example, John told a story about different value systems that clashed in his college when the department chairs met to discuss the allocation of new scholarship money. John shared his initial anger over the desire of some department chairs who had wanted to allocate the money in the direction that John called the "white line" because it used arbitrary standards as the threshold for eligibility, such as standardized testing known to give an advantage to white, upper class students. John stated:

> The last time I was really pissed off – it was a nice problem to have – we had monies
> for fellowships in our [college] and I was actually acting as the chair because ours…
> was out. And so I was asked to sit and to represent our program. So all [of the
> programs] are here and the monies – these are monies that are completely under our
> control. The rest of the money – we have assistantships but we've lost a lot of those
> over the years because of budget cuts. But the other monies for graduate student

fellowships are all geared toward that "white line." The monies are there if [students] walk on water and then they're set. So we walk in here and I took it as an opportunity for us to say "We could have any kind of student we want to here." This would enable us to recruit for a wide range of diversity. And there were several faculty who had the same kind of idea, but there was one program in particular that really wanted no rules. And there's an academic side of me and the American side of me that goes "Yeah, yeah! Freedom is good!" Except that that, of course, is presumed on the assumption that no rules means equal chance, and there's no such thing as equal chance, right? And so I was rather angry that the set of faculty could not see that, right? That if they chose to do whatever they wanted – that really had no effect on [my program], they could do what they want in their program. We're in education, right? And your role is to assume that people will act equitably in assignments of things. And so I was angry – it didn't go that well… It seemed like a point where we could have actually talked about how these rules disadvantage people… I would've been happy if they had said "I can understand that." …What I really heard in that, was you're not going to change their minds, but this is their world. So it was the lack of willingness to even entertain that [with a discussion of the rules that things] could be equitable – that was particularly troubling.

Interviewer: Why do you think they were resistant to discussing those types of things?
I think it has a lot to do with what they viewed as their privilege to do as they wish and not having to function or connect with the world or that it's disconnected. It's relatively common in the academy – somehow that they are exempt from the considerations of others.

John's anger came from the knowledge that the faculty in one program were unwilling to work with everyone else, or in other words, were unwilling to connect in the glass tube of the fifth order analogy between the open ends of their contradictory value systems. John's value system was clearly different than the faculty of that one program; however, his self-worth was not internally questioned (as in third order), and the conflict with his value system did not cause him prolonged distress (as in fourth order). Instead, John's focus was on the refusal of the faculty to entertain any guidelines, their unwillingness to "connect with the world." Yet, John's response to the situation was even more telling of his fifth order meaning-making structure:

> You have to engage in all kinds of political actions to make sure that that meeting doesn't happen like that again. There are ways that meeting could happen differently... I've already talked with the chair that when that meeting comes around again there's going to be a prior meeting... The prior meeting is going to create a block that will be carried into this meeting that will make that stance less tenable, right? So we'll organize to... We won't organize to deny them access to fellowship money, we will organize them to make sure that they have to consider how the fellowship can be a benefit to the school in terms of equity. That's how we'll bring it, right? I really don't care to make the decisions of [exactly] who gets what. It needs to meet the principles. So we'll organize around that... It will work out.

John's reflection on the first meeting led him to take steps to direct those particular faculty into exploring how the new money could benefit the school in terms of equity. Again, John's focus was not to force a particular outcome beyond getting the faculty to be part of the conversation, or to connect, with the other department chairs. John's meaning-making

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structures allowed him to identify the multiple systems that operated in the situation (equity of scholarships, coalition building among departments) and he understood how to navigate them. He was focused on moving through obstacles set up by other systems, such as the faculty in the other program. John had accepted that he did not need the entire university system to align perfectly in order to set things in motion for things to have worked out in the long run (fifth order).

General findings of the subject-object interview.

All nine participants demonstrated some level of self-authorship as defined by Kegan's fourth order of development in the Social Maturity Model, albeit in varying degrees. Three of the participants (Bruce, Collin, Helen) were transitioning between the third and fourth orders; three participants (Charlotte, Karmen, Tammy) were operating in the fourth order; two participants (Anne, Chris) were in early transition into the fifth order; one participant (John) had completely transitioned into the fifth order.

When looking at a breakdown between student affairs staff and faculty, three out of five staff had reached the fourth order or above as compared to three out of four faculty who had reached at or above the fourth order. When considering gender, four out of five women had achieved fourth order or above as compared to two out of four men who were operating at fourth order or above.

In the subject-object interview, participants had ten categories of emotions that they had chosen from. Within each interview participants specifically discussed anywhere from three to four different categories. The categories of emotions were focused upon in the following order from most referenced to least referenced: angry (7 times), how I've changed/ how I'm changing (6), success (4), conviction/ take a strong stand (4), guilt (3), sad (3),

moved/ touched (3), purposeful (2), torn/ conflicted (2), and anxious/ nervous (1). All ten categories were referenced at least once.

Most narratives tied to each category were about experiencing that particular emotion; however, there were three instances where participants discussed a category because they did not believe they had experienced it or they experienced it outside of what they thought was typical for most people. Of those three instances, two of them were in reference to how the participant thought about success and one moment was related to conviction/ take a strong stand. For example, John discussed how his success in social justice work was that he continued to work through struggle. Helen indicated that she thought most people would have defined her life as successful but that she was not satisfied with her success because of specific academic achievements she had not accomplished and was doubtful she would have to the time to do so. Bruce discussed how he wanted to share examples of when he took a strong stand or felt conviction but that his internal self-doubt had made him cautious of identifying any of his recent experiences in such a way.

Analysis and Findings in the RMMDI

Analysis of data collected using the Reconceptualized Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (RMMDI) by Jones and Abes in 2013 was organized into common themes based on the first interview I completed with each participant. The RMMDI interview activity asked participants to identify their core attributes (not easily visible), their social identities (visible to external viewers or imposed by society), and to share narratives of how they had thought about and experienced those identities as it related to privilege and oppression. General areas I explored in my analysis of the RMMDI model included the ways in which participants expressed identity salience with their privileged or oppressed identities and the

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ways participants understood how their experience with their multiple layers were defined by internal or external forces. The organization of the themes that emerged from the RMMDI interviews made sense when I compared participant similarities on the RMMDI with the scoring groups from the Social Maturity Model. I looked at what participants had shared with their identities and how they had arrived at that understanding of themselves through their meaning-making structures that filtered their interactions with their environment.

Participants' core identities.

Eight participants each listed four to ten words and one participant listed 12 words when they described their core identities. The only core attribute that was shared by all nine participants was that of caring or kindness. Seven of the nine participants specifically wrote caring or kindness in their list of words describing their core. The other two participants did not write caring or kindness for their core but stated they were caring or kind when they explained their core attributes during the interview.

Out of the 67 total words listed to represent participants' core identities, 56 of those words (or 83.6% of the total) were explained as a positive attribute and 11 of the words (or 16.4% of the total) were explained with a negative connotation in reference to how the participant spoke about their core identity. Of the 11 negative core words, nine of those words (or 81.8% of the negative words) were indicated by the three participants (Bruce, Collin, Helen) who were believed to have been transitioning between the third and fourth orders of consciousness in the Social Maturity Model. The nine core words with a negative connotation for these three participants included nervous, eager to please, unsure, indecisiveness, imposter, friend to few, disorganized, and two references to being insecure. The other two negative core words (or 18.2% of the negative words) were indicated by

Karmen, a participant who was believed to have been operating with a fourth order meaning-making structure. The two negative words Karmen listed as part of her core identity were controlling and impatient. During the interview, two of the participants (Bruce, Collin) said they had struggled with writing identifying words to describe their core identities.

Core identity connections to the Social Maturity Model.

The alignment of most of the negative core words with Bruce, Collin, and Helen made sense when compared with their transition scores from the Social Maturity Model. Their primary conflicts within the subject-object interview as they transitioned between the third and fourth orders of consciousness were expressed as tension over identifying their values, acting upon those values, and maintaining their self-worth when others disagreed with them. The negative attributes that Bruce, Collin, and Helen listed for their core identities centered on a struggle to make decisions or that they had experienced anxiety over how others perceived them while doing social justice work. Bruce and Collin had struggled the most to identify their core identities. This struggle further aligned with the subject-object tension they experienced because they were believed to be operating with a third order meaning-making structure still ruling how they processed their thoughts. Both reflected conflict in knowing if their values were really their own or if they would continue to maintain them because of the conflict it created with their relationships or because they did not know if the values were self-generated (third order). During the RMMDI interview, Bruce's frustration with himself was further expressed at the end when he regretfully stated "I still can't believe it took me almost 20 minutes to think of my core." Collin also shared his struggle with identifying his core identity when he stated:

I think writing this was a little difficult for me because I think so much in terms of working with students around social justice that I think in terms of a lot of the sociocultural identities that are listed later [in the activity]. So I think I can get away from those core things that maybe make me up.

Collin believed he had a hard time writing words to describe his core identity because his social identities were the typical way he thought about himself. Bruce echoed similar reasons for why he had struggled to write his core identity descriptors when he stated:

So for my core identity this was a lot harder than I thought because I'm very used to describing myself in terms of social identity. But I never really have used naming what [my core] looks like… That is not a question that I often examine, and I think part of that is because I think, with my job, I assume that people would assume that my external person is my internal person.

Bruce and Collin disclosed they had not usually thought about their core identities as potentially separated from their social identities. The reasons for that difficulty may have partly resulted from their lack of a stable value system that operated within their meaning-making structures.

Helen, on the other hand, did not struggle to list her core identities, but she did contribute a share of the negative core words that were similar to the types of insecurities that Bruce and Collin expressed. Helen's ability to list her core identities more easily, as compared to Bruce and Collin, made sense under the Social Maturity Model because Helen was believed to have a fourth order meaning-making structure ruling over a third order meaning-making structure. With a fourth order structure ruling, Helen had a more stable value system that would have allowed her to identify her core identity more easily.

Remember that Helen's subject-object tension was related more to the emotional turmoil she had in anticipation of acting on her self-generated value system or having reflected on the experience after she acted.

Karmen did provide two of the negative core identity descriptors: controlling and impatient. Whereas the negative descriptors from Bruce, Collin, and Helen suggested uncertainty in making decisions, Karmen's negative core descriptors did not suggest such an issue, which was further supported from her subject-object interview score of operating firmly within a fourth order meaning-making structure. Karmen "did not love" the part of her identity that was controlling and impatient but she had accepted them as "part of who I am." Karmen did not speak specifically about those traits again in the interview; whereas Bruce, Collin, and Helen referenced their negative core traits throughout their interviews.

The final connection between core identity and the Social Maturity Model I want to highlight was in relation to the types of descriptors that were provided by the only participant believed to be operating with a fifth order meaning-making structure: John. John provided only four descriptors for his core identity; the fewest of any of the participants. The words John listed were border crosser, positioned, relational, and obligated. These words are related to either social status (border crosser, positioned) or interacting with or for the sake of others (relational, obligated). These words were fitting when considering that a fifth order meaning-making structure was characterized by the ability to navigate between multiple systems, an acceptance that contradictions were a natural part of the world, and the desire for human connection in pursuit of life purpose. The social and communal nature of John's four core identity descriptors were more about process and action; thus indicative of how John had achieved his goals as organized by a fifth order meaning-making structure.

Participants' social identities.

During the RMMDI activity, participants were asked to name three to six social identities they had thought about the most as it related to their lives. Collectively, the nine participants indicated 45 references to describe their social identities on their template and an additional nine references to their social identities that they shared as they answered other questions during the interview. The total of 54 references to participants' social identities spanned across 14 social categories. Those social categories, in order of most to least referenced by participants, were: race (all 9 participants), socio-economic status (9), education (7), gender (6), family roles (4), spirituality (4), geographic region (3), non-family roles (3), age (2), body image (2), sexual orientation (2), able-bodied (1), gender expression (1), and mental health (1). All nine participants identified race and socio-economic status as identities that had been communicated to them by external messaging from individuals or societal norms. Of the seven participants who referenced education as a social identity, five of those participants also identified as coming from a low socio-economic status. The participants who referenced age or body image as social identities were all women. The participants who listed family roles as part of their social identities named roles related to being a partner, parent, or daughter/son. The participants who referenced non-family roles as part of their social identities named roles such as teacher, mentor, scholar, ally, and musician.

When participants were given the opportunity to indicate social identities that intersected or overlapped with each other in the way the participants experienced them, all nine participants marked at least one intersection of identities on their the RMMDI template. The most common intersections linked race and gender together. Other common intersections of social identities were between education and socio-economic status or when

participants linked education, socio-economic status, and race together. At some point

during the interview, all nine participants indicated they believed each of their social

identities intersected with or were influenced by the others in some way, even if they could

not provide specific examples. Anne shared her understanding of how all of her social

identities intersected at the start of the activity when she drew one circle around all of them

after attempting a few other iterations of the visual aid and had decided against it. Tammy

initially indicated only two intersections but eventually said all of the social identities played

off of each other in different ways. The social identities seemed easier for participants to

identify but creating the visual representation of possible intersections proved to be more

difficult.

How core and social identities became known to participants.

One of the questions each participant was asked during the interview was to share

how they had become aware of their core and social identities. Although core descriptors

were more likely to be invisible from the outside, each participant shared how individuals or

the way society treated them had communicated to them that which were their core attributes.

Some of the core traits were known early on because of interactions with family or

community members, others were learned over a period of time, and some were unknown to

the participant until they were in college. For instance, Karmen identified being a woman as

part of her core identity and a social identity that she knew early on and had it reinforced

over the years:

>My mom would always say stuff to me about "As women we have to be strong, we
>
>have to look out for each other. Men do X, Y, and Z." And so I feel like that
>
>because, just the natural conversation in my household and my mom's beliefs, that's

kind of how being a woman has really shaped my identity… I notice myself, on a

daily basis, finding myself experiencing the world as a woman. That comes up for

me a lot.

Karmen's childhood included conversations about differences between men and women and

that Karmen was seen as a woman. That messaging from her childhood had been reinforced

by her daily life as an adult.

Bruce discussed how being anxious became part of his core during graduate school

when he realized he had always found support from external forces and had never worked

through important issues on his own:

The anxiety – the first time I had to come to grips with what it means to go through

hardship was at a point of graduate school. It was the first time I didn't get what I

wanted in terms of support. The person I wanted [to be with], the one thing I wanted

– it was not available to me. And I had to figure it out and I couldn't do it because I

had no internal mechanism for that. That's when I realized that my support was

based on – *I had no internal mechanisms*. Everything was external. I realized that

[my] core was very soft in terms of resiliency because I never needed to establish it.

Because I assumed it was there… That was when I said I had to figure it out. Where

does that come from? …It was the first time that life got capital "H" Hard. That was

when I figured out that my core self was just a vacuous void or the absence of things.

When Bruce realized he lacked resiliency to deal with the break-up from his partner he

experienced anxiety that he had since come to accept as part of his core identity. The

awareness that his support structure was not what he thought it was led him to question what

other misconceptions he had about his environment and the people with whom he had interacted.

As participants shared the different time tables of how they had become aware of their core and social identities, they all expressed an awareness of external messaging that had shaped how they thought and felt about themselves. As indicated by the RMMDI in Figure 2 on page 94, each participants' meaning-making structures provided the filter through which the external messaging of society had passed before being blocked or incorporated into their cognitive processing (Jones & Abes, 2013; Kegan 1994). Their awareness of outside pressure came across in several examples and likely indicated the filtering of that experience to determine what, if anything, it meant for each participants' identity. For example, Anne identified the outside pressures when she shared her thoughts on societal norms related to marriage when compared to the hardship of starting over after a house fire:

> And I think the hyper-sexualization of women in our country, in the world of what
> I'm supposed to look like, who I'm supposed to be. I think this is really salient for me
> right now because I have gotten engaged and planning a wedding, and it's the most
> sexist process on the planet and it has kind of sucked the joy out of it a little bit…
> Also, [prior to getting engaged] we had a house fire and lost everything and no one
> gave us anything. No one offered to help us. But I get engaged, my aunt and uncle
> send me a $500 check. I'm like, what the fuck? *(Laughs in disbelief)…* It was just
> stuff, but all of a sudden I've entered into this social construct of religion and gender
> and I'm following a certain path that people value and all of a sudden it's like "Here's
> money" *(Laughs in disbelief again).* I'm like *what?*

Anne's experience with the fire and receiving no help from family was contrasted with the announcement of her engagement and family members sending money as an engagement gift. Her question of how that made sense indicated Anne processed the experience through her meaning-making filter.

In another example of filtering, John acknowledged the influence of external experiences when he spoke about being positioned as a word that described his core:

I put positioned for my core thing because [I was] working-class mountain. I was raised by my father, was raised in a gang, and that is a defining experience for me… So I was always positioned… I can remember entering high school and the school principal meeting me at the door and saying "I know you're really a good kid, but…" Right? And I was by the school definition the "smart, bad kid." So I kind of had incongruity from back from day one, but early on I was always positioned as outside to something, right? There was some border crossing that I was allowed because of what investment I made in schooling that my peers wouldn't make.

When John referenced he was "positioned" "outside" and "border crossing" he indicated an awareness that societal norms expected him to think and act a certain way as it related to being in a gang, working-class mountain, and a smart student in school. Thus, John and the other participants had not articulated their social and core identities because it was something they innately knew about themselves. Instead, the ability to recognize their identities had come from interacting with outside influences, filtering those interactions through their meaning-making filter, and having decided what relevance the messaging had for how they viewed their identities. Their sense of self, whether their core or social identities, was still

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derived from how participants thought of themselves in relation to the interactions they had with their environments.

Identity connections to the Social Maturity Model, difference, and salience.

Although participants were aware that social norms could influence their perceptions of their social and core identities, how they thought about that outside influence and how they responded was varied. Based on the RMMDI, the variance in how participants thought about their experiences seemed partly determined by the degree to which their meaning-making filter was opened or closed. A closed, or tightened, filter meant a participant was less likely to have allowed outside influences to shape their sense of self. Instead, they seemed to rely on inner reflection to define their sense of self. An opened, or loosened, filter meant there seemed to be a higher level of influence from external interactions that had shaped how a participant thought about their sense of self. A meaning-making filter left wide open for a prolonged period of time meant the participant had no way of distinguishing their sense of self, or identity, from the outside world. A filter that was left closed for a long period of time would mean the participant only reflected on their sense of self based on what they intrinsically knew about themselves (Jones & Abes, 2013).

The narratives of six of the nine participants (Anne, Charlotte, Chris, John, Karmen, Tammy) indicated they had a fluid relationship with their meaning-making filter in the sense that they were able to adjust their filters by opening or closing it as they processed outside messages. The fluctuation of their meaning-making filters had not appeared to swing so open that they lost their sense of self to external messaging or so closed that they were shut off from being able to process or reflect upon outside perspectives. For example, when I asked Chris how his identities became known to him he said:

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These descriptors are really the diametric opposite of how I was when I grew up. So I grew up in a tough environment. And it was in every way, shape, or form not a productive – not a good place to be. So I was a really – a pretty wretched young man, to be perfectly honest with you. And the only core attributes that I had was strength, but I lacked integrity, honesty, humility, and particularly empathy for others. And service was far from what I wanted to do with my life. And it was by growing up this way and maturing and seeing that through education… and other life experiences… coming to grips with what was my past that I could redefine who I really was instead of being something or someone that I thought I was…

Those [core identities] are all part of who I am. So part of who I am dictates what I've become. What I've become is who I am.

Chris understood the connection between his life experiences and sense of self as parts that had brought along their own way of being, or messaging, while they were simultaneously dependent on each other to determine how they should be in the way he understood himself and was understood by others. To put it another way, his life experiences (external messaging) shaped his sense of self; however, his sense of self ("who I am") shaped how he processed those experiences and how he had then taken action to live his life based on how he wanted to be rather than how outside contextual influences thought he should be. His beginnings as a "wretched young man" could have resulted in Chris closing his meaning-making filter so tightly that no future external influences could have altered his sense of self. Instead, the bi-directional influence between Chris' sense of self and contextual messages reflected his fluctuating meaning-making filter.

Identity and feelings of difference.

All nine participants expressed self-awareness and understanding about themselves that came from internal reflection after moments of feeling different because of their social identities. Difference was indicated when a participant noticed a discrepancy either in what they thought about a situation compared to what they believed others thought, because the participant was treated differently than others, or because someone told the participants that their identity made them different. The feelings of difference occurred across a variety of identities, both privileged and marginalized. Further, every participant expressed feelings of difference in two or more areas of their identities.

For instance, Bruce and Collin each spoke at length about considering others' perspectives because they had become aware that what they thought were normal experiences were now recognized as being filtered through their social identities, such as being educated, white males. They understood the importance of considering how their primarily privileged identities had imposed views on those from marginalized groups. Difference reiterated the ongoing need for Bruce and Collin to reflect because they had not wanted to impose their views on others the way they had been made to feel. One experience of difference for Bruce was in comparing himself to an unrealistic expectation of masculinity. For Collin, living as an atheist in a predominantly Christian area was a frequent reminder of how a lack of understanding differences could alienate someone.

Findings with the Frames of Colorblind Racism

The format of the interviews made participants recall personal stories of how they had understood their identities and tension surrounding their work related to critical social justice. Still their interviews sometimes included elements of systemic issues in their institution that I

believed were indicators of the frames of colorblind racism. Remember that my goal was not only to understand how participants understood their individual role in practicing critical social justice. I also wanted to consider how participants navigated oppressive systems within the institution. I needed to identify possible examples of those systems in order to focus on strategies participants had used to cope with them.

The four frames of colorblind racism, as defined by Bonilla-Silva (2014), were naturalization, cultural racism, minimization, and abstract liberalism. Naturalization occurred when whites have justified racism in education, and other areas, as something that naturally existed. Cultural racism assumed cultures of color were operating at a deficit and that they were inherently flawed compared to white culture. Minimization acknowledged that racism occurred but downplayed the effects of it on individuals and groups. Abstract liberalism incorporated some of all three of the previously named frames and integrated them with concepts of liberalism such as free choice and equal opportunity. These concepts were applied to individual instances of opportunity and were used to negate large scale group discrepancies between people of color and whites (Bonilla-Silva, 2014).

The participants were not specifically asked to share examples of colorblind racism. I used participants' narratives to determine if an example might indicate the presence of one of the frames based on how they described the issue or how the problem manifested in their lives. I counted not only direct references to racism, but also, moments that illustrated social justice as a whole. There were 48 individual references to one or more of the frames of colorblind racism from all nine participants. Some of the examples encompassed more than one of the frames, thus giving a total of 56 connections to the frames of colorblind racism. Cultural racism was identified the most at 19 times. Naturalization came up 17 times,

abstract liberalism was identified 14 times, and minimization came up three times. There

were three instances of racism that came up that represented a systemic issue but the exact

frame was inconclusive based on the information present in the interview transcript.

The references and indicators to colorblind racism appeared to be evenly disbursed

across the nine participants and did not follow a particular pattern. There were moments

when participants directly referenced an issue they had encountered that was related to

racism, such as when Helen spoke about her concerns with the experience of Latino students

as her program merged back with another program in the college:

So we have these programs, two of them used to be linked… And what I see

happening, and I don't know what to do about this, but basically they segregated our

school. They've segregated these minority students off from the rest of the students

because they're in this one program. I'm concerned about it because they're re-

segregating in a situation when [the students] didn't want to be segregated

themselves… I'm so happy they're here. I'm glad the professors are here. I'm happy

to support what they want to do, but I don't think they should do it in isolation…

And now we're moving [the programs] back together… but I saw the draft of how

we're moving back together and, basically, all we're doing is having one name for

two separate programs. And everything is being made separate, and this is me

talking, they're not allowing their students… to do a minor in the other part of the

program…

This excerpt reflected the naturalization frame because, for outside observers and incoming

students, it normalized the segregation of the students' academic studies as something that

appeared as just the way things are. But students' academic decisions were being guided by

the organizational structure of the two departments that were being set up to encourage segregation because academic requirements and the culture of the faculty had not encouraged integration.

Sometimes participants directly linked an incident to an issue of racism, even when the situation was linked to other elements of identity. For example, in Anne's first interview she shared an experience with the frame of cultural racism she had when others questioned her professionalism because she wore jeans to work:

> Specifically with race, gender, and mental health. I think about those the most, like how I'm supposed to be as a woman, or female identified. I think there are very strict boundaries of who I'm supposed to be… [Others on campus would ask] why are you wearing jeans every day? Which, I still am because I don't give a shit, actually. I actually had someone tell me that, no seriously, by wearing jeans to work [I wouldn't be taken seriously]. And it was interesting because it was a woman of color who told me that, and I always think about that, of like, what was she projecting onto me with what she has been told about her race and gender and how it is a projection because I get away with it because I'm white. Or did she feel like I was making it harder for her? I think about that a lot…

Anne's narration began as focused on gender expectations but also connected to issues of racism when she questioned how women of color had been held to a "harder" standard in order to have been taken seriously at work. I marked this transcript bit as an indicator of cultural racism because Anne believed the other woman's comments reflected societal expectations that were more critical because she was a woman of color and had to prove her professionalism more.

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In other instances, participants spoke of situations that were not directly related to race but were instead generalized or encompassed multiple marginalized identities. For instance, in his first interview, I asked John if filling out the RMMDI template had made him think of any experiences of privilege or oppression that influenced how he completed the task. John responded:

> I'm not sure that certain memories came up. What came up for me was the irony of
> me being privileged to tell the story now, right? And somehow that's connected to
> social justice, which is a double irony, right? Somehow, my story about social justice
> is enough. You found me through that. And somehow I now get to tell the story
> about social justice. Is it a social justice story? There's a lot of problems in that
> circle, right?

I marked this part of the interview as an example of John's response in having dealt with the frame of abstract liberalism. Remember that this frame used concepts such as equal opportunity to maintain racially oppressive systems. When John identified the "irony" of his opportunity to share his perspective on social justice work, he understood that others were not given an equal opportunity to provide their stories in my study. John questioned the validity of whether his perspective should have counted as a social justice narrative and emphasized that his individual perspective, while useful as a tool for critical awareness, should not have been construed as the primary story of social justice. Nor should John's story have negated group inequalities that people of color faced when practicing critical social justice.

All participants encountered some or all of the frames of colorblind racism, either in their work or through their understanding of their identities. The presence of participants'

interactions with the frames of colorblind racism assisted in me in the identification of the

coping strategies participants used to work through those issues.

Findings on Strategies Participants Used to Practice Critical Social Justice

Participants directly and indirectly identified strategies they used for social justice

advocacy in their work environment. Those strategies were best understood in the two

categories. The first category were those strategies that mirrored the Learning Partnerships

Model (LPM) as defined in Baxter Magolda's work on supporting self-authorship in college

students (2001, 2004). The second category of strategies were those that emerged through

my thematic analysis of the data.

Strategies within the Learning Partnerships Model.

The LPM offered recommendations for college educators to support students in their

cognitive development toward self-authorship through the three principles of the model. The

three principles were: validate learners as knowers, situate learning in learners' experience,

and define learning as mutually constructing knowledge. Recall that I had three questions I

wanted to consider in my study using the LPM. How had white faculty and staff individually

foster self-authorship in students? What resistance narratives occurred at the systematic level

when concepts of the LPM were introduced as a way toward practicing critical social justice?

How had white faculty and staff continued their own development into self-authorship if they

had not already done so? The parts of the transcript that I marked as indicative of one or

more of the principles of the LPM referenced participants' work with students and with other

colleagues. I looked for elements of the LPM beyond just student interactions because I

assumed that faculty and staff would have interacted with their peers in a way to support

learning amongst themselves. Since I had not explicitly asked whether participants practiced

the LPM it was possible that some participants may have followed the principles more than

what I discerned from the transcripts.

General findings with the Learning Partnerships Model.

Across all participants, there were a total of 36 references to at least one of the LPM

principles. All nine participants referenced at least one of the principles in their interviews;

five participants indicated all three principles of the LPM in their narratives. The participants

who referenced all three LPM principles were Anne (11 instances of the LPM), Chris (4

instances), Charlotte (3 instances), Helen (3 instances), and John (3 instances). For the

participants who had not hit on all three principles, Bruce shared 3 instances of the LPM that

were related to the mutual construction of knowledge; Collin shared 2 references to the LPM

that were also related to the mutual construction of knowledge. Tammy had 4 references of

the LPM principles that were a combination of validating learners as knowers and situating

learning in the learner's experience. Karmen was the only participant who scored a 4 or

higher on the subject-object interview to have only one of the LPM principles come up in her

interviews; however, this appeared to be a result of Karmen's job responsibilities. Karmen

spent the majority of her time one-on-one with students after they had encountered personal

difficulty and were trying to get back on track for personal and academic success. The nature

of Karmen's interactions with students made the LPM principle of validating learners as

knowers the consistent part of the model that she enacted in her work.

How participants fostered self-authorship in others.

The LPM was developed to help educators support students' development toward

self-authorship, but even with the three principles clearly outlined I wondered in what ways

participants enacted the model. The setting in which participants had acted out one or more

of the three LPM principles occurred in any situation where they had contact with students. The time and place of student interactions with the LPM were connected to the job responsibilities of the participants; they occurred in classrooms, presentations, advising, discipline meetings, through student employment, student groups, workshops, and trainings. There did not appear to have been a pattern in how participants enacted principles of the LPM.

Social justice resistance narratives and the Learning Partnerships Model.

Earlier in chapter 2, I proposed that the Learning Partnerships Model could be used to validate, situate, and mutually construct learning for students from marginalized groups. I wanted to know what resistance narratives, if any, my participants had that were linked to their practice of the Learning Partnerships Model in social justice situations. The main theme in the resistance narratives I identified were categorized by the position type of the participant.

Five of the nine participants were staff in the student affairs division of Southeastern University. Four of the five staff participants made one or more comments about the internal struggle they had experienced in trying to weigh their desire to help students take ownership of their education and campus (i.e. be self-authored) while trying to avoid overstepping their role in the eyes of their employer. Four of the staff participants (Anne, Bruce, Charlotte, and Collin) specifically discussed a tension narrative related to the campus protests that had recently taken place on Southeastern University's campus in the weeks before the interviews. Anne, Bruce, Charlotte, and Collin referenced how they had seen students' participation in protesting as a way for students to take ownership of acting upon their values (self-

authorship) but recognized that being affiliated with the protesting was not safe for them because, as staff members, they could have lost their jobs. As one example, Bruce stated:

> I think about if the resources we are afforded working at the institution gives us access to a lot of students and a lot of ways to make change, but that change is inherently stunted… Through the university I am afforded a seat where I can empower students to be activists. But I don't think I, myself, can be an activist because too much of my stock is tied into the institution… How do we find a balance to continue to reform and do stuff without trying to make it a revolution, which we would then lose access to that?... If I'm about [social justice], do I put myself in a position to get fired? If I'm about it, do I risk myself to a certain point? Then is that me wanting to be a hero with my identities?

Bruce's analysis went from a systematic critique on his having had "stock" in the university and moved to a more personal critique on his job security and influence of his identities as he struggled with the appropriate way to support students toward self-authored behaviors. Karmen was the staff participant who did not mention a resistance narrative between her employment and empowering students to be self-authored.

As compared to the four faculty, staff participants had voiced a greater concern of being expected to support student meaning-making as at-will employees, meaning they could have been released from their positions with limited notice and with minimal reason beyond the university no longer having wished to employ them. Not all of the faculty participants were tenured, and at least one was not in a tenure-track position. Thus, the faculty were not all guaranteed ongoing employment but they had not expressed the same concern for balancing employment expectations with students' education to the same degree as the staff

participants. One faculty participant, Helen, mentioned feeling emboldened to take some

actions in social justice situations because she had seniority as a tenured faculty member.

Participants' development toward self-authorship.

Based on the subject-object interviews, six of the nine participants were believed to

have been operating at or beyond the fourth order of consciousness, or self-authorship. The

three participants who seemed to have not fully reached self-authorship were Bruce, Collin,

and Helen. Of these three participants, Helen was the only one whose narratives indicated a

fourth order meaning-making structure was ruling with a subject-object interview score of

4/3. The moments in Helen's interviews that related to the Learning Partnerships Model had

not appeared to be different from participants who had reached the fourth order or beyond in

the Social Maturity Model. Helen was different from Bruce and Collin in that her interviews

referenced all three principles of the Learning Partnerships Model whereas Bruce and Collin

only referenced one of the principles – mutually constructing knowledge.

The one, and only, Learning Partnerships Model principle that Bruce and Collin

indicated in their narratives was mutually constructing knowledge. The use of mutually

constructing knowledge made sense when linked to the subject-object scores for Bruce in

Collin. As part of the journey in developing self-authorship, one of the challenges that Bruce

and Collin had each needed to work through was operating with an internally generated set of

values. From the perspective of the Social Maturity Model, both participants would have still

been in need of establishing an internal value system. The creation of a value system would

likely have required the additional construction of meaning-making structures, such as what

could have emerged from the principle of mutually constructing knowledge. Recall that

Collin had tried to determine his place in social justice work and how long he would continue

to focus on the topic. After talking about people of privileged identities being afraid of "look[ing] stupid" when doing social justice work, Collin gave the following response to my question about what motivated him to continue doing social justice work:

> I get motivation from the change that I felt. But also, when I'm in a room with other people, students specifically, they teach me something. And I can kind of see, kind of the – you can see the importance. You can see where people get [social justice]. You can see where they feel empowered to go do things… and I think that's also the way that I can be an activist in a space where I can't be an activist. I think a lot of us at-will employees, we want to show students that we're about the cause…

Collin's description of what motivated him to do social justice work was also an excerpt that illustrated mutually constructing knowledge. His reference to "being in a room" related to an earlier part of the interview when Collin discussed drawing out ideas in his sessions with a group of students who were trained to do social justice advocacy on their campus. By having opened himself to learning from his students and having allowed them to see how he processed ideas he had enacted the principle of mutual knowledge construction. Collin demonstrated an example of mutually constructing knowledge when he spoke of talking with colleagues about situations that had made him angry. The act of talking through why an incident might be a social justice issue helped Collin construct a set a values with his colleagues that he had thought and lived by. Bruce displayed similar examples of mutually constructing knowledge when he spoke of processing his internal struggle with others during a time he felt torn:

> I was talking about ally-ship with student volunteers after going to a professional development workshop on race, and I was talking about what does it mean to be an

ally? And with my identities all I can ever do is be an ally. And it's the idea that I

don't get to call the shots…

Talking with others about his thought process helped Bruce begin to establish his own

internal value system, such as talking with the student volunteers. Bruce's interviews

contained multiple examples of realizations he had while processing with students and

colleagues, including the two interviews he completed with me. Toward the end of the

second interview Bruce stated:

I still believe I have some semblance of authenticity in [social justice] work… but I

also know that I'm not where I need to be. Yet having these conversations, this is the

first time that someone's actually challenged me on it… This is the first time that I

have to engage into it… And I have to come to terms with the fact that I'm having to

stare at [my authenticity], and I think I've still got a lot of work to do so this is,

individually, very powerful.

The recurrence of mutually constructing knowledge in Bruce and Collin's work had served a

dual purpose in fulfilling their responsibilities to help students develop and having assisted

Bruce and Collin in becoming fully self-authored.

Strategies from thematic analysis.

Outside of the Learning Partnerships Model, I observed other strategies participants

had used to either solve an issue related to social justice or to personally help them cope with

practicing critical social justice. Strategies I identified were sometimes directly related to a

situation a participant shared; other times, the strategy was a generalized approach or mindset

of the participant that stemmed from a value or other meaning-making structure. Strategies

were more likely to emerge from the second interviews because participants spoke about

conflict or successes they had doing social justice work. The strategies were coded under

two different systems, meaning each strategy received two different sets of codes. The first

coding system was based on the process of how the strategy was used as it related to

productivity and time frame. The second coding system I created was based on topical

themes in the type of awareness and action the participants described within the strategy.

Productivity.

Within the first coding system, strategies coded for their level of productivity were

marked as either *productive* or *unproductive*. Productive strategies were those that increased

a participant's ability to practice critical social justice in terms of their education, awareness,

or taking positive action. Unproductive strategies represented behaviors that maintained the

status quo or were a regression of the participant's previous behaviors to support the practice

of critical social justice. The productivity of a strategy was determined either by my agreeing

with the participant's assessment that something they had done was productive or

unproductive in practicing critical social justice or because I estimated the level of

productivity.

For example, one of the productive strategies I marked for Tammy was self-reflection

and understanding locus of control. I assembled that strategy from transcript bits that

included an experience from several months prior to the interview:

> I had a situation… where I felt like I got shut down by two or three other white males
>
> with something I was talking about. And I really kind of felt shut down, like my
>
> mind started to lose focus, I couldn't retort in a way that would have made sense.
>
> And I felt overwhelmed, like where am I – where are my peers?... I just kind of felt
>
> like that was a loss; that was a failure. I can do better.

Tammy's self-reflection allowed her to identify the ways that her shutting down had not moved her toward her goals. Her reflections also helped her identify what she could control, such as when she said "I can do better." Tammy's grasp on locus of control also came through when she discussed the colleague who said he had not wanted to get to know his students. Tammy stated "I can easily say that's *his* stuff. He clearly has other things going on… It wasn't personal to me, and I can leave it at that." Tammy had chosen to cope with the situation by letting go of something she recognized she could not control. By enacting this strategy, Tammy further developed her ability to support social justice by having found a way to cope with negative reactions to her work – thus, a productive strategy.

An example of an unproductive strategy I found was in Bruce's interviews; he had sometimes abdicated responsibility to advocate for social justice because he had been unsure of how to proceed:

> All I can ever do is be an ally, and it's the idea that I don't get to call the shots because I don't know what's going on. And I'm trying to think that through that, how do I work alongside people who do know what's going on so they can tell me what to do. I think for me, my idea of activism is shortsighted because I don't really know what those communities need…

When I sought clarification from Bruce on what he meant by needing to be told "what to do" he elaborated further:

> I definitely had some incongruence there in terms of I can't claim that I need to be instructed on what to do – that's an inherent problem… I'm inherently insecure about this. I'm always afraid of messing up. Part of it's because I, one, I define my self-worth on how other people define it, which is a problem… It's easier for me to be

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hypercritical of myself and allow for other people to say "Oh no, you're actually

doing a good job" than it is for me to actively say I do this good but I need to work

better in these areas… If you are the critical white man trying your hand at social

justice and are feeling burdened by the world's problems then at some point

someone's going to choose to pull you up. And so I try not to lean on that but I

understand at this moment, at a certain point I do that either intentionally or not… I'll

be more critical of myself than I necessarily actually am or need to be because it's

always safer to say I'm not doing something than to acknowledge that I am doing

something. Is that necessarily sustainable for my own work? I don't know.

In these segments, Bruce used the coping strategy of stepping back and waiting for

instructions from a person of a marginalized identity as a way to assuage the discomfort of

opening himself up to a critique of his genuine, best effort at critical social justice. While the

coping strategy assisted Bruce in the moment, this was an unproductive behavior because it

maintained the circumstances around which a social justice issue had formed. Further, Bruce

discussed using this strategy to avoid conversing with the colleagues who had originally

questioned his authenticity. By avoiding colleagues in his department who were also doing

social justice work, Bruce's use of the strategy had rendered him unable to productively

contribute or engage social justice initiatives.

Time frame.

Once strategies were designated as productive or unproductive, I considered the time

frame in which the strategy occurred. For time frame, a strategy was deemed either *current*

or *future*. Future strategies occurred when participants spoke of plans and actions they were

working toward to practice critical social justice but were unsure of how to do so. Future

strategies also came up when participants discussed a desire to do something that was outside

of the scope of their job responsibility – meaning that they either did not have authority

within the university to follow through or to do so would have taken time away from their

required duties.

Strategies marked as current were those that participants had used within a few weeks

prior to the interviews or were still being used during the interviews. Current and future

strategies were further categorized as either *long term* or *short term* based on the length of

time that participants could have maintained the strategy before impairing their ability to be a

social justice advocate. Long term strategies could be used multiple times, were self-

sustaining, or had not required large amounts of energy or resources for participants to have

continued the strategy. Short term strategies could not be or had not been sustained for

prolonged periods of time, had a diminished or detrimental effect on the participant or issue

if used consistently, and required more energy or resources than participants could routinely

expend. Long term strategies, as compared to short term ones, were more likely to have been

associated with strategies that were also coded as productive; however, there were a few

instances when short term strategies were also productive.

Karmen's narrative indicated the workings of several strategies that were intertwined

and yet distinctive in the demonstration of the time frame coding. The following are

statements Karmen made during the subject-object interview in response to the index card

titled "how you've changed" and how long she thought she could continue her current

position:

This is something that I talk with my [supervisor] about all the time. I have an anger

that is inside of me that did not used to be there. [*She sighs*] I feel that I use up so

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much of my reserves for helping people during the day… I am feeling like I'm in a better place right now, but the past year and a half has been so hard on me that it's really made me question that… I don't think that I'll be able to do the exact job that I'm doing for that much longer, you know?... What I would like to do is maybe be a supervisor to people who do this kind of work… And hopefully [I would] be able to influence broader policy. Or if I keep working at Southeastern University then I can advocate for students as a whole more effectively on a higher policy level rather than – because right now I feel like I'm in the trenches and I'm just going from person to person.

One strategy I found in this excerpt was Karmen's ability to identify whether her work was sustainable specifically for her. This strategy was coded as *Productive-Current-Long term* (or P-C-L) because the realization that she could not see herself carrying out her current duties prompted additional reflection rather than Karmen having focused on completing her work only a day at a time. This approach was productive because it could have prevented Karmen from running over the proverbial cliff by exhausting herself, thus furthering Karmen's ability to remain in a role that advocated for social justice. The strategy was current because Karmen demonstrated it in the interview and as something she had recently thought about. The process of carrying out this strategy was not taxing on Karmen's resources and had not posed a threat to her ability to continue her work. If anything, questioning her longevity in her role may have motivated her to keep going so she could have successfully bridged her work into another level.

Karmen's reflection on the sustainability of her position then led to another strategy she had demonstrated – planning and taking actions based on her assessment of the

sustainability of her work. This strategy was coded *Productive-Future-Long term* (P-F-L) because putting together a plan was a beneficial next step to prevent Karmen from going over the cliff that she identified through the previously mentioned reflection strategy. Karmen's suggestion that she could be a supervisor and work on policy changes was clearly referenced as a strategy to be carried out in the future; it also appeared as a longer term solution she could carry out as a follow up to the short term path on which she had found herself.

Another strategy I want to highlight from this narrative was from Karmen's reference to being "in the trenches" in her work with students. The face-to-face work Karmen did required the strategy of empathizing with her students so they would feel better supported as they worked through their challenges. The strategy of empathy was coded as *Productive-Current-Short term* (P-C-S) because it affected the quality of help Karmen had provided by better understanding students' needs (productive), was current during the interview, but jeopardized Karmen's well-being through the increased anger and exhaustion (short term).

For an additional example of time frame coding, reconsider the more recent narrative from Bruce that was used to highlight the unproductive strategy of abdicating responsibility to act on a social justice issue. This strategy was coded as *Unproductive-Current-Short term* (U-C-S) since Bruce was still using the strategy (current) and because it had diminished Bruce's ability to support social justice issues (short term). Lastly, Bruce referenced the incident that led him to avoid engaging others on social justice issues because of the internal anxiety and indecisiveness he had experienced, which indicated the strategy was taxing his emotional reserves and likely could not have been maintained for a long period of time (short term).

Summary of analysis for strategies.

The interview transcripts contained a total of 69 strategies identified across five combinations of the coding; the full list can be found in Appendix K. *Productive-Current-Long term* (P-C-L) strategies were identified 55 times and represented by all nine participants. *Productive-Current-Short term* (P-C-S) strategies occurred five times and were found within the interviews of four of the nine participants (Anne, Bruce, John, and Karmen). *Unproductive-Current-Short term* (U-C-S) strategies were indicated twice and only found in the transcripts for Bruce. *Productive-Future-Long term* (P-F-L) strategies were found twice, once from Bruce and once from Karmen.

The final combination of coding was a category of mixed strategies – mixed in the sense that the productivity and time frame was unclear or could potentially have encompassed productive/unproductive and short term/long term codes. There were five strategies that fell into the mixed category:

1) From Bruce: Privileged identities should vacate leadership roles within social justice initiatives (P/U-F-L/S).

2) From Chris: Do not make it personal when others cannot support your efforts/do not burn bridges (P/U-C-L/S).

3) From Collin: Balance ethical responsibility for addressing social justice issues with self-preservation/wellness (P/U-C-L).

4) From Helen: Use positional power to re-allocate resources or take a stand to support a social justice issue (P/U-C-L/S).

5) From John: Help others of marginalized identities gain access (cross borders) (P/U-C-L).

The coding for these strategies depended on the circumstances of how they were used, the motivation for using them, or the actions taken after a particular strategy was implemented. For instance, the mixed strategy from Chris – do not make it personal when others cannot support your efforts – implied there may have been times someone withheld their support because they had a discriminatory bias against the group of students. The strategy could have been viewed as productive because Chris advocated for his students' access to a resource even if it was initially denied. But this strategy could also have been unproductive because there was an increased chance that the people who refused their support for discriminatory reasons remained unchallenged in their practices, thus the status quo was maintained. Additionally, Chris' strategy could have been viewed as long-term or short-term because although not making things personal could be used multiple times without draining Chris (long-term), this approach could have become unsustainable and de-motivating for him if he was unable to convince himself that refusals to help were not personal toward him or his students. While Chris was had maintained the emotional balance of being turned down by colleagues on campus, the turning point between what a person could/should tolerate and could not/should not tolerate was unpredictable. And so, a long-term strategy could turn short-term if Chris was unable to overcome his suspicion that his students were being discriminated against. Each of the strategies that received a mixed coding depended upon the context of the situation in which the strategy was applied. The implications of the contextual influence on how white faculty and staff practiced critical social justice is discussed in the next chapter.

Themes related to topic-based coding.

The 68 strategies found in the transcripts offered a range of ways to practice critical social justice but there were also some commonalities in the topics participants shared. There were seven themes that emerged from the strategies expressed by the participants; some of the strategies fell into more than one theme. In order of most referenced to least, the themes consisted of: self-reflection with 20 references across eight participants, political with 18 references from six participants, knowledge with 17 references from six participants, networking with 14 references across six participants, difficult conversations with nine references from four participants, mentoring with five references from three participants, and purpose with three references from three participants.

Self-reflection, as a topical theme, came up when participants referenced the need to internally process through challenges they had encountered or reconfirmed how their beliefs interacted with their actions. One example was when Tammy spoke about a presentation she had made months before the interview when she struggled to respond to a colleague in her own department who questioned the value of her work on connecting with students. Tammy's self-reflection that "I can do better" was later connected to her thoughts on the more recent presentation when a different colleague stated they did not want to get to know their students. Through self-reflection, Tammy identified what she could control in the situation, acted upon her thoughts in another presentation by standing her ground, and then further reflected on the struggles from the other colleague that she acknowledged "That's *his* stuff, he clearly has other things going on."

Political-themed strategies were indicated by six of the nine participants. These were strategies that indicated an awareness of and a need to interact with systems of policy and

procedures, as well as elements of power and authority. For instance, one of John's strategies called for understanding the difference in social justice issues that would require different solutions to solve those same problem. John further referenced the need to "name and speak" directly to a social justice issue as one option or potential first step in confronting systematic oppression. But John also indicated additional steps were sometimes needed "to engage in all kinds of political action" to ensure policies and procedures "benefit the school in terms of equity." John's strategy of formulating a response to social justice issues focused on defining the issue and bringing about changes through his knowledge and power related to the policies and procedures of his department. Participants with strategies that fell into the political theme, like John, shared an understanding of the need to navigate larger systems, groups, and various levels of authority within their institution that was different from confronting individual instances of oppression.

Knowledge-themed strategies came up for six of the nine participants and occurred when participants identified a need to know information, either through experience or written/oral communication, in order to respond to a social justice issue. Knowledge-based strategies were often coupled with self-reflection strategies, but they were different. Self-reflection could lead to knowledge on how to respond, but self-reflection was not the only way for participants to gain knowledge. Additionally, self-reflection was not used only to develop tangible ways to respond to situations – it also served a purpose of processing emotions and cognitive dissonance for a higher level of self-knowledge. Knowledge of self, such as Tammy's realization that she could do better, was different from Collin's strategy of knowing when to push or challenge oppressive statements or actions made by others. In Collin's strategy, knowledge gained through self-reflection, training, and experience taught

him tangible ways to approach someone in a conversation. Participants who indicated knowledge in their strategies then acquired such knowledge through experience, training, practice, discussion, and self-reflection. Lastly, some participants indicated an on-going or future need for knowledge in order to sustain a current strategy or begin to enact a future one, such as Karmen's strategy of understanding her locus of control in being able to understand and address an issue. Karmen had identified that her current position had not allowed her to fully understand and address the oppression her students encountered. Her current knowledge allowed Karmen to understand her locus of control; however, she further understood the need for more training and experience in any higher level role she took to address the inequities she wanted to tackle. Thus, the knowledge-themed strategies represented the current and on-going need for learning about social justice issues.

Networking came up as a theme in the strategies for six of the nine participants. These participants frequently relied on understanding and being connected to the network of resources and people across the university. Networks were used as a support structure to maintain the wellness of participants, but it was used most often as a way to access resources for change that would positively affect their students. For instance, many of Chris' stories from the second interview involved working with colleagues or other students to make arrangements for students on their final chance before being dismissed from the university for academic or financial reasons. Chris emphasized that the support he provided for his students was completely dependent on his ability to maintain relationships with colleagues and students across campus. Without networking, those six participants would lose much of their capacity to advocate for students.

Difficult conversations were strategies focused on the need and process of cognitive dissonance as a valuable way to help individuals move forward in their understanding of social justice issues. Four of the nine participants indicated strategies that required keeping an open mind, actively listening and learning from others with a different perspective, embracing discomfort, and problem-solving collaboratively. As one example, Helen shared multiple instances in her classroom, writing, and presentation work when she asked her audience to consider and act upon ways to solve systematic issues with a democratic process. Helen indicated that the democratic process provided a procedure for engaging in hard conversations and interacting with people who held different views from each other.

Mentoring-theme strategies were referenced by five of the nine participants. This group of strategies included participants serving as mentor to students and colleagues as they navigated social justice issues on campus. Participants with mentoring strategies found personal fulfillment and motivation in mentorship in addition to understanding how the process of mentoring enabled others to advocate for larger-scale changes at the systematic level of the institution. Some of the participants explicitly said they mentored students, such as Tammy, while other participants named mentoring practices even if they did not say they were a mentor. Similar to the difficult conversations theme, mentoring was an individually focused strategy rather than operating on a group or systematic scale such as the political or networking themes. Charlotte, for instance, indicated the value of mentoring practices with her strategy of working to address the personal needs of her students, staff, and colleagues. Charlotte's focus on being person-centered helped her remain grounded in her advocacy that was policy-based. By mentoring students and staff through active listening, empathy, and

guidance Charlotte was able to see the direct effect of policy that did not account for students' marginalized identities.

The final theme, purpose, was indicated by three of the nine participants. While all nine participants indicated some understanding of purpose in their discussion about understanding sense of self, only three participants indicated stating their purpose as a strategy for advocating for social justice in their work. Purpose as a strategy allowed participants to bypass ambiguity associated with discussing a controversial issue, such as when Karmen articulated the need to tell people in authority why something was a problem. Verbalizing purpose also helped the participants remain focused and motivated in their work, such as Anne and Karmen being present with their students when they shared stories of oppression. Or when Tammy used her purpose to anchor herself in the presentation when a colleague questioned the value of her work. Purpose-based strategies were a reference point for clear communication and a means for maintaining a chosen path of practicing critical social justice.

Summary of Findings and Analysis

Throughout this chapter I have shared my process for individually analyzing and reporting the findings through four different, but interconnected, theoretical lenses. My findings with Kegan's (1994) Social Maturity Model provided a foundation for understanding participants' multiple dimensions of identity with Jones and Abes' (2013) Reconceptualized Model for Multiple Dimensions of Identity. My consideration of Bonilla-Silva's (2014) frames of colorblind racism highlighted the ways participants had experienced systemic racism within the university; the identification of strategies were often in response to participants' interactions with the frames. Baxter-Magolda's (2001/2004) Learning

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Partnerships Model guided my identification of the strategies participants used in response to the systematic oppression they encountered (via the frames and external influences on their understanding of self). I identified additional strategies participants employed in their work as social justice advocates that emerged separately from the pre-identified models I used. While these strategies fall outside of the other models they are still relevant to my theoretical framework because they emerged as constructed responses to what my participants experienced in their interactions with the environment because of what they identified as viable responses to achieve their goals of advocacy. The findings provide a multi-faceted perspective on how white faculty and staff build the capacity to understand themselves as they practice critical social justice on an individual and systematic level.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to seek to understand how white faculty and staff participants operated as practitioners of critical social justice. The study considered how participants' lived experience translated to their practicing or not practicing critical social justice through individual understanding while simultaneously navigating the oppressive systems within their higher education institution. In order to begin piecing together the various levels of analysis conducted in the previous chapter the research questions must be brought back to the forefront:

1) In what ways do white faculty and staff understand their identity as critical social justice practitioners in higher education via a model of multiple dimensions of identity?

2) In what ways do white faculty and staff place value on critical social justice work in higher education via their internal meaning-making structures?

3) In what ways do white faculty and staff navigate resistance narratives (tension) between their personal values and those of the institution in which they work?

The answers I found during this study were complex, interconnected, and far from complete. Were the participants in my study practitioners of critical social justice based on the definition of being aware of social justice issues and taking action to address those issues? Yes. Although each participant effected their immediate environment on different cognitive levels and through different strategies, they still worked to be knowledgeable and take action. But I also believe this study has led me to identify a more in depth understanding of what a practitioner of critical social justice could strive toward.

This chapter also includes reflections from the field journal and how it influenced my overall analysis of the participant interviews. By sharing some of the thoughts in my field journal they were a reminder to me, and I hope to readers, that this entire dissertation was a journey of interpretation based on the meaning-making structures of participants, readers, and most especially – me.

The interpretive nature of this study, coupled with the small sample, means the results do not offer a definitive answer for what a critical social practitioner does or does not think and act like. Instead, this qualitative research has offered questions for consideration in how white faculty and staff can participate in the role of being a practitioner of critical social justice. The questions for consideration are peppered throughout the discussion of this chapter. Some of the questions I answer based on my ongoing development on the topic, but all of them are open for discussion by any who would choose to engage me with the intent of moving this research forward in a productive way. The findings of this study must be critiqued in order to prevent the research from being a perpetuation of the white-supremacist-capitalistic-patriarchy (hooks, 1994).

Field Journal Findings

I wrote the first journal entry the day I started to contact participants via e-mail to recruit them for the study. Entries were made in the journal for the 11 months that followed as I conducted interviews, transcribed the audio, analyzed the transcripts, and began outlining the final two chapters of my dissertation. The entries that occurred just before, in between, and immediately after the interviews were more likely to run two to three pages in length. The remainder of the entries often consisted of a few paragraphs as I used the field journal to process my experience as ideas emerged during the analysis.

As I read over my field journal in preparation for writing the final piece of my dissertation, I was struck by how many layers of analysis went into this dissertation. Each transcript was reviewed at least 10 times to account for the four types of analysis. Even as I wrote about the findings of one narrative I suddenly made a connection or realization about another interview. The notes in my journal reminded me of the fluidity of how we, my participants and I, understood ourselves and the environment around us. What was written in in my journal and dissertation was *truly a snapshot* of how participants filtered their experiences (while having been simultaneously directed by my questioning as the interviewer), filtered through my translation of the audio to transcript, filtered through the scoring of the subject-object interview by the research assistant and me, and filtered *again* through my writing of these pages. Each stage of translation was influenced by what was happening to the participants and me at a local, national, and global level.

My field journal reflected two primary struggles. First, I struggled to balance my role as listener during the narratives. I so badly wanted to affirm participants' stories when they spoke of struggles I used to experience or had currently experienced. I wanted to interrupt their tales to ask questions for my personal understanding when they did things that I aspired to do as an advocate. I wanted to challenge or confront their privilege and discriminatory views when I believed they had missed acknowledging that bias in the interview. I wanted to believe that I really would have challenged them if I had met them in different circumstances and that I was not using my interviewer status as a shield to protect my own ego. The result was that sometimes I was inconsistent during the interviews, having asked either too many questions or not enough. The second interviews were markedly more informative than the first interviews because I had weeks to reflect on how the first round of interviews went and

had identified areas where I had not asked enough clarifying questions of the participant or I had spoken too much.

The second struggle I saw in my journal notes was my concern about leading participants to elaborate on certain content during their interviews based on my assumptions of where I thought they were developmentally rather than allowing their development to have shown itself. Those assumptions started to form the moment I made contact with them, communicated with them to schedule the interviews, when I met them face-to-face the first time, and during the weeks between the first interview and the second interview. As I did the first few subject-object interviews I worried that I had not asked for enough clarification to test my hypotheses about the meaning-making structures I believed were evident as I conducted the interview. I did not want to hear what I expected to hear from participants based on my pre-conceived notions of their development. This resulted in my having to spend more time reviewing the transcripts to determine what I thought was each participants' developmental level within the Social Maturity Model. And I believe there was evidence of meaning-structures that was not articulated during the interviews because I did not always ask enough questions. I first became aware of the issue after I reflected and reviewed my notes on the first two subject-object interviews; I used that realization to increase my efforts to clarify things by re-reading parts of the subject-object interview manual by Lahey et al. (2011). Parts of the manual discussed how to ask clarifying questions without leading participants to a particular answer.

I attempted to address both struggles during the analysis by relying on multiple reviews of the material over several months and by conducting negative case analysis. I focused part of my analysis on identifying strategies the participants used or had spoken of

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that either challenged or perpetuated white supremacy in higher education. I closely looked at each strategy had I identified and asked whether it was productive in social justice advocacy, and for whom was it productive? My goal was to continue to maintain the credibility and trustworthiness in my results.

My journal notes also reflected my ongoing development as a supporter of social justice. (I say supporter because I do not grant myself the authority to name myself advocate – I believe only others can do that and seeking title rather than the actions it indicates would be a misguided use of my privilege.) I am still trying to sort through all of my thoughts and realizations in doing this project. Journaling forced me to provide written record of my own emotional experiences with social justice conflict and my identities that was similar to what I asked my participants to discuss during their interviews. I reflected on what I thought I did well and I found myself writing about what I believed I did not do well. The latter parts were the hardest to read. I found motivation to not retreat from my privileged identities, in particular my white supremacy, by seeing some of the good that I had done being reflected in some of the successes that my participants shared. Participating in this study challenged me to identify the internal and external effects of what I believed and reflected upon versus what I did and allowed others to see about me. Thinking, versus doing, versus reflection on the experience of thinking and doing crept into all aspects of my life over the last two and half years of completing my dissertation. This dissertation was an ongoing conversation with myself that prompted me to think and do more to support social justice than I believe I would have done had I not completed this project.

The last relevant theme that came from my field journal was a realization about the difficulty of dealing with language in my study. I specifically did not define a lot of words

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for my participants because I wanted to see what words they used to talk about their identities and tension narratives related to social justice issues in their work environment. When I conducted the interviews and analyzed the transcripts I found that making sense of language to identify meaning-making structures and strategies for practicing critical social justice was a greater challenge than I expected. Although my participants and I shared a racial identity we were more dissimilar in our identities of gender, socio-economic status, and spirituality, to name a few. The result was that we used language in more varied ways. I asked clarifying questions in some of the interviews but I quickly found during the analysis that it was impossible for me to completely subtract my bias in language from how I made sense of the language participants used to speak on their experiences. The question of how language was used by my participants and me relates back to one of my opening comments about my field journal – everything has been filtered and was an interpretation of my perspective of what participants shared. Although the findings of this study were interpretive and constructed, there was still meaning-making value for anyone who interacted with this narrative past my writing of it.

Critical Social Justice via Multiple Dimensions of Identity

By applying intersectionality to participants' experiences through multiple dimensions of identity, I identified ways that participants understood their experience. Participants seemed to be motivated to practice critical social justice because they cared to do so and because they valued the insight they gained about themselves after experiencing feelings of difference based on their social and core identities. Additionally, participants benefited from ongoing interactions with their environment so they could continue to engage

in the meaning-making process of how they cared and how they understood their inner selves.

Caring was a core characteristic indicated by all of the participants in their discussion of their internal identities. It came as no surprise to me that caring could be a common trait of critical social justice practitioners – but is caring required in order to be a practitioner? I would argue yes, that caring about an awareness of social justice issues and caring enough about social inequalities to take action to address them are needed in order for a white faculty or staff member to be a practitioner. Without an ethic of care, white faculty and staff would further perpetuate elements of the frames of colorblind racism, such as cultural racism as defined by Bonilla-Silva (2014), by taking action because of an assumed deficiency within marginalized cultures. On the flip side, caring does not guarantee a white faculty and staff member will be or can be a critical social justice practitioner. Caring does not lead to an automatic understanding of social justice issues or the ability to always act to support social justice. As with the participants of this study, caring may provide a motivation for white faculty and staff to be more likely to put forth the time and energy to practice critical social justice.

Additionally, motivation to practice critical social justice may be supported by the experience of feeling different as external pressures are filtered and internalized by a person's core identity. As participants experienced feelings of being different through one or more of their social or core identities, their identity salience increased. Identity salience occurred when participants developed a better understanding of self after reflecting upon the experience of feeling different. Participants valued experiences of difference as defining moments when they better understood themselves, and thus, supported their efforts to

practice critical social justice because of the ongoing development of understanding social justice issues.

The experience of difference seemed to lead to more clearly defined moments of participants gaining increased identity salience – or an increase in how they came to value their experiences of difference as something they valued in better understanding their sense of self. None of the participants expressed enjoyment over the realization of how they were different from societal norms but they all recognized the benefit of those tensions narratives helping them make meaning within themselves.

For example, in one of Chris' earlier passages he referenced life experiences and education as elements that had helped him "come to grips" with his horrible past. Some of the life experiences he discussed in his interview were moments of feeling different, such as feeling he was an "imposter" in college and would be discovered and thrown out at any moment. Through tension narratives with external influences, such as being a poor student in college, Chris began to find internal acceptance of his self, or salience.

The identity salience that came from participant experiences of difference further increased their motivation for learning about and taking action toward critical social justice. Instances of difference were key in how participants understood their current selves and the work they did in higher education. For example, Anne considered the daily experiences of students with mental illness; Charlotte developed strategies for personal wellness that took social identity into consideration; Helen integrated new texts and projects into her classes to encourage cross-cultural understanding among her students; John focused on coalition building with campus units to create more inclusive policies for a diverse student body in his program; Tammy took daily action in class to demonstrate to her students that she truly cared

about them. Participants' awareness of what made them different was linked to how they thought about and acted upon social justice issues in their work.

The identification of caring and identity salience as motivators to practice critical social justice must also be considered in light of the shifting meaning-making filter as highlighted by the RMMDI. The shifting nature of the filter is important because it causes the manifestations of identity salience and caring to always be in flux. The means for achieving identity salience one day can change the next. How to demonstrate caring for one marginalized person or group can shift based on the context of any given situation. The shifting nature of the meaning-making filter suggests that critical social justice practitioners may benefit from continuously interacting with their environments in order to process the changes within them and those around them. The need to interact with others to maintain caring and identity salience as motivators may seem verbose; however, some campuses respond contrary to this idea. Covering a minimum of one diversity-focused topic for faculty and staff development sessions does not encourage ongoing interactions. A silo of diversity and inclusion units in one area of a campus does not encourage ongoing interactions. Without ongoing interactions related to social justice issues, practitioners are unable to continue the development needed to maintain caring and identity salience as positive motivators for practicing critical social justice.

Although critical social justice practitioners may have commonalities in their interactions with identity salience, caring, and the need for ongoing engagement with external influences, they may also be varied in the core identities they carry and how their social identities intersect. Even the nine participants of this study used dozens of different descriptors for their core identities. In this study, the three participants who were not yet

fully self-authored shared some negative viewpoints about their core attributes as compared to the six participants who were thought to be self-authored. Is the negative perspective about one's core common among other practitioners of social justice who are not self-authored? It is possible that cognitive dissonance that promotes growth toward self-authorship is brought about by white faculty and staff coming to terms with the intermingling of their privileged and oppressed social identities that are then filtered into their core identities. Perhaps white faculty and staff developmentally benefit from the cognitive exercise of conceding to the complexity and interconnectedness of their core and social identities.

The intersection of social identities was varied in how participants described their social experiences; however, they were conscious of the complexity that emerged from the intersection of their social identities – in particular with their whiteness and socio-economic status. Other social identities were discussed in other combinations, and this indicates that social justice practitioners are able to, or would benefit from, understanding the complexity of multiple dimensions of identity. Practitioners would likely benefit from understanding how the complexity of multiple identities informs their thinking and behavior and how, even with awareness, the privilege and/or oppression linked to certain identities is difficult to identify in the self. The understanding of the complexity of multiple dimensions of identity would make a social justice practitioner more adaptable to receiving critique on their privileged behaviors without attempting to negate their privilege because they are also connected to social identities that are marginalized.

Value of Critical Social Justice Work via Meaning-Making Structures

The value of critical social justice through the exploration of participant's meaning-structures followed a predictable pattern in that value came through on expressions of conflict or accomplishment. The conflict or accomplishment narratives aligned with the subject-object relationship associated with each particular level of the Social Maturity Model. Results also indicated what needs participants had in order to sustain their efforts as critical social justice practitioners.

Participants' meaning-making structures were easiest to identify through the subject-object interviews when they talked about the strong emotions they had experienced as they shared their narratives. The value they placed on practicing critical social justice was through their efforts to work through the subject-object relationship appropriate to their development within the Social Maturity Model. For the participants who were firmly in the third order of consciousness and in transition to the fourth order (self-authorship), they experienced critical social justice through the emotions they had after interacting with the emotions of others. The stability of individual relationships were key for how these participants valued social justice. For participants who were self-authored and heading toward the fifth order of consciousness, their meaning-making structures valued social justice work that aligned with their value systems. These participants appeared able to navigate the individual difficulties of social justice work as long as their value systems were validated. They experienced conflict when their value system was violated. The participant who reached the fifth order of consciousness valued critical social justice work that could be completed at the systems level, but involved multiple operating systems. This participant,

simultaneously, valued opportunities that encouraged people to connect with one another on an individual basis, not for the participant's personal benefit, but for others' benefit.

Participants appeared better able to sustain their efforts toward critical social justice when they could self-generate and self-sustain a value system as opposed to maintaining a singular value for social justice. In terms of white faculty and staff as social justice practitioners, I am suggesting they need a value system that is more complex than holding the singular value of social justice. The long term sustainability of being a critical social justice practitioner may be more likely when the person is at least self-authored in their meaning-making structure. Based on participant responses, the ability to effect change toward social justice likely moves from individual to systematic as cognitive development increases. Additionally, all of the participants acknowledged they had room to grow when it came to doing social justice work and that continued internal struggle, on their part, was an indicator of progress. When applied to other white faculty and staff in higher education, it is important to question how they are continuing their education and interaction with social justice issues, or even starting that journey at all.

Identity and the Social Maturity Model.

In terms of the Social Maturity Model, remember that six of the participants (Anne, Charlotte, Chris, John, Karmen, Tammy) were believed to be operating within or beyond a fourth order meaning-making structure. Their fluid relationship with their meaning-making filters was likely possible because they could maintain their self-generated values and self-worth in the face of external messages that did not align with how they perceived themselves when they opened their filters. Their value systems would have allowed them to close their

meaning-making filters to preserve their sense of self when outside contextual influences could become detrimental to their personal well-being.

For instance, Charlotte shared how she was coming to terms with her core attributes of being passionate and logical as they compared to prior messages she had received about gender and race:

Logic is one that people tell me… When I went to graduate school we used the Myers-Briggs… and I typed myself into the wrong group because I wanted to be a feeler and not a thinker, and I'm very much a thinker. And I was in this group with other people that their personality type was different from mine, and I was responding [to my group members] of "No, that's not right." And realizing that because of my beliefs around gender that I thought I needed to be more of a feeler, but I'm actually a thinker and that logic is more what I like… When I was younger, being around gender, feeling like I didn't fit into that gender role [of being female]. But I think as I learn more about racism and white culture I think it's actually tied into success as a white person because I think that's tied into the belief that to be successful that that's what you have to do. And that thinking, over emotions, is more valued. But I can be passionate, too, and logical. I can have both of those things at the same time.

In this excerpt, Charlotte weighed her identity as being logical and passionate against what daily interactions had taught her were expected of her as a female. Her narrative illustrated that through her meaning-making filter she connected racism and white culture to a societal preference that valued logic over passion in order to be deemed successful. Charlotte's filter served as a cognitive meeting place for her sense of self to analyze the messages she had received from external sources. The meaning-making filter was vital to Charlotte retaining

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her sense of self as a logical and passionate person because she defined those elements within her identity even though it went against the messaging she had received about who she should be as a woman or the requirements to be viewed as a successful person. The ability of Charlotte and the other five participants (Anne, Chris, John, Karmen, Tammy) to articulate instances of switching between an opened or closed filter was likely supported by their clearly defined and stabilized value systems (fourth order of consciousness from the Social Maturity Model). If their sense of self was shielded, or protected, by their value system it would make opening their meaning-making filters easier for them. Their value systems would have provided the cognitive strength to know when to close their filters.

In contrast, Bruce and Collin expressed a different level of awareness and ability to open or close their meaning-making filters during their interviews. Remember that Bruce and Collin had a difficult time describing their cores because, according to them, they usually thought of themselves in terms of their social identities. That Bruce and Collin focused on being socially defined rather than internally defined suggested their meaning-making filters operated in an opened state. For example, Bruce shared his awareness of how he defined his sense of self when he stated:

> I don't know whether or not I've had to establish a core because I never had to look inward for validation because everything was external. And so I never had to find resiliency because people love me for me.

That Bruce found validation externally points to an open filter. Although Bruce spoke of these things as in the past, his primarily negative view of his core (four out of five words) and his previously referenced comment that the activity asked him to consider his core "for the first time" suggested that closing his meaning-making filter was still a difficult process

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and occurred in a limited capacity. Collin also expressed a more open meaning-making filter when he said:

> I care more about what other people think and what they want to share about their stories than my own. So it's a struggle for me to write [my core] down… [I'm] indecisive in nature, that's in my core.

Similar to Bruce, Collin talked about being concerned more with what other people thought as opposed to his own experience and thought; indicative of a more open meaning-making filter. It seemed to be easier for Collin to think about external influences through others' stories than to focus on his own thinking about himself.

For Bruce and Collin, an open filter suggested their sense of self mirrored their external environments rather than being self-generated. As a point of comparison for what a self-generated self could look like, reconsider Charlotte. She incorporated passion and logic into her sense of self from reflection on what she thought rather than continuing to believe the external messaging she had received that passion and logic could not operate together or that being female meant she could not be logical. During the interview, Bruce and Collin described the ongoing struggles they had in trying to discern what they thought about themselves because they could reflect on it or if their sense of self came from what others thought about them.

Bruce and Collin's narratives suggested difficulty with opening and closing their meaning-making filters; they seemed to function more consistently with an open filter. Helen's interview was also relatively void of reflections that supported a meaning-making filter that could operate fluidly between being opened and closed. Instead, Helen's narrative suggested a more closed meaning-making filter. Remember from earlier that Helen easily

defined her core attributes but she experienced ongoing anxiety over how others responded to her taking action based on her value system. I believe the juxtaposition of Helen's strong sense of self but struggle in navigating others' perceptions of her indicated a closed meaning-making filter. When the other eight participants explained their RMMDI templates, they spoke in a way that indicated an interpretive understanding of themselves, with words and phrases such as "sometimes" "generally" "more often than not" and "I have found myself to be." Helen described herself using more definitive language, with her most commonly used phrases of "I am" and "I am not." I believe the language Helen used to describe herself was the result of a more closed meaning-making filter that kept outside influences from weighing in on how Helen thought about herself. At one point in the interview, Helen also stated that "I have to learn on my own." This statement was likely another indicator of Helen's closed meaning-making filter.

In both interviews Helen shared multiple examples of procrastination when she knew that she needed to do something but had delayed.   For instance, when Helen explained her core and social identities she said:

I'm often late with deadlines, and this bothers me a great deal… I'm working on a piece right now that I've started over three times. And you'd think after writing for 30 years I wouldn't have those kinds of problems, but I do.

Other instances of Helen's procrastination came up in reference to telling her department chair about her misgivings over the proposed merger of her academic department with another, or when she expressed avoidance of communicating with colleagues that the project they collaborated on was canceled because she could not finish her portion of it. I believe Helen closed her meaning-making filter to protect her sense of self from the harm it

perceived from external influences, such as others being displeased with her. Helen rarely mentioned moments of her altering her perceptions or beliefs based on the consideration of outside viewpoints. The few moments Helen mentioned interacting with other perspectives she shared a difficulty in getting over those moments. In one example, Helen stated:

> I've had one incident here, which I won't talk too much about, in which I was really –
> I was really called a racist. And I didn't think I was. And it really hurt, and it took
> me a couple of years to make sense of that offense that was created. For me, I didn't
> think that I had broken… and I try very hard to be responsive to students.

For Helen to take "a couple of years" to overcome the hurt her sense of self experienced over being called racist and the conclusion that she was still unclear on what she had done wrong in that situation supports the idea that Helen mainly operated with a closed meaning-making filter. Had her filter been opened more, perhaps Helen could have engaged with others about the conflict she experienced. Instead, I believe Helen closed her meaning-making filter as a form of self-protection, while simultaneously leaving only herself to work through the confusion and harm the experience caused for her.

The ability of the meaning-making filter of the RMMDI to fluidly open and close may be an indicator of how critical social justice practitioners keep an open mind or protect the inner self when an experience is too much for their existing cognitive structure. How could an individual's meaning-making filter be monitored for signs of conflict that could either promote growth or hinder it? Could self-knowledge of your filter assist white faculty and staff in identifying personal obstacles to achieving identity salience?

Motivation for doing social justice work in the subject-object interview.

Participants in the subject-object interviews were asked to reflect on different types of tension and success they had recently experienced in relation to social justice issues in their work environment. The design of the interview made strong emotions an obvious marker for identifying ways in which participants experienced doing social justice work.

Although every emotion was referenced at some point during the interviews, the more telling motivation for participants thinking about and acting upon social justice issues came from *why* certain situations elicited a strong emotion from them. The reason for each strong emotion directly informed how each participant was scored within the Social Maturity Model during the subject-object interview because it likely represented what the participant was subject to in the subject-object relationship.

The three participants (Bruce, Collin, Helen) who were transitioning between the third and fourth orders of consciousness experienced strong emotions related to balancing their self-worth with the relationships of those around them as they worked to establish a self-generated value system. They were moved to thought, action, and reflection as it related to how the situation made them feel about themselves, their emerging value system, and/or their desire to act upon those values to advocate for others. Some of those instances included when Bruce felt anger over his dedication toward social justice advocacy being called into question by colleagues (self-worth), when Collin wondered how long he could sustain a direct role in social justice advocacy (establishing values), and when Helen presented on the need to consider democratic processes as the way to bring about social justice (acting upon values).

The participants (Charlotte, Karmen, Tammy) who operated with a fully established fourth order meaning-making system, were motived to think and act to support social justice advocacy when they experienced emotional tension related to their value system, taking responsibility for how they responded to conflict with others, and awareness of how many parts formed a system of rules. Some of those instances came up when Charlotte spoke up in staff meeting about concerns related to strategic planning (established value system), when Tammy chose to not be derailed by an interruption during her presentation (taking responsibility for conflict), and when Karmen realized there had to be changes in other areas of her work in order for her students to stop needing an advocate (systems thinking).

The participants (Anne and Chris) who were just beginning to transition toward fifth order were motivated to support social justice advocacy in ways that were similar to the previous group of participants who operated consistently in the fourth order. Additionally, Anne and Chris were further motivated to think and act when they experienced conflict related to operating between contradictory systems and when they saw an opportunity to help others establish their own value systems. Some of these instances included when Chris shared his desire for the university to "show some humanity" and that he stayed awake at night considering the "rightness and wrongness" of the world (contradiction of systems), or when Anne disclosed the value of her sharing her experiences with mental illness with her students because it was a topic not easily discussed in the university setting (shared vulnerability).

The participant (John) who operated with a fifth order meaning-making structure was similar to Anne and Chris in his motivations to support social justice. He, too, thought about and took action to help others navigate between contradictory systems by creating space for

human connection and discussion to occur. Examples of this included when he spoke of his role as convener for students of color (human connection) or when he took steps behind the scenes to get certain faculty to be willing to entertain new ideas for the equitable awarding of scholarship funds (discussion).

The subject-object challenges for each participant did not only have relevance within the Social Maturity Model. As other parts of the analysis and findings illustrate, the tension narratives for each participant, as framed within the Social Maturity Model, provided a deeper understanding of how participants thought about and navigated social justice issues in their work.

Navigating Resistance Narratives in Critical Social Justice Work

There were moments in the design and implementation of this study that research assistants and participants expressed how the use of storytelling assisted them in clarifying their thoughts related to resistance narratives they encountered with social justice issues. For white faculty and staff in higher education, narratives may serve as a powerful way for processing through tensions that arise from social justice issues, either in the self or by listening to the narratives of other people.

Another take-away of attempting to understand the tension narratives of participants in the study was that seemingly productive and/or sustainable coping strategies should not always be applied in every situation or in the same way that it may have been previously applied. The handful of participant strategies that were coded as mixed in terms of productivity and time frame were the result of resistance narratives of which the participants were only sometimes aware. Some of the mixed strategies depended on the motivation for why the participant used them, which connects to earlier discussion points of this study

where intent and impact of an action must be aligned to avoid the perpetuation of discrimination (such as in the form of cultural racism as one of the frames of color blind racism). If a white faculty or staff member did the right thing to support social justice but did it for the wrong reasons, then the power of white supremacy is maintained in the long term, regardless of the short term gains that were made.

In the case of the participants of this study, the mixed-coded strategies appeared to come out during the interviews because they were the result of a resistance narrative the participant had discussed. Participants could not always articulate why their response or proposed strategy could be problematic, although sometimes they did. White faculty and staff in higher education could benefit from reflecting and sharing about their responses to conflict they have in relation to social justice scenarios. By focusing on moments of tension, white faculty and staff could begin to analyze their motivations, with the help of others, for the strategies they use to navigate resistance narratives in their social justice work.

Participants also navigated resistance narratives in the way that some of them discussed the contradictions in their work – that as white individuals in authority positions they could be perpetuating oppression even if they had good intentions or held marginalized social identities. Put another way, some of the participants questioned what amount of safety and security they should transfer to marginalized identities and what amount of power was acceptable for them to maintain for their own wellness. The general consensus of response from the participants who explored this in their interviews was that they maintained their hired position within the institution and used that authority to help create space for marginalized voices to engage with the university. Although participants recognized that whiteness had contributed to some of the privileges they experienced, they also expressed

they did not believe that whiteness alone had been the sole reason for their professional achievements.

This conundrum raises the question – is it possible for a white faculty or staff member to contribute to social justice as long as their power is maintained? Based on the participants of this study being identified by others on their campus as being social justice advocates, I think it is possible for white faculty and staff to still contribute to social justice in higher education, *but it is not a guarantee*. Again, being well meaning in one's efforts does not guarantee productive or sustainable results. If a white faculty or staff member were to use their institutional power to enact equitable systematic changes (via policy and procedures) and then bind themselves to the outcomes of those practices then they can still positively contribute to social justice. But if they do not help to enact change or do so but use their power to still operate outside of the guidelines of which those equitable policies are meant to undo then white faculty and staff perpetuate white supremacy.

Moving Forward

This study represented only part of understanding how white faculty and staff can operate as critical social justice practitioners. Through a framework that included elements of meaning-making structures, multiple dimensions of identity, and systematic oppression I have identified potential benefits for continuing to examine the social justice advocacy role of white faculty and staff in higher education. Based on the findings of this study, I believe I can offer suggestions for how to encourage the development of white faculty and staff toward becoming critical social justice practitioners. This study has raised additional questions for future research related to this topic.

Encouraging the development of critical social justice practitioners.

The results of this study have provided suggestions for how individuals and institutions can support white faculty and staff in higher education toward becoming critical social justice practitioners, although white faculty and staff have to be willing to engage on this topic. If there is not some type of buy-in or motivation for participating in development toward being a critical social justice practitioner then white faculty or staff are less like to make progress. Still, I believe that all institutions should set forth expectation that white faculty and staff are expected to learn about social justice issues so they can be prepared to take action when they are cognitively ready to do so. The suggestions for supporting the development of white faculty and staff as critical social justice practitioners is divided into two categories: logistics and areas of knowledge.

Logistics.

White faculty and staff who choose to work toward practicing critical social justice need to set realistic expectations in what they can accomplish on their own. Development toward being a critical social justice practitioner should include a mix of internal and external interactions. One of the issues with critical whiteness studies as it currently exists is that it can allow white individuals to only internally reflect on their role in perpetuating white supremacy but never yield an ability to take action to change systematic oppression. A white faculty or staff member wanting to contribute positively to social justice efforts should be open to critique of their work and self-reflection by a mix of people who share and do not share their identities. Additionally, these white faculty and staff members should keep in mind a need for patience and empathy in their pursuit of constructive feedback, especially from marginalized identities. While white faculty and staff cannot become practitioners of

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social justice without the input from people of marginalized identities, they should not demand the undivided attention of those same people. Living as a member of a marginalized identity can bring about its own level of exhaustion. White faculty and staff must work to find the balance between being open to critique, especially from people of color, while simultaneously not relying on people of color to do all of the work for white college educators.

Engagement with social justice issues must be continuous for white faculty and staff. Consistency in setting aside time for learning about and advocating for social justice issues is necessary because of the ever-changing nature of meaning-making structures. This means continuing to learn about and engage with a social justice topic even if a person believes they know everything there is to know about that particular issue. Only through on-going development can a white faculty or staff member reflect and act upon their meaning-making structures as they relate to social justice issues. To avoid learning and thinking about a topic because we have done so before would be the equivalent of me assuming that the cognitive structures of my participants can never change, or that I learned everything I could about them through the two interviews I conducted with each of them. Avoidance of social justice topics we believe we have already learned would be like refusing to read a class work of literature in adulthood because you read it once before in high school. I do not believe that our more current selves have nothing to learn from material we encountered as our older, less developed selves. By continuing to interact with social justice issues on a regular basis, white faculty and staff are provided more opportunity to construct a more self-sustaining meaning-making structure as a practitioner of critical social justice.

Areas of knowledge.

The framework provided in this study may be helpful for creating a holistic approach to creating training modules or exploring personal development for white faculty or staff in higher education. Engagement with others as a way to share stories related to conflict and accomplishments in social justice can be a way to gain clarity of understanding topics such as core identities, social identities, messaging of external influences, and conflict. Further, exploring conflict related to social justice issues can help college educators identify points of systematic oppression and make them easier to name, see, describe, and take action against. Participants in the study appeared to have frequent encounters with systematic oppression in their institution; I believe it is worth the energy for all college educators, not just white faculty and staff, to consider how conflict around them could be an indicator of systematic oppression.

Another area of knowledge white faculty and staff should explore is the types of strategies they should or should not use in response to systematic oppression in their institutions. The participants of this used strategies related to the Learning Partnerships Model and the seven other categories of reflection, difficult conversations, networking, mentoring, finding purpose, general knowledge, and politics. It is not enough for white faculty and staff to know about these strategies but to also train and evaluate how they use them based on the context of their own identities and those of the situation where the strategy is used. There is not one way to use these strategies and the use for them can shift as our meaning-making structures cause us to shift the way we interact with our environments.

Questions for future study.

Prior to starting this study, I expected to have more questions than answers at the conclusion. I was not disappointed. I have posed several questions throughout the findings and discussion of this study that, for me, have culminated in two areas of additional questions that I would be interested in pursuing in future research and practice.

First, how applicable is the use of the conceptual framework in this study as a way to identify locations of oppression for discussion, defining, acting upon them? If the study were expanded to more participants would other trends emerge? Would the same or similar trends hold steady?

Second, how can the resistance narrative of being a white faculty or staff member in higher education assist them into growing to be a contributor to social justice rather than a perpetuation of white supremacy through the maintenance of white safety and security in positions of power? What is a valid level of discomfort, fear, and loss of security for the process of power being transferred to people of marginalized groups? What level of discomfort inappropriately crosses the line of undue stress that should be understood as a universal level of being that no person should have to fall below? When are white people resisting the loss of the advantages they have received as white individuals and when do they have a valid claim to something needed for survival?

Further critique and action is needed around the topic of how white faculty and staff who practice critical social justice transfer their power to marginalized people and *remain active and under the political rule in that environment as opposed to leaving for another environment where their power is still maintained.* Otherwise, the actions being taken are not truly critical social justice and will not last.

Limitations of the Study

There are four primary shortcomings of this research that I wish to highlight, although I consider the list to be seemingly endless since there is always room to argue for what could have been in a study. The first limitation I want to highlight was from my short-term usage of the RMMDI activity and subject-object interview to understand the complex and fluid elements of participants' meaning-making structures. Meaning-making structures were always in motion as people endlessly and simultaneously reflected on their environment, their selves, and their actions. This meant that any data I collected was truly a snapshot of what participants were expressing. My interpretation of the results may have differed if I had spent more time with participants in the time frame of the study or if I had extended the time period in which data collection occurred.

The second limitation I want to focus on deals with the complexity of the theories I pulled from to create my theoretical framework. The layering of constructivism, intersectionality, and critical whiteness studies provided a foundation on which to organize my study; however, I am not satisfied with the final result of what I have produced from this study. By making my theoretical framework too complex I may have missed some of the findings as I struggled to organize the information I had. The answers to my research questions were not easy to clarify. There was much more writing that could have been done on the interpretation of what participants shared in their interviews. I have chosen to focus on what I thought was most valuable but there was more to explore within this study in terms of additional explanations or patterns related to how participants understood themselves while practicing critical social justice.

For my third limitation of this study, I want to draw attention to an issue that arose when the second scorer and I rated the subject-object interviews. Transition to the next stage in the Social Maturity Model depends on a person working through cognitive dissonance by choosing to consistently act based on the higher level meaning-making structure. If a person frequently acts based on the lower level meaning-making structure then they would be scored as operating in a lower order of consciousness (Kegan, 1994; Lahey et al., 2011). One issue with this distinction between orders of consciousness was that the model is unclear on what would be a reasonable threat to safety and wellness to have caused someone to knowingly respond to a situation for their survival and not as evidence of a lower order of consciousness. The Social Maturity Model did not provide a clear distinction on what should be regarded as a legitimate concern for safety and what was the demonstration of a person who had chosen to not pursue the higher development of which their meaning-making structure was capable? For this study, the second scorer and I had to make the distinction of what was valid motivation of fear versus a meaning-making structure that was not capable of supporting the self in operating within a higher order of consciousness. Not only were the second rater and I scoring subject-object interviews for the first time, we were also filtering participants' comments through our own lens of privileged and/or marginalized identities to determine what was valid fear for participants' safety. The second rater and I discussed this issue repeatedly during our analysis sessions. These discussions occurred after we scored the first participant and talked so we could streamline our process, then we spoke about it again after we had separately scored the other eight participants and were comparing our scores. We attempted to give participants the benefit of the doubt for their meaning-making structures by not using those parts of the interviews as evidence of a lower order of

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consciousness. Instead, we looked for additional transcript bits to determine what order of consciousness we believed was most appropriate for describing participants' meaning-making structures. As a limitation, it meant that the subject-object scores could have been too lenient or too harsh in determining the final score given to each participant.

The final limitation of this study that I want to emphasize was that this study has been put forward from the words and perspective of a researcher, me, who lives and thinks within the identities of being a white, heterosexual, able-bodied, cisgender woman in her 30s who is college-educated, middle class, non-Christian, and a mother, wife, and daughter. This study has drawn assumptions about others' identities and experiences – some of which I have some experience with and many that I did not. This study was limited in that it has not yet been opened to critique by people of marginalized identities, particularly people of color. In order for white college educators to, as Bruce said "have any semblance of authenticity" I must seek out and be open to critique from people of marginalized identities and move forward with that critique in mind as continue on my journey to be a critical social justice practitioner.

Concluding Thoughts

What do I as the researcher do next? I do not know the exact answer, but I want to close with an excerpt from my field journal that I wrote when I first started to write about my analysis and findings in Chapter 4. I was stuck and procrastinating on my writing. In the six months that passed from when I wrote the passage to when I completed writing my dissertation, I re-read the passage multiple times:

Fear. What if I don't have anything worthwhile to say? What if I see things that are not really there, but are just a way to prove my ideas are not perpetuating

whiteness?... But my whiteness is there. It is true. I do have something to prove – so shut the fuck up and *say something* so you can actually *do something*! Saying is the first step toward being prepared to do something about it.

This work is a contribution to the discussion and action on social justice advocacy. I welcome the critique of those who would offer it, will seek out additional feedback from those who feel they were not welcomed to add their voice, and I will continue to push to evaluate myself and not wait for others to do the work for me.

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Appendix A: Examples of Fourth Order Thinking

Taken directly from: Kegan, R. (1994). *In over our heads: The mental demands of modern life*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, pp. 302-303

In the work setting

1. Be the inventor or owner of our work (rather than see it as owned and created by the employer); distinguish our work from our job

2. Be self-initiating, self-correcting, self-evaluating (rather than dependent on others to frame the problems, initiate adjustments, or determine whether things are going acceptably well)

3. Be guided by our own visions at work (rather than be without a vision or captive of the authority's agenda)

4. Take responsibility for what happens to us at work externally and internally (rather than see our present internal circumstances and future external possibilities as caused by someone else)

5. Be accomplished masters of our particular work roles, jobs, or careers (rather than have an apprenticing or imitating relationship to what we do)

6. Conceive of the organization from the "outside in" as a whole; see our relation to the whole; see the relation of the parts to the whole (rather than see the rest of the organization and its parts only from the perspective of our own part, from the "inside out").

Adults as learners

1. Exercise critical thinking

2. Examine ourselves, our culture, and our milieu in order to understand how to separate what we feel from what we should feel, what we value from what we should value, and what we want from what we should want

3. Be a self-directed learner (take initiative; set our own goals and standards; use experts, institutions, and other resources to pursue these goals; take responsibility for our direction and productivity in learning)

4. See ourselves as the co-creators of the culture (rather than only shaped by culture)

5. Read actively (rather than only receptively) with our own purpose in mind

6. Write to ourselves and bring our teachers into our self-reflection (rather than write mainly to our teachers and for our teachers)

7. Take charge of the concepts and theories of a courses or discipline, marshalling on behalf of our independently chosen topic its internal procedures for formulating and validating knowledge.

Psychotherapy

1. Perceive our standards as based on our own experience (rather than upon the attitudes or desires of others).

2. Perceive ourselves as the evaluators of experience (rather than regard ourselves as existing in a world where the values are inherent in [experience] …).

3. Place the basis of standards within ourselves, recognizing that the goodness or badness of any experience … is not something inherent in (that experience; rather it) is a value placed on it by ourselves.

4. Transform our energies from manipulating the environment for support into developing greater and greater self-support.

5. Learn to stand on our feet emotionally, intellectually, economically.

6. Learn to stop re-indoctrinating ourselves with the unwholesome philosophies of life, or values, we imbibed and taught ourselves in youth.

7. Learn to challenge and question our own basic values, our own thinking, so that we really think for ourselves.

8. Take responsibility for our lives.

9. Learn the psychological myths or scripts that govern our behavior and re-author them (rather than just use insight for better understanding of why the script is as it is).

Partnering

1. Be psychologically independent of our partners.

2. Have a well-differentiated and clearly defined sense of self.

3. Transcend an idealized, romanticized approach to love and closeness.

4. Set limits on children, selves, extra-family involvements to preserve couple.

5. Support our partner's development.

6. Listen empathically and non-defensively.

7. Communicate feelings directly and responsibly.

8. Have an awareness of how our psychological history inclines or directs us.

Appendix B: Request for Research Assistance

Dear (**INSERT NAME**),

I am contacting you to request your assistance in identifying potential participants for the research I am conducting to fulfill my dissertation requirements for the doctoral program in Educational Leadership at Appalachian State University. My research is titled "Social Identities and Thought Processes of How White Faculty and Staff Practice Social Justice in Higher Education."

The purpose of this research is to develop an understanding of how white faculty and staff in higher education understand and advocate for social justice in their daily work with students and within institutional policies and procedures. This research will seek to describe how participants think about their social identities, social justice, and how they act upon those thoughts in their work. The findings of this research will be used to complete my dissertation requirements for a doctoral degree at Appalachian State University. Results may be shared at a later date via conference presentation or academic publication.

As the Chief Diversity Officer at your institution, I am hoping you would be able and willing to identify White faculty and staff on your campus who you believe are aware of social justice issues and advocate for positive social change in their work. Specifically, I am looking for 5 White faculty and 5 White staff who I can contact about my research to see if they are willing to participate. When I contact these potential participants I will inform them that "you were recently identified by other constituents who work with diversity initiatives at your institution as a White faculty or staff member who applies social justice concepts in your work."

As of December 16, 2015**,** my research has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at Appalachian State University 15-0285**.** If you have any questions about my research, you can contact me at rXXXXXXXXXXXXXXj@appstate.edu or call my personal cell phone at XXX-XXX-XXXX. My faculty advisor is Dr. Nickolas Jordan, and he can be e-mailed at jXXXXXXa@appstate.edu by phone at 828-262-XXXX. You can also contact the Appalachian Institutional Review Board Administrator at 828-262-2130 (business days), through email at irb@appstate.edu or at Appalachian State University, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, IRB Administrator, Boone, NC 28608.

I would appreciate the opportunity to speak with you further about my research request.

Sincerely,

Cathy Roberts-Cooper
ASU Doctoral Student
XXX-XXX-XXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX@appstate.edu

Appendix C: Request to Potential Participants

Dear **(INSERT PARTICIPANT NAME),**

I am contacting you to request your specific participation in a research study I am conducting to fulfill my dissertation requirements for the doctoral program in Educational Leadership at Appalachian State University. My research is titled "Social Identities and Thought Processes of How White Faculty and Staff Practice Social Justice in Higher Education."

You were recently identified by other constituents who work with diversity initiatives at your institution as a white faculty or staff member who applies social justice concepts in your work. I asked faculty and staff at your institution if they knew of any white faculty or staff members who they believe are aware of social justice issues and advocate for positive social change in their work. This invitation to participate in the research study has gone out to a small number of potential participants and is based solely on recommendations from other faculty or staff on your campus.

The purpose of this research is to develop an understanding of how white faculty and staff in higher education understand and advocate for social justice concepts to their daily work with students and within institutional policies and procedures. This research will seek to describe how participants think about their social identities, social justice, and how they act upon those thoughts in their work.

As of December 16, 2015, my research has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at Appalachian State University 15-0285. If you are interested in learning more about what participation in this research would entail, please contact me. I would appreciate the opportunity to speak with you further about my research and your potential participation.

Sincerely,

Cathy Roberts-Cooper
ASU Doctoral Student
XXX-XXX-XXXX
rXXXXXXXXXXXXj@appstate.edu

Social Identities and Thought Processes of How White Faculty and Staff Practice Social Justice in Higher Education

Principal Investigator: Cathy Roberts-Cooper
Department: Leadership and Education Studies
Contact Information:

        <u>Principal Investigator</u> – Cathy Roberts-Cooper, XXX-XXX-XXXX, XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX@appstate.edu

        <u>Faculty Advisor</u> – Dr. Nickolas Jordan, 828-262-XXXX, XXXXXXX@appstate.edu

Purpose:
The purpose of this research is to develop an understanding of how white faculty and staff in higher education understand and apply social justice concepts. This research will seek to describe how participants think about their social identities, social justice, and how they act upon those thoughts in their work. The findings of this research will be used to complete requirements for the doctoral dissertation of the principal investigator. Results may be shared at a later date via conference presentation or academic publication.

Why am I being invited to take part in this research?
If you volunteer to take part in this study, you will be 1 of about 10 people to do so. You are invited to participate in this study because you were identified by other constituents at your institution as a White faculty or staff member who applies social justice concepts in your work. If you are willing to participate in this study, please check the following characteristics that would make a person eligible:
- You self-identify your race as white
- You have earned at least a master's degree
- You have worked at your current institution as a faculty or staff member for at least 1 year (you do not need to have worked in the same position for at least 1 year)

What will I be asked to do?
- You will be asked to fill out a form that provides demographic data for the study and contact information so the principal investigator can communicate with you to arrange the meeting times and to contact you for any clarifying questions after you have completed meeting with the principal investigator.
- You will be asked to meet with the principal investigator 2 separate times in the time span of **[insert one month span]** in 2015. In the first meeting you will be asked to complete a 60- to 90-minute activity, and in the second meeting you will be asked to complete a 60- to 90-minute interview. Meetings will take place on the main campus of your institution in a private room.
- In the 60- to 90-minute activity you will be asked to describe how you identify and think about your social identities (e.g. race, sex, spirituality).

- In the 60- to 90-minute interview you will be asked to share your experiences with applying social justice concepts in your work at your current institution.
- Both activities will be audio-recorded for later transcription. Any paperwork you complete in the activity will be collected for later review. Any paperwork you complete in the interview will not be viewed or collected by the research team.

What are possible harms or discomforts that I might experience during the research?
To the best of our knowledge, the risk of harm and discomfort from participating in this research study is no more than you would experience in everyday life. You may find some of the questions we ask (or the social identity activity we ask you to do) to be upsetting and stressful. If so, we can share with you contact information for people who may be able to help you with these feelings.

Some of the answers you provide may be very personal or indicate behavior which you do not want made public. This information could be damaging to your reputation if information is released outside of this research.

How will you keep my information confidential?
The information gathered in this study is confidential. This means you will be referenced in any write-up or presentation by a pseudonym (fake name); however, it is possible for the research team to determine which information was contributed by you to the study. Your real name will not be used in any published or presented materials. The key that indicates what pseudonym is assigned to you will be saved in a password protected format and stored on a flash drive that is secured in a desk drawer and room that are both locked. Audio recordings will be stored in the same location as the pseudonym key. Original recordings and the pseudonym key will be destroyed after 3 years.

What are possible benefits of this research?
This research should help us learn more about the ways in which white faculty and staff apply social justice concepts to their work in higher education. We hope to use this research to inform future social justice education programs geared toward white faculty and staff. Additionally, this study should help us identify some of the ways that social justice issues are encountered in higher education so that solutions can be generated to bring about positive, lasting, social change at a systematic level. There may be no personal benefit from your participation but the information gained by doing this research may help others in the future.

Will I be paid for taking part in the research?
You will not be paid for the time you volunteer while being in this study.

What will it cost me to take part in this research?
It will not cost you any money to be part of this research.

Do I have to participate?
Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. If you choose not to volunteer, there is no penalty or consequence. If you decide to take part in the study you can still decide

at any time that you no longer want to participate. You will not lose any benefits or rights you would normally have if you do.

This research project has been approved on December 16, 2015 by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Appalachian State University. This approval will expire on December 15, 2016 unless the IRB renews the approval of this research.

Whom can I contact if I have a question?

If you have questions about this research project, you can call Cathy Roberts-Cooper, Principal Investigator, at XXX-XXX-XXXX, or through e-mail at rXXXXXXXXXXXXXj@appstate.edu. You can contact the Appalachian Institutional Review Board Administrator at 828-262-2130 (business days), through email at irb@appstate.edu or at Appalachian State University, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, IRB Administrator, Boone, NC 28608.

I have decided I want to take part in this research. What should I do now?

If you have read this form, had the opportunity to ask questions about the research and received satisfactory answers, and want to participate, then sign the consent form and keep a copy for your records.

_____
Participant's Name (PRINT)   Signature
           Date

Appendix E: Participant Demographic Information

First Name: _____   Date Filled Out: _____

Last Name: _____   Sex: _____

Birthday (MM/DD/YYYY): _____   Race: _____

E-mail: _____

Phone: _____

Position Title: _____

Department: _____

Have worked in this position since (MM/YYYY):_____

Have worked at this institution since (MM/YYYY):_____

Work Classification (circle most appropriate):   faculty   staff

Highest level of education obtained: Master's   Doctorate   Other:_____

What was the focus of study for your master's degree(s) and what year did you graduate?

_____

What was the focus of study for your doctorate or other degree(s) and what year did you graduate?

_____

Appendix F: Protocol for the Subject-Object Interview

Room Set-up
- Private room with 2 chairs and a table or other writing space

Materials Needed
- Digital audio-recording device
- Blank paper (for researcher notes)
- 2 pencils
- 1 clipboard
- 10 index cards, each with one of the following titles on it:
    - Success
    - Anxious, Nervous
    - Purposeful, Important to Me and/or Others
    - How you've Changed, are Changing
    - Torn, Conflicted
    - Sad
    - Angry
    - Strong Stand, Conviction
    - Guilt
    - Moved, Touched

I.   Welcome & Introduction:

[Researcher Reads]: "Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. This portion of the project will be a 60- to 90-minute interview. Last time we met, I asked you to explore and articulate to me how you understand your identities on a personal and social level. Now that you have had time to reflect on how you understand your own identity, this last part of the study will ask you to consider moments when you have applied social justice concepts to your work at the university. The goal of this interview is to learn how you think about social justice issues in the context of your work and how you make sense of your experiences with applying social justice concepts to your work. Remember that you do not have to talk about anything that you do not want to share."

II.   Generating Content:

[Researcher Reads]: "I am going to give you 10 index cards that are titled with an emotion or thought process. You will have 15-20 minutes to look at each card and recall experiences you have had in the last several weeks, maybe even in the last couple of months, where you have felt the emotion or gone through the process listed on the card. To help you remember these experiences, I would like you to use the index cards to jot down notes that will help you recall those memories if you choose to talk about them during the interview. The cards will not be collected at the end, and I will not see what you have written on them. The cards are for you to keep; it is your choice what you do with them after the interview. We do not have

to talk about anything that you do not want to talk about, regardless of whether it is written on one of the cards."

[While still holding the index cards, the researcher gives a 1-2 sentence explanation of what type of experience each card title is referencing. Researcher then gives index cards to participants}

"Start with the first card and take a moment to think about the most recent times that you have experienced what is listed on the card in reference to doing social justice work in your job. Are there two or three things that come to mind? Just jot down on the card what you need to remind yourself of what those times were. If nothing comes to mind for a certain card you can skip it and go on to the next card."

III.   Participant Narration of Experiences:

[Researcher Reads]: "Now we have an hour or so to talk about some of the experiences you have recalled or jotted down. You can decide where we start. Is there one card you felt more strongly about than the others?.... "

[*Notes to the researcher*]: As the participant shares stories, the researcher should listen for what is important to the participant and allow the narrative to be told. Once the story is told, the researcher should ask probing questions to explore why these experiences are important. By inquiring into why something is important, the researcher can begin to form a hypothesis of what meaning-making structures are operating for the individual and then test the hypothesis during the interview.

IV.   Conclusion:

[Researcher Reads]: "Thank you, again, for sharing your time for this research study. This interview concludes the last formal part of the research study. I do not anticipate needing to interview you further; however, I may contact you if I need clarification on a point you shared during the process. It is still up to you if you choose to share any additional information with me. If you have any questions about this study or need assistance related to participating in this study, please do not hesitate to contact me."

Adapted from the Administering the Subject-Object Interview form by Lahey et al., 2011, appendix F.

Appendix G: Subject-Object Analysis Formulation Process Sheet

Name or Code of Interviewee: Analysis Page #:

Bit #/ Interview Page #	Range of Hypotheses	Questions
	1 1(2) ½ 2/1 2(1) 2 2(3) 2/3 3/2 3(2) 3 3(4) ¾ 4/3 4(3) 4 4(5) 4/5 5/4 5(4)	1) What structural evidence leads you to these hypotheses? 2) What would you need to narrow the range of plausible hypotheses? 3) On what grounds are you rejecting plausible counter-hypotheses?

From *A Guide to the Subject-Object Interview: Its administration and interpretation* by Lahey et al., 2011, appendix F. Replicated with permission from the authors. Copyright 2011 © by Minds At Work. All rights reserved.

Appendix H: Subject-Object Analysis Overall Formulation Sheet

Name or Code of Interviewee: Analysis Page #:

    A. <u>Tentative Overall Hypotheses</u> (minimum of 3 bits reflective of each hypothesis):

    B. <u>Rejected Tentative Hypothesis/Hypotheses and Reason(s) for Rejection:</u>
        (use back of sheet if necessary)

        1. Hypoth: _____ Why rejected:

        2. Hypoth: _____ Why rejected:

    C. <u>SINGLE OVERALL SCORE</u> (minimum of 3 bits reflective solely of this score):

        (if interview not scorable with a single score, enter range of scores*)

        *[If unable to formulate single score, explain what further information needed to reach single score.]

Appendix I: Protocol for RMMDI Activity

Room Set-up
- Private room with 2 chairs and a table or other writing space

Materials Needed
- Digital audio-recording device
- Blank paper (for researcher notes)
- 2 pencils
- 1 clipboard
- 1 Blank copy of the MMDI Template (see below)

I. Welcome & Introduction:

[Researcher Reads]: "Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. This first portion of the project will be a 60- to 90-minute activity and answering questions about the activity. The purpose of the activity is to have you create a visual of how you identify your personal and social identities. I will provide you with a template and instructions for how to create this visual representation of your multiple identities. After you have completed the template I will ask you to respond to a few processing questions about the visual you created. The goal of this session is to learn how you identify yourself in the context of social identities, personality traits, and how well you believe these categories describe who you are as a unique individual. The information you provide today of how you see yourself as an individual interacting within our society will be compared alongside the information you provide in the second interview about your work on social justice issues. I am interested in understanding how your awareness of your social identities may relate to the social justice work you do on campus. Remember that you do not have to create the visual representation or talk about anything that you do not want to share. Do you have any questions? Are you ready to proceed?"

II. Generating Content:

[Researcher Reads]: "The template I am about to provide to you is meant to help you create a visual representation of how you identify your multiple identities in this moment, meaning that this will only be a snapshot of how you think about yourself at this time. If you were to do the same activity an hour later then you might fill out the template differently. These differences are OK. As we move forward in this study, you may find that you think and feel differently about the information you provide on this template as you think about our interactions. Again, these differences are OK and are to be expected because how we understand our identities shift based on our daily experiences and how we reflect upon them. I will collect your visual aid at the end of the session today."

(Researcher gives blank MMDI template to participant)

CORE

"Here is the template. We are going to start with the dot located at the center of the sheet. This dot is meant to represent what I will refer to as the core of your personality, or inner self. Your core is comprised of personal attributes or characteristics. This part of your identity may not be easily visible to other people unless they get to know you on a personal level. I would like you to take 3-5 minutes to write down on the sheet 5-10 words that describe your core identity. Examples might include words such as "smart" "honest" or "considerate." Do you have any questions?"

(Once participant questions are answered, researcher allows 3-5 minutes of quiet time for participant to complete the task. Monitor participant to see when they seem to be wrapping up on their own. If participant is still working as time hits 4 minutes, researcher will give participant a heads up to take one more minute to wrap-up their list of core terms.)

CONTEXT

"Let's take a look at the rest of the template now that you have started to define your core. There are 6 rings circling the dot that depicts the core. Each ring is meant to represent the context of one of your social identities, such as your family background, sociocultural conditions, current experiences, or career decisions and life planning. The identities represented by these rings might be identities that you use to describe yourself or those that others use to describe you. I would like you to take 3-5 minutes to label the rings with 3-6 social identities that describe you. Each ring should have only one identity written next to it. If you think of more than 6 identities that describe you, please label the 6 that you think about the most often. Examples might include your sex, spirituality, or class. Do you have any questions?"

(Once participant questions are answered, researcher allows 3-5 minutes of quiet time for participant to complete the task. Monitor time the same way as when participant filled out their core identities.)

SALIENCE

"Next, I want to ask you to indicate how the contextual identities, represented by each of the rings, relate to your core. To do this, I would like you to take 3-5 minutes to draw a dot on the rings based on what degree you think the identity of each ring connects to your core. The closer a dot is placed to the core then the more you are indicating that the identity on that ring resonates with how you think about yourself in your core. For example, if I had labeled one of the rings 'gender' and I believed that being a woman also describes my core then I would place my dot on the ring at a distance that would be closer to the core. But, if I felt that being socially identified as a woman did not match up with how I think about myself then I would place the dot farther away from the core. As you start to think about where you want to place your dots, remember to consider how certain rings of identities might interact with each other. Perhaps two or more of your identities labeled on the rings are linked together in how you experience them. Feel free to use the intersections of the rings to help you place your dots in a representation that makes the most sense to you for how you see your social

identities interacting with your core identities. There is no one way to fill in the sheet, nor is there a way that is more right than any other. Do you have any questions before you place your dots?"

(Same researcher instructions as the last two sections while participant completes task.)

III.   Participant Narration of Experiences:

[Researcher Reads]: "Now we have an hour or so to talk about your thoughts in completing the identity template and some of the experiences you may have recalled while you worked on it. I have a few questions I would like to ask you to respond to. Before we get to those, can you please explain your identity sheet to me? Please share with me what is at your core, what you chose for your social identities, and how you see those relating to each other based on where you positioned the dots?"

(After the participant has shared their template):

1. Does the core allow you to describe how you see yourself? If not, how would you describe your identity differently?
2. How is it that those characteristics and identities at your core became central to you?"

"Now, let's talk about the social identities you labeled on the rings and placement of the dots:
3. Do you experience any of your social identities as intersecting or in conflict or both? If so, which ones and how?
4. How is it that you became aware of these social identities? Or how is it that you were able to overlook certain identities?
5. What does social justice mean to you? Are there parts of your social identity that you believe have taught you the most about your understanding of social justice? If so, how?
6. What is the influence of privilege and oppression on the identities you selected and those not represented on your sheet?
7. What influence did an experience or experiences of privilege or oppression have on the construction of the visual you created?"

"I'm curious to know if completing the sheet brought up any experiences you've had in the past associated with an aspect of your identity that you were writing down. Would you mind telling me about one of those experiences?"

[*Notes to the researcher*]: As the participant shares experiences, the researcher should listen for what is important to the participant and allow the narrative to be told un-interrupted. Once the story is told, the researcher should ask probing questions to explore why these experiences are important.

(Researcher collects completed MMDI template from participant)

IV.   Conclusion:

[Researcher Reads]: "Thank you, again, for sharing your time for this research study. This concludes our first part of the project. I will be in contact with you to schedule the next interview to take place within two weeks of today. In the meantime, if you have any questions about this study or need assistance related to participating in this study please do not hesitate to contact me."

Adapted from questions in the *Identity development of college students: Advancing frameworks for multiple dimensions of identity* by Jones, S.R & Abes, E.S (2013).

Appendix J: Multiple Dimensions of Identity Template

CONTEXT
Family Background
Sociocultural Conditions
Current Experiences
Career Decisions and Life
Planning

CORE
Personal Attributes
Personal
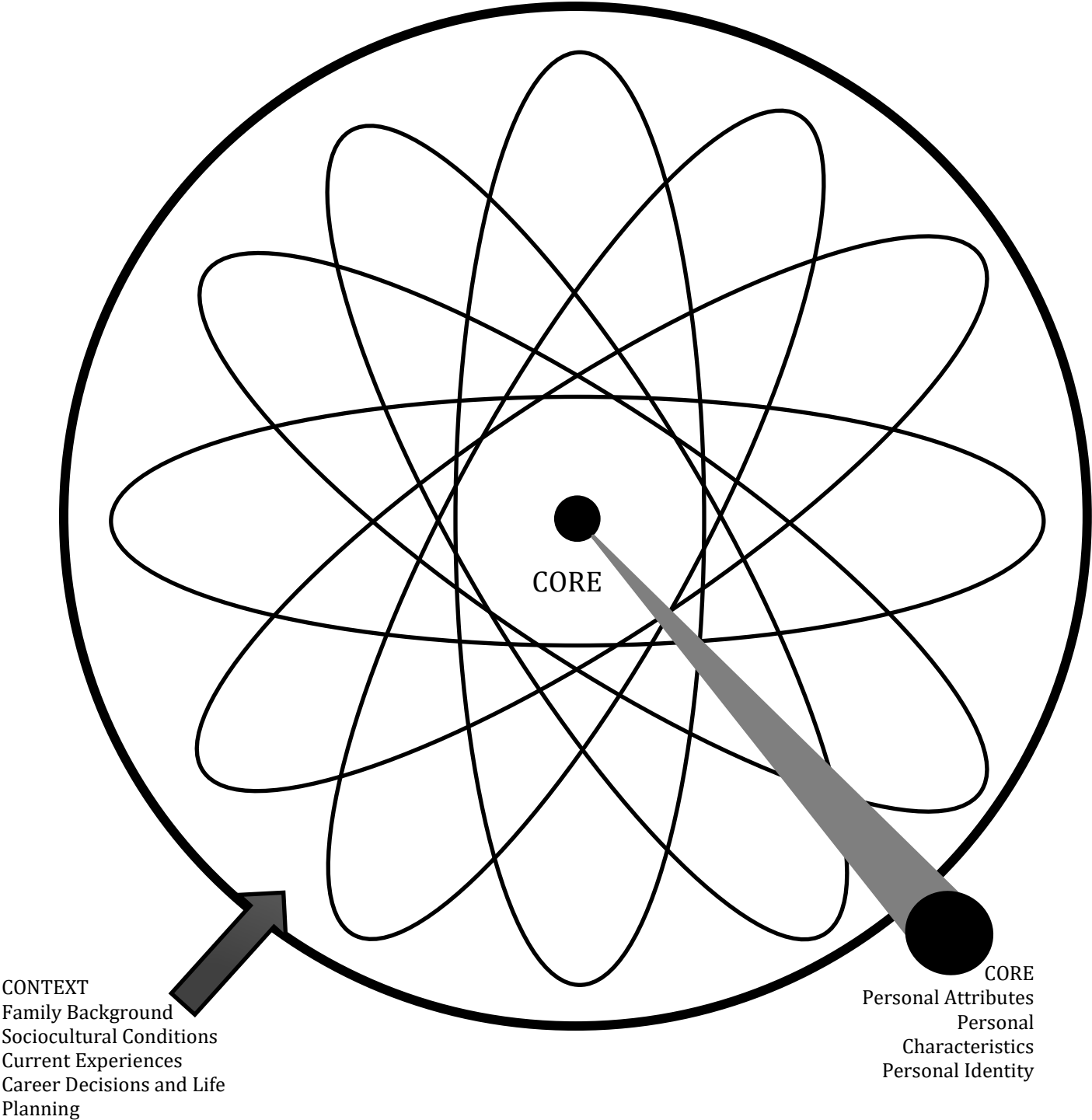Characteristics
Personal Identity

Image from *Identity Development of College Students: Advancing Frameworks for Multiple Dimensions of* Identity by Jones & Abes, 2013, p. 96. Replicated with permission from the publisher, John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Copyright ©2013 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc. All rights reserved.

Appendix K: Comprehensive List of Strategies Identified by Participants

Participant: Anne, 5 strategies, 4 out of 7 themes		
Listening to ideas different from one's own perspective.	P-C-L	Reflect, Difficult Conversations
Move conversations to the middle so talking can occur	P-C-L	Difficult Conversations
Take responsibility for and stay in a difficult/hostile environment because of social justice issues because marginalized people need support.	P-C-S	Difficult Conversations, Politic
Find purpose in what you do to develop resiliency.	P-C-L	Purpose
Understand a tiny shift in how things are done can make a huge impact in showing others that they matter.	P-C-L	Knowledge
Participant: Bruce, 11 strategies, 1 out of 7 themes		
Self-reflect on motives and areas of ignorance.	P-C-L	Reflect
Avoid events and people who challenge your social justice perspective to maintain self-esteem/personal well-being.	U-C-S	
Work to align internal thoughts/understanding with external behaviors that are deemed more socially acceptable when supporting social justice with privileged identity.	P-C-S	Reflect
Privileged identities should vacate leadership roles within social justice initiatives.	P/U-F-S/L	Political
Find ways to coalition build with the community rather than have social justice pet projects.	P-F-L	Network
Engage in self-educating practices (reading, experiences) and process with others for external guidance.	P-C-L	Reflect
Academic/intellectual processing can make raw emotions more manageable in understanding social justice issues from a privileged perspective.	P-C-S	Knowledge, Reflect
Understand the pros and cons of choosing certain advocacy roles as it relates to privileged identity and positional authority within the institution.	P-C-L	Reflect, Politic
Abdicate responsibility to people of marginalized identities for taking action or waiting to be told what to do.	U-C-S	
Do not wait to be the perfect social justice advocate before taking action; understand you are a work in progress and find a balance between advocating and minimizing the harm of misguided, good intentions.	P-C-L	Reflect
Differentiate between different types of interpersonal support in social justice advocacy (e.g. working with marginalized identities versus confronting privileged identities).	P-C-L	Reflect, knowledge

Participant: Charlotte, 8 strategies, 3 out of 7 themes		
Student-centered philosophy of social justice advocacy can only be achieved by addressing needs of students, personal needs, and colleagues' needs as it relates to social justice.	P-C-L	Knowledge
Identify and respond to structural inequalities in the university.	P-C-L	Politic
Develop a network of peers and consult with them on social justice issues.	P-C-L	Network
Be prepared and able to speak up on your own when you see a social justice issue.	P-C-L	Knowledge
Process your emotional response to a social justice issue so you can identify a purpose when you speak up or take action. Work to be calm and accept your feelings without being defined by them.	P-C-L	Reflect, Purpose
Work within your job responsibilities to advocate for social justice.	P-C-L	Politic
Leverage the positional power of others in the university to influence positive change.	P-C-L	Politic
Explicitly incorporate social justice perspective into your work; don't leave it to be assumed.	P-C-L	Knowledge
Participant: Chris, 12 strategies, 5 out of 7 themes		
Mentor others	P-C-L	Mentor
Integration of values across different life roles (work & personal).	P-C-L	Reflect, Knowledge
Identify what you do not like in what you have seen others do and do the opposite.	P-C-L	Reflect, Knowledge
Recognize the complexity of social justice issues means they cannot be solved alone.	P-C-L	Network
Pick your battles carefully (1-know the line that causes a battle; 2-be willing to follow other leads or trust other leads will emerge)	P-C-L	Politic, Network
Do not make it personal when others cannot support your efforts/do not burn bridges.	P/U-C-L/S	Network
Understand what you can influence in your role.	P-C-L	Reflect, Politic
Engage in a cycle that leads to improvement: assess/plan/change.	P-C-L	Reflect
Use networks/relationships to build a greater capacity to bring about change.	P-C-L	Network
Balance relationships in an effort to keep all students in your periphery so they know you're still available to them.	P-C-L	Network
Understand different ways of helping to connect students to resources beyond the scope of what is your direct responsibility.	P-C-L	Knowledge, Network

Identify systematic inequalities and redundancy and question ways to do address them.	P-C-L	Politic
Participant: Collin, 3 strategies, 3 out of 7 themes		
Reflect on type of social identities and how they interact internally and externally.	P-C-L	Reflect
Learn when and how to push or challenge oppressive statements or actions made by others.	P-C-L	Knowledge, Difficult Conversation
Balance ethical responsibility for addressing social justice issues with self-preservation/wellness.	P/U-C-L	Reflect, Knowledge
Participant: Helen, 6 strategies, 4 out of 7 themes		
Use positional power to re-allocate resources or take a stand to support a social justice issue.	P/U-C-L	Politic
Use job responsibilities to inform prioritization of social justice issues.	P-C-L	Politic
Be open to students questioning about social justice issues.	P-C-L	Difficult Conversation
Understand that achieving equality requires a focus on process (i.e. local democracy).	P-C-L	Knowledge
Understand that social justice cannot be demanded in order to be long-lasting; it must be collaborative.	P-C-L	Network, Difficult Conversation
Be open to talking with and learning from each other.	P-C-L	Difficult Conversation, Knowledge, Network
Participant: John, 12 strategies, 6 out of 7 themes		
Build scaffolding in systematic processes for equitable access (capacity building).	P-C-L	Politic
Create space for a support network to develop (a convener).	P-C-L	Network
Recognize oppressive thoughts/scripts in own thinking.	P-C-L	Reflect
Understand the need for different formulas to find solutions to social justice issues and act upon them (1-what must be named, defined, spoken; 2-political action)	P-C-L	Knowledge, Politic
Know when to push against systematic rules and who has the power to do so.	P-C-L	Knowledge, Politic, Difficult Conversations
Embrace your own discomfort from a point of privilege in order to shield others who are marginalized.	P-C-S	Difficult Conversations, Politic
Have your own affairs in order before trying to go elsewhere (focus on what you can control before trying to expand beyond that).	P-C-L	Reflect, Knowledge
Work to transfer your power to others who are marginalized.	P-C-L	Politic
When others seek your guidance, be direct/explicit about the cost of social justice work on the self and systematic.	P-C-L	Network, Mentor

Set realistic expectations of what can be changed/how many people you can guide.	P-C-L	Knowledge, Network, Mentor
Enable marginalized traditions to be continued, not replaced.	P-C-L	Politic
Help others of marginalized identities gain access (cross borders).	P/U-C-L	Politic, Mentor
Participant: Karmen, 6 strategies, 5 out of 7 themes		
Know the appropriate time and place to process or express personal emotions related advocacy and act accordingly.	P-C-L	Knowledge, Reflect
Clearly state what the problem is to those who can change it.	P-C-L	Politic
Find purpose/meaning in what you're advocating for.	P-C-L	Purpose
Know what is self-sustainable and act accordingly.	P-C-L	Reflect, Knowledge
Understand the cause(s) and locus of control of the social justice issue, then act to address those sources.	P-C-L	Knowledge, Politic
Empathize with those you are advocating for.	P-C-S	Network, Reflect
Participant: Tammy, 4 strategies, 4 out of 7 themes		
Set clear goals/purpose for outcome of action/stand being taken.	P-C-L	Purpose
Engage in self-reflection on what you can control and what you cannot control.	P-C-L	Reflect
Use your support network and resources to build capacity for social justice and access for others.	P-C-L	Network
Mentor and model advocacy and personal wellness for others.	P-C-L	Mentor

Vita

Cathy J. Roberts-Cooper was born in Westland, Michigan to Glenn and Sharon Roberts. Her college career began at High Point University where she spent four years earning double degrees and, in May 2003, was awarded a Bachelor of Science in Psychology and a Bachelor of Arts in English. That fall, she began her graduate work at North Carolina State University toward a Master of Science degree. The M.S. in College Counseling was awarded in May 2005. After serving several years as a student affairs professional in higher education, Ms. Roberts-Cooper began working toward her Doctorate of Education in Educational Leadership at Appalachian State University. She was awarded the Ed.D. in December 2017. Ms. Roberts-Cooper resides in Statesboro, GA with her husband and two children.