

ENACTING DIVERSITY AND RACIAL PROJECTS ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES:  
TENSIONS AND POSSIBILITIES FOR TRANSFORMING PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES

by

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A dissertation submitted to the  
Faculty of the Graduate School of the  
University of Colorado in partial fulfillment  
of the requirement for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
School of Education

2014

This dissertation entitled:  
Enacting Diversity and Racial Projects on College Campuses:  
Tensions and Possibilities for Transforming Pedagogical Practices  
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Of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.

IRB protocol #11-0326

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Enacting Diversity and Racial Projects on College Campuses: Tensions and Possibilities for  
Transforming Pedagogical Practices

Dissertation directed by Professor Michele S. Moses

### Abstract

Racial, socioeconomic, and political segregation patterns currently surpass pre-1960s levels in America (Anderson, 2010). Higher education may be the first—and perhaps only—time students interact with diversity of ideas and people (Harper & Hurtado, 2011). My dissertation examined how universities mediated diversity initiatives where students learned about diversity and race while participating in seminars that fostered cross-racial interactions. Informed by a cultural historical approach to learning and development, I examined two case studies of one public and one private university. The following research questions guided my inquiry: (a) How do postsecondary educators (administrators, faculty, and volunteers) theorize issues of diversity and race? (b) How do postsecondary educators organize student learning about issues of diversity and race? (c) What are the affordances and constraints of how postsecondary educators organize student learning? and (d) How do racial attitudes of student participants shift from the beginning to the end of the seminars? Using Cultural-Historical Activity Theory to address these questions, I analyzed three sources of data: audio recordings of interviews with postsecondary educators, video recordings of seminar interactions, and student responses to the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS; Neville, Lilly, Duran, Lee & Browne, 2000). My findings show how different kinds of pedagogical practices created or shut down entry points for students to engage with issues of diversity and race. By “re-purposing” tools from everyday life, postsecondary educators facilitated opportunities for students to make connections between

personal experiences and abstract concepts. However, powerful modes of silencing, such as questioning practices and rules to ensure safety sometimes suppressed discussions. Subsequently, how students related to issues of diversity and race within the seminars was promoted or hindered by how postsecondary educators organized learning environments.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A startling six years since I began graduate school, and I can trace the contours of this journey through a constellation of people who illuminated my life with their brilliance, insight, and dedication. This dissertation represents a communal endeavor textured by heartache and challenge made much brighter and lighter thanks to invaluable support, mentorship, and friendship.

To the students and educators who welcomed me to their spaces and shared their stories with me, thank you for helping me make meaning of diversity, race, and equity. Your insights impacted me profoundly and compelled me to reflect deeply about how we can move forward, in solidarity, to strengthen our schools and dismantle systemic inequities.

To Michele Moses, when I first read your biography, I wanted to meet you. When we first spoke on the phone, warm intuition blossomed in my heart because I knew you were meant to be my advisor. In some magical way, you always knew when to challenge me so I could stretch and grow, but you also knew when to catch me when I wanted to give up. Without you as my compass, this dissertation would surely remain an unfinished document. I hope to one day emulate the grace, heart, and intellect embedded in all that you do. Thank you, a million times over, for everything.

To Kris Gutiérrez, who opened my eyes to imagining *the world as it could be*—I cannot express how grateful I feel to have worked with and learned from you. Your theories and ideas will forever imbue my approach to pedagogy, research, and education. Thank you for inviting me into your zone of proximal development and creating a transformative experience that has left indelible impressions in my educational trajectory. Words cannot describe the boundless density of appreciation I feel for you.

I am deeply indebted to the rest of my wonderful committee—Margaret Eisenhart, Daryl Maeda, and Willy Solano-Flores—for providing attentive critiques, encouraging me to think deeply, and offering perspectives that strengthened my research agenda. Thank you for your patience and generosity.

To Tom Siller, fortune smiled on me the day we met. I marvel at the ways you navigate the terrain of higher education with political acumen, genuine compassion, and deep sensitivity attuned to the needs of all learners—students, staff, and faculty. You cultivate potential in me to grow, sincerely care for me as a person, and position me first as a scholar, not simply as a cog in the wheel. I cannot thank you enough for the time you gave me, whether this manifested as time away from the office to write my dissertation, time to listen to my tales of woe, or time to contemplate educational theory together. You are one of my favorite “peeps” in the world, and I look forward to collaborating with you in years to come.

To my academic family—Subini Annamma, Joshua “JC” Childs, Patrick DeWalt, Darrell “DJ” Jackson, and Deb Morrison—thank you for reading my work, offering feedback, pushing me to think deeply in our conversations, and inspiring me to do my best in the struggle for social justice. To the lovely Amy Boelé, I am so grateful we ran this academic marathon together. With your sweet encouragement, kind words, and our shared predilection for certain artifacts from pop culture, we crossed the finish line—26.2 miles! To my amiga, Ruth López, although you live on the other side of the country, you never feel far away. Thank you for your beautiful friendship, optimism, perspective, and support. To Shirin Vossoughi, words cannot express my admiration and appreciation for the ways you organically weave authentic care and brilliance through your pedagogical practices and writings. You inspire me. To Liz Mendoza, my *huwifey* and *madrina*, I thank my lucky stars our pathways are intertwined. You are my sister scholar who has pushed

me to grow intellectually, reflect critically, and disrupt common sense notions of our world. These past six years are but a prelude to a lifelong kinship.

To the siblings I never had—Annalyn Cruz, Vanessa DeGuzman, Glenn DeGuzman, Amy Logan, and Jackie Nguyen—thank you for reminding me about life beyond graduate school, one that is filled with joyful memories in the making. To Bree Allmon and Arlene Nededog, many thanks for encouraging me to advocate for myself, listen to my truth, and live in ways that resonate with my values.

To my mom, I will never forget the mantra I heard frequently throughout childhood: “Knowledge is power. Once you have an education, nobody can take that away from you.” Thank you for instilling the value of education within me, encouraging me to grow, and steeping me in unconditional love. Because of you, I feel like a tree, strongly rooted in commitment and determination while perpetually stretching my branches toward dreams composed from sunlight and ambition. To the other mom in my world, Sandy, whose love and loyalty know no bounds, and whose passion for family has kindled within me a deep longing for building community and kinship no matter where I go.

To Scott, my life partner and my soul mate. You anchored me when life unraveled, and you suffused our home with strength and hope every time I contemplated quitting. You never cease to astound me with the genius of your educational engineering, gift for building relationships, passion for creating a better tomorrow, and zest for life. Thank you for your infinite stream of wisdom, love, support, encouragement, light, and laughter. Without you, this journey would be meaningless.

Last, but certainly not least, I want to express heartfelt gratitude to Bill Barclay and Connie Hoon Barclay for the Ofelia Miramontes Scholars Fellowship and to the American

Educational Research Association Minority Dissertation Fellowship. Because of these awards, I received tremendous financial and academic support throughout the completion of my coursework and the writing of my dissertation. Because of these awards, my dreams of pursuing a doctoral degree became a reality.



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Racial and socioeconomic segregation patterns currently surpass pre-1960s levels in America, exacerbating systemic inequities and producing unequal access to quality education (Anderson, 2010). For students with access to higher education, the postsecondary setting may be the first—and perhaps only—time students interact with diversity of ideas and people (Harper & Hurtado, 2011). Subsequently, many higher education institutions coordinate diversity initiatives<sup>1</sup> to promote robust learning outcomes and facilitate racial integration (Shuford, 2011; Zúñiga, Nagda, Chesler, & Cytron-Walker, 2007). In my dissertation, I examined how universities organized seminars in which students learned about issues of diversity and race while participating in activities that fostered cross-racial interactions. I hope findings from my study will help postsecondary institutions strengthen diversity initiatives, promote rich learning, and position students to be powerful designers and authors of their futures.

My dissertation is located within a new generation of research to understand how diversity initiatives are designed and what elements of these programs create educational benefits (Bensimon, 2007; Chang, 2002; Gurin & Nagda, 2006; Harper & Hurtado, 2011). Through two case studies, I explore how one public and one private university organized seminars centered on diversity and race. The following research questions guided my inquiry:

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<sup>1</sup> The terms *diversity* and *multicultural* are used interchangeably herein to characterize any postsecondary initiatives, interventions, programs, seminars, or classes with the following goals: to recruit, retain, and support non-dominant students and/or to organize opportunities for all students to learn about issues related to diversity and multiculturalism.

1. How do postsecondary educators (administrators, faculty, and volunteers) theorize issues of diversity and race?
- 2a. How do postsecondary educators organize student learning about issues of diversity and race? 2b. What are the affordances and constraints of how postsecondary educators organize student learning?
3. How do racial attitudes of student participants shift from the beginning to the end of the seminars?

### **Race: Social Construct With Real Consequences**

By 2050, people of color—American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian, and multi-racial individuals—will constitute 50% of the U.S. population (United States Census Bureau, 2006). Despite demographic shifts toward increasingly heterogeneous populations, racial and ethnic segregation continues to fragment social and educational systems at proportions not seen since the 1960s (Anderson, 2010; Jayakumar, 2008; Kozol, 2005; Orfield & Lee, 2006). Proponents of racial integration worry that educational institutions “have been quietly resegregating – in some regions to levels that exceed those that obtained before the courts began to seriously enforce *Brown*” (Anderson, 2010, p. 1). Although race is a social construct and biological myth, issues of race and racism generate real consequences. For example, the relationship between racial segregation and social inequalities perpetually erode the contours of American life, where people of color earn less, face exclusionary housing practices, experience racial profiling, remain overrepresented in the prison system, and encounter limited access to quality education as well as postsecondary education (Alexander, 2012; Andrews & Tuitt, 2013; Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Collins, 2009; Moses, 2002; Pollock, 2008).

Many college freshmen have interacted primarily with people of their same race, and this tends to be particularly true for White students who have minimal contact with



people of color (Jayakumar, 2008). To address this issue, some universities coordinate interventions that encourage cross-racial interactions and help students challenge preexisting stereotypes about people unlike themselves (Gurin-Sands, Gurin, Nagda, & Osuna, 2012; Tienda, 2013). At the same time, institutions provide spaces for students of color to access support systems themed by racial and ethnic identities—student organizations, sororities, fraternities, advocacy offices, and multicultural centers—to combat isolation, stereotype threat, and microaggressions (Nealy, 2008; Tatum, 1997). Whether universities and colleges offer interventions that foster racial integration or racial affinity groups, I contend that issues of race and racism warrant emphases in postsecondary educational practice and scholarship that are separate from notions of diversity.

### **The Grammar of Diversity**

The term diversity has become prosaic in educational scholarship and practice, reflecting a wide spectrum of meanings and intentions (Gutiérrez, Paguyo, & Mendoza, 2012). During the 1960s and 1970s, notions of diversity that challenged canons of “mainstream Western empiricism” (Banks, 2003, p. 14) emerged when scholars and communities of color, as well as allies, advocated for the integration of ethnic studies and multicultural content in academic affairs (Maeda, 2009; Shuford, 2011). In response to successful protests, for example, the first School of Ethnic Studies was founded at San Francisco State University; this landmark decision galvanized other students to protest for the creation of ethnic studies programs and diversity initiatives at their respective universities (Maeda, 2009). Subsequently, many other institutions extended the scope of

their services through diversity outreach programs and academic courses with foci on ethnic studies (Patton, 2005; Shuford, 2011; Wright, 1987).

Many diversity initiatives—also known variously as retention, multicultural, advocacy, and/or equal opportunity programs—were founded at public universities that were predominantly White institutions (PWIs). According to Young's (1995) historical account of diversity initiatives, as increasing numbers of students of color enrolled in PWIs, they were challenged with expectations to assimilate into the dominant cultural practices in ways that sacrificed their familial cultural practices and backgrounds. Unfortunately, many students of color “encountered issues and concerns related to adjustment to college, academic performance, financial resources, feelings of loneliness and isolation, racial/ethnic development, racial hostility, issues of entitlement, and a lack of connection to the college environment” (Shuford, 2011, p. 19). In response to the unfamiliar needs of student populations, for many offices that housed diversity initiatives,

the mission in their nascent years was to provide support to a new influx of students who had been historically disenfranchised from attending PWIs by providing personal, social, and academic support to aid them in their acclimation to the PWi campus. Multicultural students began to feel as if they mattered on campus and that their needs could be met. (Shuford, 2011, p. 23)

New legislative measures, combined with evolving student demographics, spurred the expansion of increasingly specific roles for postsecondary educators to accommodate the perceived needs of an increasingly diverse student body. Currently, administrators affiliated with diversity initiatives provide support to help students acclimate and navigate through the political, and oftentimes, overwhelming system of higher education (Dungy, 2003). In recognition of always-changing student demographics, many diversity initiatives have branched out beyond racial identity to serve as resources for women,

students with disabilities, and the gay, lesbian, transgendered, bisexual, and/or queer community (Dungy, 2003). In fact, beginning in the 1980s, diversity was celebrated as a form of heterogeneity in social identities beyond race, such as gender, socioeconomic background, sexual orientation, religion, spirituality, first-generation college status, and ability, becoming a buzzword that saturates educational scholarship and practice in the 21st century (Baez, 2000; Gutiérrez et al., 2012; Moses, 2006).

The grammar of diversity is a provisional practice that sometimes refers solely to people of color, social identities or underrepresented populations. The ubiquitous and inconsistent use of the term diversity prompts me to approach issues of diversity and race as separate, but related, constructs to problematize pervasive approaches that conflate the two words.

### **Arrangement of the Dissertation**

In the following chapter, I situate my research in the literature of student affairs, multicultural education, and racial attitudes. I first draw on literature about theories used in student affairs, also known as student personnel services or student support services in university and college settings. Of significance, I summarize empirical studies to understand how postsecondary educators use theory and research to inform their practice in student affairs, particularly since the two case studies depicted in this dissertation were housed within the field of student affairs. Second, I highlight key articles from multicultural education to discuss how pedagogues organize learning opportunities for students to engage with issues of diversity and race. Third, I review research that measures racial attitudes of college students to determine how students relate to issues of race.

In Chapter III, I discuss the utility of Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) as my theoretical framework for modeling each seminar as an activity system. The relevance of CHAT presents the following affordances for my research study. First, CHAT's organizing principle of *cultural mediation* provided a lens through which I analyzed different types of tools (or artifacts) leveraged to organize diversity initiatives. More specifically, I saw which ideologies, artifacts, languages, and practices postsecondary educators used to conceptualize and coordinate diversity programs. Second, an exploration of *historical context* explained the evolution of diversity initiatives and the professional journeys of postsecondary educators involved in these interventions. Third, analyzing each diversity seminars as a *social organization* helped me situate each program as an activity system constitutive of students, educators, formal policies, implicit rules, and division of labor.

In Chapter IV, I provide an overview of my methodology. I collected and analyzed data from interviews with postsecondary educators, video records of seminars, and responses to Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scales. Taken together, these different sources enabled me to engage in analyses about the following: first, how postsecondary educators approached issues of diversity and race (interview data); second, how these approaches then emerged in the ways instructors physically and socially organized student learning (video records of seminars); and third, how students related to issues of diversity and race (pre-/post-surveys and video records of seminars).

In subsequent chapters, I summarize findings from my data analyses. In Chapter V, I present interview findings and discuss the different ways that postsecondary educator participants thought about and talked about issues of diversity and race. More specifically,

I discuss how administrators themselves understood theory and research, I make meaning of their roles, and I describe how their practices indexed conceptualizations of diversity and race. This information enabled me to understand the assumptions implicit in their approach toward diversity initiatives, and relatedly, how these orientations manifested in the seminars they facilitated. In Chapter VI, I consider the affordances and constraints of each seminar that may have cultivated or hindered how students engaged with issues of diversity and race, thus co-constructing their racial attitudes.

In the final chapter, I discuss empirical and practical implications of my findings. I hope that my dissertation contributes to a new wave of research by shifting the dominant inquiry to understand not only how postsecondary educators conceptualize and deliver ideas about diversity and race, but how students learn about these constructs as well. Arguably, creating learning opportunities for educators, researchers, and students to reflect and talk critically about diversity and race can engender racial integration, ignite transformative learning opportunities, and nurture educational benefits for all students (Anderson, 2010; Tienda, 2013). By placing diversity, race, and equity at the center of scholarship and practice, “the U.S. educational system fulfills its democratic promise by helping students create a meaningful sense of possibility for their lives” (Moses, 2002, p. 174) and helps us to re-imagine education *as it could be* (Boal, 1995).

## CHAPTER II

### FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE: A LITERATURE REVIEW OF DIVERSITY AND MULTICULTURAL APPROACHES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Since the upswing of diversity initiatives on college campuses across the country, many studies related to “diversity” have emerged (see Antonio, 2001; Bowen & Bok, 1998; Chang, 2001; Denson & Chang, 2009; Gurin, 1999; Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002; Laird, 2005; Marin, 2000; Pike & Kuh, 2006; Schoem & Hurtado, 2001; Smith, 2009; Umbach & Kuh, 2006). From these studies, Denson and Chang (2009) identified three primary strands of empirical research regarding diversity: (a) *structural diversity*—the demographic composition of student populations; (b) *curricular/co-curricular diversity*—learning outcomes associated with coursework, programs, events, and workshops that expose students to content regarding diversity, race, and/or ethnicity; and (c) *interaction diversity*—frequency of informal interactions between students of different races. While these research strands offer productive opportunities to better understand educational outcomes associated with diversity programs, very few of these studies explicitly explore how postsecondary administrators purposefully design and facilitate diversity initiatives (Bensimon, 2007; Harris, Bensimon, & Bishop, 2010). Scholars have attempted to incite fellow postsecondary researchers, practitioners, and universities to “make full use of [diversity] as an institutional resource” (Nagda, Gurin, Sorensen, & Zúñiga, 2009, p. 1) instead of assuming that diversity, by itself, spontaneously generates educational advantages.

Conventional diversity studies ask questions such as “Did it work?” and more specifically in postsecondary scholarship, “Did we recruit more students of color?”

(question of *structural diversity*) or “Did students persist at higher rates?” (question of *curricular/co-curricular diversity*) or “Did students experience more cross-racial interactions?” (question of *interaction diversity*) to better understand the effects of engaging with a diversity intervention. However, the “logically and empirically prior question to ‘Did it work?’ is ‘What was the ‘it’?’” (Erickson & Gutiérrez, 2002, p. 21). Understanding the “it” enabled me to describe both exemplary educational strategies and constraining pedagogical practices that educators can tailor (or avoid) for their own institutions.

In an effort to better understand how higher education practitioners approach issues of diversity, I narrowed my literature review from the broad expanse of diversity studies to the more focused purview of student affairs administrators who coordinate student support programs in the postsecondary realm. First, I provide an overview of student affairs theories commonly used to inform practice. Within this section, I discuss several tensions between theory and practice, that is, why theory is rarely used to inform how educational interventions are designed and carried out. Additionally, I summarize empirical studies related to how administrators use theory to inform their work (broadly in student affairs and specifically in multicultural programs since my case studies are situated in these areas). Second, I highlight scholarship from multicultural education to discuss how instructors teach and students engage with issues of multiculturalism. As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, diversity studies tend to focus on *student outcomes*, as opposed to multicultural education literature that more broadly addresses *how* instructors organize learning about issues of diversity and race. Third, I provide an

overview of research regarding racial attitudes of college students. Finally, I outline ways to address gaps in the literature through my own work.

### **Part I: Theory and Practice in Student Affairs**

In this portion of the literature review, I discuss the following: theories utilized in conventional student affairs practice; why a gap exists between theory, research, and practice; and the importance for bridging these gaps to strengthen student support programs.

#### **Conventional Student Affairs Theories**

Postsecondary scholars like Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, and Renn (2010) and Upcraft (1994) advocate for the purposeful integration of theory and student affairs practice. To facilitate this process, Evans and colleagues co-authored a seminal student affairs textbook that offers a broad overview of theories to help explain student development in cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains (Patton & Harper, 2011). Other student affairs programs, particularly higher education classes complying with Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS), provide graduate students with the opportunity to take at least one course focused on student development theory (Patton & Harper, 2011).

Prominent theories in student affairs work are based upon psychosocial development theories, cognitive development theories, and environmental theories (Patton & Harper, 2011). Psychosocial development theories serve to explain how individuals transform in their social identities over time. These transformations typically occur in phases, stages, and life events and outline a trajectory about how students might identify with their gender, sexual orientation, and race/ethnicity (e.g., Wijeyesinghe &



Jackson, 2001). Consider Asian American Identity Development theory, a framework that generalizes identity development among Asian American college students through five phases, beginning with an awareness of ethnic differences, resistance to Asian cultural practices and appropriation of White identities, awareness of the marginalization and exploitation of Asian/Asian American groups, participation in activities that kindle Asian American pride, and finally, incorporation of Asian American identity as one of many identities (Kim, 2001).

Cognitive development theories explore how individuals shift in the ways they think, reflect, and approach life circumstances. The assumptions that undergird cognitive development theories in student affairs are that college students will perceive their world in increasingly complex ways. This development is irreversible and occurs in predictable stages. Kohlberg's (1976) theory of moral development, an instantiation of cognitive development theory, predicts that college students will move through a six-stage process as they consider how their decisions affect themselves and others. First, students act to avoid being punished; second, students make decisions characterized by quid pro quo interactions, that is, they will do something for others only if results are mutually beneficial; third, students behave in ways to gain the approval of peers; fourth, actions are intended to show respect not just for peers, but for institutions and authority; and finally, in the most advanced stages, behaviors are not only dictated by what others say is right, but an internal compass of ethics (Kohlberg, 1976; Evans, 2003).

Finally, campus ecology theories move the focus away from the individual and explore the dynamic relationship between students and the campus environment (Banning & Bryner, 2001). Popular campus ecology theories developed by Banning (1980, 1989,

1992), for example, explore how physical features of the campus environment (i.e., architecture, signs, decorations, and formal/informal designations about the use of different spaces) communicate to college students. Additional theories prevalent in student affairs scholarship include retention theories (e.g., Tinto, 1987, 1993) that explain why students persist (or leave) the university, organization theories (e.g., Kuh, 2003; Weick, 1979) to understand how universities function as institutional structures, and leadership theories (e.g., Astin & Astin, 2000) to describe how administrators (and students) can lead universities and programs to success.

### **Explanations for the Gap Between Theory and Practice**

The gap between postsecondary practices and theory/empirical research has been described extensively. Upcraft (1994) offered possible reasons for the divide between student affairs theory and practice. He wrote,

Scholars developing theory are often so estranged from campus life, buried in a world of research and graduate students, that their theories many times have little relevance to campus problems and issues, and even less relevance to practitioners . . . but, in spite of the scholarly efforts by theoreticians, theory is often not known by practitioners, and when it is known, seldom integrated into practice. I believe it will require a change in attitude and behavior on the part of both theoreticians and practitioners if theory and practice are to be melded for the benefit of institutions of higher education, student affairs services and programs, and most of all, students. (p. 438)

Decades later, this statement still resonates in student affairs practice and scholarship (Patton & Harper, 2011). Although administrators and scholars often position theory as an important tool for postsecondary interventions, “theory is often misunderstood in ways that limit its use in practice” (Ibid, p. 187). Patton and Harper (2011) summarize five misconceptions about the relationship (or lack thereof) between theory and practice. First, while theory may be a class offered in graduate school,

students often learn theory in a vacuum, separate and disconnected from their assistantships. When graduate students receive their degrees and become seasoned administrators over time, few professional development opportunities exist for them to recall the different phases and stages of theories learned in graduate school.

Second, the desire to interact primarily with students is what may compel individuals to enter the student affairs profession, not the desire to interact with a computer, journal articles, and library books. In this regard, theory may be seen as boring, particularly if theory is only brought to bear upon research papers and comprehensive exams (Patton & Harper, 2011).

Third, novice student affairs administrators—arguably, individuals with the most robust understanding of theory due to recent exposure in graduate school—allegedly lack the competence and credibility more senior administrators have. In the postsecondary context, administrators with longer résumés are positioned with more regard (Patton & Harper, 2011).

Fourth, according to Harper & Patton (2007), scholars of previous eras developed well-known student affairs theories from samples of predominantly White, men, aged 18 to 22 years to explain student development. Despite the outdated nature of these theories, however, some still remain popular in student affairs discourse. Such theories include moral decision-making processes (Kohlberg, 1976), student retention and attrition (Tinto, 1983), and intellectual/emotional/physical development of college students (Chickering, 1969). Although aspects of these conventional theories may be generalizable to different populations, other features of traditional student affairs theories might be most relevant

and applicable to the dominant communities and less germane to students from non-dominant backgrounds.

Finally, many postsecondary educators assume that evidence-based theory will shape practice subconsciously or automatically. In other words, once people learn theory, they will leverage it in practice immediately and naturally. Regardless of how thoroughly administrators study theory or how often cutting-edge theoretical articles are published in peer-reviewed journals, “theory will not inform or enhance administrative action on its own” (Patton & Harper, 2011, p. 189).

The relationship(s) between theory (and empirical research) and practice becomes further complicated when situating administrators within the larger activity system of universities. To take one example, on the one hand, administrators are caught in the wake of implementing student services; on the other hand, they are encouraged to find time to read, make meaning of theory, and reflect on their practices in their free time (Upcraft, 1994). Although the ability to translate theory into practice (Pope & Reynolds, 1997) appears, at times, to be a challenge placed primary upon the shoulders of postsecondary practitioners, I believe this matter must be reframed in ways that account for larger social, cultural, historical, and institutional contexts. My perspective parallels Bensimon’s (2007) argument that the problem of educational inequality is not an issue that affects all undergraduate students evenly, nor is this solely a problem about “translating theory into best practices” (p. 446). More specifically, supporting student success is an opportunity for *practitioners* as well as *institutions* to learn. This is particularly relevant since, as Bensimon points out, postsecondary administrators “have developed implicit theories about students: why they succeed, why they fail, and what, if anything, they can do to

reverse failure” (p. 446). These theories represent taken for granted expressions or cultural models (Quinn & Holland, 1987) developed from an accumulation of administrators’ knowledge and histories with education and non-dominant populations; taken together, these experiences shape how practitioners conceptualize students’ needs and student support programs.

### **Justifications for Bridging the Theory-Practice Gap**

Scholars such as Upcraft (1994) and Patton and Harper (2011) articulate a variety of justifications and opportunities for bridging the gap between postsecondary scholarship and practice. To take one example, they argue that contemporary and emergent theories ought to account for students beyond the prototypical White male sample and across a broader group of students in terms of race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, gender, and ability. Given the increasing heterogeneity of college campuses, this is a compelling rationale for embedding practice with more theory and empirical research.

Upcraft (1994), Braxton (2003), and McEwen (2003) discuss how student affairs practitioners experience increased pressures to prove their services are working, particularly in light of shrinking campus budgets. Harris et al. (2010) corroborate this concern and note how financial strains in postsecondary education continue to weaken student affairs programs and multicultural interventions. Subsequently, programs that support non-dominant populations will face even more constraints in terms of status, resources, and ability to support larger numbers of students. Student affairs administrators, “as the guardians of the out-of-class environment” (Harris et al., 2010, p. 439) must be purposeful about collaborating with faculty and postsecondary scholars;

having scholarship to support their work facilitates opportunities for administrators to convince “faculty-dominated budgets” that co-curricular programs are worthwhile expenditures (Harris et al., 2010, p. 439). This partnership benefits faculty, too, since practitioners’ experiences with contemporary issues on college campuses have potential to inform, develop, and shape research toward more relevant and meaningful implications for postsecondary practice. In essence, purposeful collaborations between academic affairs and student affairs can help ensure that student affairs programs receive adequate funding and credibility while also guiding academic affairs research toward more relevant and consequential pursuits (Upcraft, 1994).

While Patton and Harper (2011) believe that “practical experience *and* theoretical proficiency together are the best combination” for organizing student success (p. 188, emphasis added), Bensimon (2007) advocates for a more comprehensive approach; she argues that administrators ought to have more time to *reflect* upon their own practices, as well as institutional practices, that contribute to the production of unequal educational outcomes. “By making practitioner knowledge and institutional practices the focal point of racial disparities in educational outcomes,” states Bensimon (2007), “there is a greater possibility for change” (p. 456). This statement resonates brightly with my approach and foreshadows my desire to invoke a conceptual framework where different forms of *mediation*—such as practitioner knowledge (implicit and explicit theories) and institutional practices (informal and formal rules, policies, and social organizations of universities)—play a central role in my research inquiries and my theoretical approach.

### **Empirical Studies of Theory in Student Affairs Practice**

More investigation of the relationship between theory and practice is necessary (Patton & Harper, 2011). This statement rings especially true considering the dearth of empirical studies about the interaction between theory and practice in postsecondary settings. Only five research articles regarding the use of theory in higher education emerged from my search (i.e., Harris & Bensimon, 2007; Harris et al., 2010; Renn & Hodges, 2007; Renn & Jessup Anger, 2008; Waple, 2006).

Waple (2006) asked 430 novice student affairs professionals to complete surveys to share their opinions about competencies and skills necessary for student affairs work. More specifically, he asked respondents to consider whether particular skills they used in their entry-level positions were learned in graduate school and whether these skills were relevant for their work. Based upon these responses, Waple developed a list of recommendations for practitioners and student affairs programs to consider. One highlight of the study—as it relates to my dissertation—points to the importance of seeing how theory might translate not just in coursework, but in graduate assistantships, which “provide the laboratory in which all current and emerging issues come to life as they provide opportunities for students to bridge theory to practice and gain practical skills” (Waple, 2006, p. 15).

Renn and Hodges (2007) conducted a study with 10 graduates from one student affairs master’s program; data collection consisted of a monthly question/prompt that participants responded to, including statements such as “Think back to when you were initially hired for your current position. Describe your hopes for and concerns about this new position” (p. 371) or “Thinking back to what you learned at [university], what has

contributed most to your work this year? What hasn't come into play yet?" (p. 372). In response to the latter prompt, one survey respondent said,

When I graduated from [master's university] I was really looking forward to being in an environment that enhanced what I learned in the classroom and forced me to make meaning of my work, asked me to connect back to theory, current issues in higher ed, etc. But this is not happening. (Renn & Hodges, 2007, p. 380)

This sort of response echoes Waple's (2006) recommendations to make more explicit the relevance of theory to practice. In a similar study, Renn and Jessup Anger (2008) collected open-ended responses from 90 novice student affairs professionals who answered questions about transitions in their new job, surprising aspects of the job, and suggested improvements to their student affairs graduate program. Some of their responses were summarized as such:

Professionals noted that they were unable to use knowledge of, for example, student development theories to develop a program or a plan. They wrote that their graduate programs prioritized knowledge attainment over application (such as through case studies or problem-based learning), leaving them at a loss once they got into the field. (Renn & Jessup Anger, 2008, p. 329)

The three previously mentioned studies implicate the difficulties of bridging theory and student affairs practice, particularly from the perspective of recent graduates and junior administrators. On the other hand, the remaining studies attempt to glean perspectives from more seasoned administrators. Harris and Bensimon (2007) worked with researchers from the University of Southern California's Center for Urban Education to develop and implement an intervention called the Equity Scorecard, an artifact co-constructed by administrators and scholars. The purpose of the Equity Scorecard was twofold: increase awareness of inequitable educational outcomes through availability of data and encourage administrators to consider outcomes as matters of institutional responsibility (Harris & Bensimon, 2007, p. 79). The researchers pursued



these goals because of their belief that demographically diverse institutions, despite reaching a critical mass of students of color, may still perpetuate stratified educational outcomes. Additionally, when educational outcomes are distributed asymmetrically across racial groups, some institutions and administrators may appropriate deficit-oriented perspectives that blame the students for less than desirable outcomes. Harris and Bensimon (2007) explain the issue effectively:

The problem of institutions and practitioners lies in the failure to recognize that one's best practices may not be effective with students who are not familiar with the hidden curriculum of how to be a successful college student. The challenge is to uncover what might enable educational practitioners to address unequal educational outcomes among minority students as a problem of institutional and practitioner knowledge. (p. 80)

As part of the Equity Scorecard intervention, practitioners participated in monthly meetings, where members explored disaggregated data, asked inquiries of clarification, determined what additional data was necessary, and challenged their peers' assumptions and interpretations of the data. Throughout this process, practitioners appropriated researcher roles and were positioned as experts in their own right. Additionally, the authors found that the Equity Scorecard provided opportunities to uncover implicit theories race administrators might have and to reframe these theories in new ways supported by data analysis and peer collaboration. In short, the Equity Scorecard aimed to foster collaboration among different actors in the university activity system, including presidents, professors, counselors, deans, directors, administrators, and program coordinators, and to position them as "local experts on the educational outcomes of students of color within their own campus and to come to view these outcomes as a matter of institutional responsibility" (Harris et al., 2010, p. 297).

The last study provides deeper philosophical understandings of the Equity Scorecard by constructing the problem of educational inequality as an issue stemming from dearth of administrator knowledge, weak pedagogical interventions, and deficit-oriented cultural models about students from non-dominant populations (Harris et al., 2010). Harris and colleagues trace “the absence of structural analysis of racial inequity” to conventional student affairs theories (see, e.g., Tinto, 1987) that position positive educational outcomes (e.g., student persistence and graduation) as the sole consequence of individual students’ efforts, behaviors, and characteristics (Harris et al., 2010, p. 293). Additionally, Harris et al. (2010) note that language mediates educators’ understanding or knowledge of students, and terms such as “disadvantaged,” “underprivileged,” and “underachieving” point to individual deficiencies; subsequently, administrators with greater awareness of language might reframe how they label students. According to Harper (2004, 2006, 2009), a focus on the so-called “underachievement” of people of color (and, in his research specifically, Black males), within scholarship will continue to promote stereotyped and racist perceptions about the limited potential of non-dominant student populations. By invoking the use of the Equity Scorecard, then, Harris et al. (2010) found that understanding data trends could raise administrator recognition about previously hidden issues; support professionals in productive critiques of cultural practices (individual and institutional) that may co-construct inequitable outcomes; inspire student affairs staff to seek more information from a variety of sources, including scholarship and theory; and, finally, try new approaches toward providing student support.

These philosophical arguments and empirical studies map the contours of postsecondary research emphasizing the central role that theories ought to play in practice

(and, similarly, that practice ought to play in the development of scholarship). In sum, authors such as Patton and Harper (2011) offer explanations about why practitioners rarely invoke theory, including difficulties with the theory-to-practice translation, inclinations to privilege experience over research, perceptions of theory/research as inadequate artifacts, and beliefs that theory somehow will automatically be used in practice. In an effort to encourage more purposeful use of theory in practice, scholars such as Upcraft (1994) argue that research can be leveraged for increasing budgets for student affairs programming and that practice can be harnessed for guiding academic affairs research toward more practical and applicable concerns. Going beyond the call to invoke theory into practice, scholars such as Bensimon (2007) and Harris et al. (2010) reframe the conversation with strong critiques of administrators and institutions; in short, they argue that inequality of educational outcomes manifest too often due to student affairs practitioners and universities that conceptualize non-dominant populations in narrow and reductive ways.

Despite the call to embed practice with more equity-oriented and relevant theory as well as academic research, the empirical studies that do attempt to investigate how student affairs practitioners use theory address this issue peripherally. Subsequently, implications from these studies are written as brief quotes from respondents and a list of recommendations for reconciling the gaps between student affairs theory and practice. Additionally, the focus of the studies thus far remains primarily on novice postsecondary practitioners to determine how much knowledge they retained from graduate school and whether such knowledge can be brought to bear upon practice. Other empirical studies

that situate more seasoned administrators as primary research participants draw on interventions to uncover and challenge implicit theories guiding practitioner work.

I hope to build upon the scholarship of these postsecondary academics by taking up a slightly different approach. I agree that invoking theory and academic research can strengthen postsecondary interventions. Similarly, I believe that *some* administrators and *some* institutions appropriate deficit-oriented cultural models of students that may contribute, in part, to the phenomenon of inequitable educational outcomes. However, the purpose of my study was not to position the administrator negatively and blame him/her for perceived inequalities. Arguably, condemning the administrator is not so different from condemning the student for observed outcomes. Within this vein, then, I believe that a conceptual framework that positions different components of the university as an activity system is particularly useful because it enables the researcher to see how the administrator represents one of many agents and players within a postsecondary context constituted of multiple constraints and affordances that contribute to student success.

From this portion of the literature review, I aimed to accomplish the following goals: (a) identify the need to reconcile theory and empirical research with postsecondary practices, (b) explore the general landscape of how researchers have discussed the relationship between postsecondary theory/research and practice, (c) make explicit the lacuna of empirical studies regarding how higher education practitioners design and organize student affairs programs broadly and multicultural interventions specifically, (d) summarize the work of researchers who document what theories (explicit and implicit) administrators use, and (e) situate the postsecondary practitioner as an actor within a

large activity system constitutive of other actors and actions that may simultaneously inhibit and promote the administrator's goals.

Another important strand of the literature within which I contextualized my research examines the types of tools and activities administrators and educators harness to teach students about issues of diversity and race. In the following section of this chapter, I offer a brief summary of this research. More specifically, I focus on *multicultural education* scholarship that describes any research studies or pedagogical practices designed to strengthen education in one or more ways: (a) reform educational institutions so students from non-dominant backgrounds experience equitable educational opportunity; (b) improve interactions among and throughout different demographic groups, including students, administrators, and instructors; and (c) expose students to concepts such as race, gender, socioeconomic background, linguistic diversity, ability, sexual orientation, spirituality, power, and privilege (Banks, 1993, 2004; Lowenstein, 2009; Zirkel, 2008).

## **Part II: Multicultural Education**

Due to the voluminous nature of multicultural education scholarship, I concentrate this aspect of the literature review on studies that address my research questions more centrally. First, I describe some historical perspectives on multicultural education. Second, I highlight research that describes how multiculturalism is taught and how college students respond to multicultural pedagogy. Finally, I discuss gaps in the scholarship of multicultural education in postsecondary settings.

## **Historical Perspectives on Multicultural Education**

In Banks's (2013) account of how multicultural education evolved over time, he described how African American communities incited the first phase in the following excerpt:

An important outcome of the Civil Rights Movement was that African Americans demanded that their histories, struggles, contributions, and possibilities be reflected in textbooks and in the school curriculum. In subsequent years, other minoritized ethnic and racial groups—including Mexican Americans, Native Americans, Puerto Ricans in the United States, and Asian Americans—made similar demands for inclusion into the school, college, and university curriculum. Consequently, ethnic studies were the first phase in the historical development of multicultural education. (p. 74)

In 1969, the first School of Ethnic Studies was founded at San Francisco State University (SFSU; Maeda, 2009). The Third World Liberation Front (TWLF), a multiracial alliance of students at SFSU, advocated for the inception “of a school of ethnic studies with a faculty and curriculum to be chosen by people of color, along with open admissions for nonwhite applicants” (Maeda, 2009, p. 42). After inciting a groundswell of protests among thousands of students, TWLF arrived at an agreement with university authorities to establish a School of Ethnic Studies, a decision that “considered communities of color proper objects of study and legitimate producers of knowledge” (Ibid., p. 70). In the decades to follow, scholars, teachers, communities of color, and allies successfully advocated for the integration of ethnic studies and multicultural content in K-12 schools and universities (Banks, 2013; Maeda, 2009; Shuford, 2011).

During the 1960s and 1970s, at the same time that ethnic studies blossomed, the intergroup education movement surfaced as well (Banks, 2004). The onset and aftermath of World War II created war-related industries in the northern and western part of the

United States, compelling many African American and Mexican American families from rural areas to move to cities with more career opportunities. Racial tensions ensued as people competed for limited jobs and housing. At the same time, Jewish organizations supported research studies and practices to decrease anti-Semitism after reaching its peak during World War II. As such, the intergroup education movement grew out of an effort to mediate cross-racial interactions, decrease prejudice, and create mutual understanding across differences (Banks, 2004).

While some scholars and educators may categorize ethnic studies and intergroup education under the same multicultural education umbrella, Banks (2004) makes two interesting distinctions between the two perspectives: first, while intergroup education focused upon interracial harmony and mutual understanding (multiple groups), early ethnic studies advocates supported empowerment of specific racial groups (single-group); and second, many leaders of the intergroup movement were Whites involved in mainstream institutions while many leaders of the Ethnic Studies movement were people of color who fought vigorously against mainstream. These disparities are not inconsequential and foreshadow the cyclical and iterative educational fluctuations between single-group and intergroup emphases that have since occurred.

Since the inception of ethnic studies and the intergroup movement, multiple versions of multicultural education have manifested and evolved over time, sometimes overlapping and sometimes contradicting one another. Banks (2004) characterizes five different dimensions of multicultural education. He noted that these categories are not necessarily mutually exclusive of one another, nor are they intended to be categories that essentialize multicultural education, but instead provide a helpful heuristic for better

understanding approaches in multicultural education. The five dimensions include the following: first, content integration, which is “the extent to which teachers use examples, data, and information from a variety of cultures and groups” (p. 4); second, knowledge construction, an analysis of how knowledge is created and how to critique sources of knowledge; third, equity pedagogy to help all students succeed; fourth, opportunities to reduce prejudice and facilitate affirmative shifts in attitudes toward difference; and finally, an empowering school culture to facilitate equality of educational opportunity for all student populations.

Another way of describing multiculturalism is evident through the work of McLaren (1994, 2000), who identified four forms of multiculturalism: conservative (or corporate) multiculturalism, liberal multiculturalism, left-liberal multiculturalism, and critical multiculturalism. He described these forms of multiculturalism as a spectrum of thoughts and practices, as opposed to static categories that remain stable over time.

Scholars and educators of the conservative multiculturalist strand tend to appropriate a heroes-and-holiday approach and represent protagonists in ways that marginalize people from non-dominant communities (Banks, 2012). More specifically, this perspective cherry-picks exemplars that uphold the status quo; take Sacajawea, for example, who is often celebrated for serving as a guide for Lewis and Clark, versus Geronimo, who is rarely included in curriculum since he led raids against White settlements (Banks, 2012). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) lament the reduction of multicultural education "to trivial examples and artifacts of cultures such as eating ethnic or cultural foods, singing songs or dancing, [and/or] reading folktales" (p. 61). Similarly,



Bell and Hartmann (2007) describe this perspective as “happy talk” that praises diversity in ideology but does not challenge notions of oppression, power, and privilege.

Similar to the conservative multiculturalism is a second type of multiculturalism, liberal multiculturalism, which attempts to provide support for all historically marginalized groups without challenging the current power structure (McLaren, 1994). This is a prevalent form of multiculturalism at universities that offer programs for students from non-dominant communities and typically work in isolation from one another, fail to recognize systemic inequities, and uphold the White, middle-class norms (Ladson-Billings, 2004). Too often, this paradigm "attempts to be everything to everyone and consequently becomes nothing for anyone" (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 62).

A third type of multiculturalism is left-liberal multiculturalism, an approach that tends to exoticize and essentialize cultural and racial differences (McLaren, 1994). The persistence of static, reductive, or over-generalized understandings of cultural communities has made it easier to view cultural communities and their members as homogenous and their practices as invariant. Of consequence, such narrow interpretations of culture are operant in fixed notions of race and ethnicity in the form of *essentialism*. Explained by Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1994), distinct features, traits, and properties of individuals are held constant through essentialism and constitute the “essence” of one’s race or ethnicity. Thus, the tendency to conflate culture with race or ethnicity and to essentialize members of particular communities makes it easy to apply characteristics uniformly across entire groups of people in ways that mark non-dominant communities as non-standard, homogenous, and exotic. According to Gutiérrez and Rogoff (1993), culture becomes a trait carried by so-called diverse peoples such that rigid

characteristics and stereotyped generalizations are attributed to non-dominant populations. This is apparent in university multicultural interventions that have an essentialized notion of race or culture that do not offer space for intersectionality.

These three forms of multiculturalism identified by McLaren (1994)—conservative, liberal, and left-liberal—have been critiqued extensively by scholars from conceptual disciplines in critical multiculturalism, Critical Race theory, Ethnic Studies, and Whiteness Studies. Scholars argue that naive forms of multicultural education have whitewashed the past, taught people how to hide behind a veil of political correctness, and reinforced rather than challenged inequitable distribution of power (e.g., Banks, 2005; Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Bryan, 2012; McLaren, 1994, 2000; Ngo, 2010; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Pickett & York, 2011). Additionally, when scholars and practitioners advocate for singular group identities, such as some feminists whose efforts concentrate generally on women (as opposed to women who also identify as people of color), multiculturalism becomes a contradictory venture of multiple movements challenging each other rather than collaborating in unity toward the struggle for equitable educational opportunity for all students (Ladson-Billings, 2004). Although multicultural education attempts to address all issues of diversity—e.g., race, gender, socioeconomic status, language, ability, sexual orientation, and spirituality—it is only effective if “careful and conscious attention is given to issues of race and ethnicity and the concomitant issues of status and power” (Zirkel, 2008, p. 1171). When multicultural education exists in conservative, liberal, and left-liberal forms, as articulated by McLaren (1994), the objective of improving “educational institutions so that students from diverse

racial, ethnic, and social-class groups will experience educational equality” often is not realized (Banks, 1994, p. 3).

The scholars mentioned in the preceding paragraphs challenged multicultural education and found fault with diluted or nonexistent approaches that failed to raise student awareness of race and power structures. Conversely, other critics of multiculturalism—for example, Glazer (1997), Stotsky (1999), Niemonen (2007), and D’Souza (1991), to name a few—believe that race-conscious forms of multicultural education are detrimental to American society. Their claims, most prominent in the 1990s, are based on rationales for color-blindness, grounded in the idea that multiculturalism incites fragmentation and strife instead of unity. To take one example, Glazer (1997) argued the following:

An excessive dose of multiculturalism is leading to disaffection among these groups and encouraging some antiestablishment extremists in their belief that malign secret powers are manipulating the school system, trying to get into the heads of their children to brainwash them into thinking this country owes something to minorities. In this respect, multiculturalism may be increasing disunity. (p. 43)

Other critics claim that in addition to promoting anti-American sentiments, multicultural education takes much-needed time away from core academic subjects in an era when other countries are out-performing America on standardized tests (Stotsky, 1999), encourages indolence even though America is one of the few countries where anybody, no matter point of origin, can succeed with hard work and determination (Chavez, 1999), teaches White men to feel guilty (Niemonen, 2007), and punishes professors for using politically incorrect terms or penalizes students who question multicultural content (D’Souza, 1991).

Whether critics of multicultural education find fault with placing too much or too little emphasis on race and power structures, the tensions surrounding issues of diversity are very much alive in contemporary circumstances that attempt to ban ethnic studies (Rodriguez, 2012), advocate for English-only practices (Tulenko, 2013), pose questions like, “Why are all the Black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?” (Tatum, 1997), and end affirmative action at universities (Connerly, 2000). Given that students, educators, and administrators inevitably face issues of diversity and race in theory and practice, many higher education institutions offer a variety of multicultural interventions. The following section offers more detail about how multiculturalism is taught and learned in postsecondary settings. Of significance, I draw on literature that explicitly discusses the content used to expose students to issues of diversity as well as outcomes associated with these pedagogical practices. As such, much of the research I found stems from articles that discuss teacher preparation courses and multicultural coursework/interventions for non-teachers.

### **Multicultural Education for Teacher Candidates**

Milner (2010) summarized the work of Eisner (1994) to discuss three types of curriculum: explicit (what is taught in the open), implicit (what is taught in covert form, whether this occurs consciously or subconsciously), and null (what instructors themselves have not learned). Accordingly, "what is absent or not included in the curriculum is actually present in what students are (not) learning" (Milner, 2010, p. 121). Since much of the literature documented in multicultural education for teacher candidates focuses on *explicit* forms of curriculum, this section summarizes studies of this nature.

Broadly, multicultural content that instructors incorporate in exemplary curriculum includes the “historic, economic, political, social, and cultural roots of the racial system that led to the creation of a category of “white” marked by privilege” (Lensmire et al., 2013, p. 421), culturally relevant instructional practices that build mutually constitutive spaces between vertical knowledge (school) and horizontal knowledge (out-of-school), thus organizing learning to and through “the strengths of a community” and their students (Gutiérrez, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2000); counter-stories that describe the “dehumanizing effects of racism” (Matias, 2013) as well as “the evolution of race and racism that centers the counter-stories of people of colour and marginalizes Eurocentric normative history” (Matias, 2012, p. 5). In their interpretation of Said (1993), Lensmire and colleagues (2013) described the importance of “using a contrapuntal rather than univocal approach” that engages students in both the “perks and perils” of dominant and non-dominant accounts of history (p. 414). Finally, Erickson (2007) suggests a proleptic orientation that encourages students to peer through a window into the future—of themselves and of their communities—a trajectory imbued with academic and professional dreams they would not otherwise imagine.

In the teacher education literature, Milner (2010) highlights concepts that construct “the collection of thoughts, ideas, images, and belief systems” that inherently constitute what and how educators teach vis-à-vis issues of diversity (p. 118). He offers a cogent summary of five foundational concepts intended to be critically examined in any setting that prepares college students to work with populations different from their backgrounds: first, color-blind ideology that may ground their perspective from a “White norm” (Foster, 1999, as cited by Milner, 2010, p. 122), thus denying students the

opportunity to identify racially; second, cultural conflicts that may arise from a lack of understanding about power structures; third, the myth of meritocracy that too often dismisses the concept of privilege; fourth, deficit conceptions that may position students from non-dominant populations as problems that need remediation and fixing; and finally, low expectations that may not permit students to question the legitimacy and source of knowledge. Milner (2010) argues that analyzing “conceptual repertoires of diversity is the most appropriate place to begin a discussion” because of the relationship between *how* novice teachers think about issues of diversity abstractly, and subsequently *how* they interact with and teach culturally diverse students (p. 125).

Educators deliver content for diversity and multicultural education through a broad spectrum of artifacts and activities. Gurin-Sands and colleagues (2012) discussed *emotion* as an important artifact when students can reflect on how and why exposure to issues of privilege and power may not only evoke discomfort in themselves, but also their peers. Similarly, Chubbuck (2010) believed that instructors must “pierce apathy and provoke the empathy and outrage needed to prompt them to act for the betterment of society” (p. 206). To make meaning of emotions and reflect critically about the ways which personal experiences shape their perspectives, scholars can ask students to create autobiographies, reflective journals, and video diaries (Bierema, 2010; Cleary, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Sleeter, 2001) in ways that “represent themselves and their stories from their own perspectives” (Jackson, 1992, as cited in Ladson-Billings, 2000). According to Bennett (2013), these types of assignments ratchet up potential for deep learning when instructors can ask poignant questions and dialogue regularly with students “to facilitate and scaffold their critical reflection” (p. 407).

To help engage students in “issues perceived to be controversial such as racism and discrimination” (Sleeter & Owuor, 2011, p. 527), professors use *culture shock assignments* and *educultural projects* to render what we find so familiar, such as pop culture, unfamiliar (Cleary, 2001; Lea, 2010; May & Sleeter, 2010; Sleeter, 2013). Put differently, forms of media—such as films, magazine articles, television shows, social media—typically embody narratives that, when examined carefully, embody stereotypes and hegemonic ideologies. Take, for example, Giroux (2010) who described sexist and racist depictions of women and people of color in Disney films. In using pop culture images from Disney, “the ability to critically view the media encourages the dispelling of students' stereotypes” and enables participants to see depictions of inequality in everyday objects (Cleary, 2001, p. 39).

Many scholars recommend pairing coursework with a practicum or fieldwork component (Bennett, 2013; Castro, 2010; Cole, 1996; Vossoughi & Gutiérrez, 2010). Integrating hands-on experience is better than “spending limited time in urban classrooms [which] often serves to reinforce students' stereotypes and racist attitudes” (Ladson-Billings, 2000, p. 209). An exemplar of a data-driven teacher education program is the Fifth Dimension, which is founded upon a “social design experiment” (Gutiérrez & Vossoughi, 2010)—a setting organized around expansive notions of learning and a humanist, equity-oriented research agenda—that fosters robust learning environments for both undergraduates and K-12 students. More specifically, Fifth Dimension settings involve after-school programs in schools located in economically vulnerable communities that are connected to an undergraduate course for students interested in teaching (Cole, 1996). Typically, the after-school program and university course are

isomorphic in design and engender two goals. First, they create robust learning ecologies infused with technology and diverse cultural practices. Second, they provide undergraduates with analytical lenses to challenge stereotypical notions of race, ethnicity, and culture.

To mediate undergraduate students' understandings of theories and concepts in the Fifth Dimension, the following artifacts are used: *weekly readings* such as journal articles and book chapters to introduce core concepts; responses to *weekly guiding questions* to help undergraduates focus on particular ideas and interact with the readings more deeply; *classroom activities*, including presentations, dialogues, and small group work to encourage undergraduates to make meaning of and critique course concepts; *cognitive ethnographies*, or field notes, written by students to document moment-to-moment interactions at the practicum site; interrogate their own assumptions and biases about how learning occurs and who can learn; infuse theory to support their interactions at the after-school program and analyze how to approach situations in the future; and *self-reflections* due at the end of the semester, where undergraduate students ponder their learning and development throughout the course and describe what afforded opportunities for them to link theory and practice (Cole, 1996; Gutiérrez & Vossoughi, 2010).

This section highlights coursework that specifically trains students to become teachers and instruct diverse populations. The following portion of this literature review focuses on other multicultural interventions for students who are not necessarily seeking teacher education per se but are more broadly interested in issues of diversity.



### **Multicultural Education for Nonteaching Career Trajectories**

In a discussion regarding multicultural education, Moses (2002) cogently argued for higher education institutions to require the integration of different types of multicultural pedagogy, in the form of curricular or co-curricular activities, or formal and informal learning spaces. She explained this in the following quote:

In 1995, over 85 percent of full-time college faculty members were white. Only 12.6 percent were American people of color. . . . If white faculty members do not take it upon themselves to infuse multiculturalism into their courses, multicultural curriculum policies serve to ensure a practical curricular focus on multiculturalism and nonoppression. (p. 103)

By enforcing policies that require enrollment in multicultural courses, regardless of majors and career plans, institutions attempt to prepare students for contribution to, and participation in, an increasingly global economy. In addition to multicultural coursework (teacher preparation and otherwise), many universities also offer Living Learning Communities (LLC) for students, which are opportunities for students to live in the same locations and attend classes together (Pike, 1999). More specifically, Inkelas and Weisman (2003) defined LLC as a constellation of “communities [that] link together learning opportunities—whether they be courses, cocurricular activities, special topics, or interactions and conversations with faculty and peers—to help students integrate and obtain a deeper understanding of their knowledge” (p. 335). Many LLCs aim to facilitate informal and formal learning environments for students from all backgrounds to build cross-cultural and cross-racial relationships, thus increasing the potential for integration to occur (Zirkel, 2008).

Intergroup dialogues are another multicultural intervention open to all students who are interested in issues of diversity, whether or not they decide to pursue teaching

professionally. According to Zúñiga and colleagues (2007), an intergroup dialogue can be defined in the following way:

A face-to-face, interactive, and facilitated learning experience that brings together twelve to eighteen students from two or more social identity groups over a sustained period to explore commonalities and differences, examine the nature and consequences of systems of power and privilege, and find ways to work together to promote social justice. (p. vii)

To discuss these issues in meaningful ways, intergroup dialogues often rely upon participants with certain social identities; take, for example, how a dialogue regarding race must be comprised of at least 50% people of color and 50% Whites; similarly, a dialogue with emphasis on gender must be divided evenly by women and men. For over a decade, many universities have used intergroup dialogues as a multicultural intervention to incite learning and foster mutual understanding across different student populations based upon race, gender, sexual orientation, and religion (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen & Allen, 1999). This goal is a callback to the intergroup movement after World War II, when educational and community practices aimed to mediate cross-racial interactions, decrease prejudice, and create mutual understanding across differences (Banks, 2004). In fact, intergroup dialogues are positioned as productive forums for addressing issues that many scholars may find too contentious and controversial to approach in the classroom (Schoem & Hurtado, 2001; Zúñiga et al., 2007).

There are four processes involved in the design and implementation of intergroup dialogues: (a) engaging introspection to better understand self-identity, (b) appreciating difference and recognizing the strengths in diverse cultural practices and backgrounds, (c) critically reflecting on institutional and structural inequities, and (d) building alliances across multiple groups (Nagda, 2006). The third and fourth processes are described as

“critical,” which “represents what Freire (1970) meant by critical consciousness—a concept that includes both analysis of power and the necessity of action” (Gurin-Sands et al., 2012, p. 63). Said differently, students who participate in critical reflecting can analyze how their biases are textured by privilege and power; additionally, students who engage in alliance building discover how to become allies to one another. In order to accomplish this, intergroup dialogues are founded upon a critical-dialogic theoretical foundation—connecting dialogue to action—that opens up possibilities for participants to mutually understand one another instead of convincing their peers that certain perspectives are more legitimate than others (Gurin-Sands et al., 2012; Schoem & Hurtado, 2001; Nagda, 2006; Zirkel, 2008; Zúñiga et al., 2007). This foundation necessarily involves a combination of enlightenment-oriented (instructional information and readings) and encounter-oriented (interaction with peers within the dialogue) processes that must be balanced so participants simultaneously engage in consuming and constructing knowledge (Nagda, 2006).

### **Student Responses and Outcomes**

Research indicates a breadth of student responses and outcomes associated with multicultural pedagogical practices. Scholars have documented a plethora of favorable outcomes among participants in multicultural interventions, including expansive shifts in beliefs and attitudes about cultural diversity, decreased prejudice, enhanced critical thinking, augmented problem-solving abilities, greater investment in college-going practices, improved institutional climate, increased commitment to social justice activities, increased comfort with difference, and meaningful equity-oriented pedagogical

practices that have enhanced academic success of students of color (Bowman, 2010; Castro, 2010; Hurtado, 2001; Yeakley, 1998; Zhao & Kuh, 2004; Zirkel, 2008).

However, other studies suggest what may appear to be less than favorable outcomes. In his critique of multicultural and antiracist pedagogy, Niemonen (2007) noted how “bafflement, sarcasm, anger, hostility, and disengagement occur frequently in their classrooms and workshops” (p. 169). Other students become “disruptive, disrespectful, or who simply turn off” when exposed to content that challenges their worldview or made them feel guilty (Thomas et al., 2010, p. 303). Despite initial reactions that may appear to be less than desirable, however, scholars sustain hope that transformative possibilities will emerge. Matias (2012), for example, discussed a student named Thurston who exhibited extremely resistant behaviors:

Instead of acknowledging the dissonance, they choose to resist it. Although those with such a response miss an opportunity to learn from their dissonance, they learn they no longer live in blissful ignorance. Furthermore, the employment of such resistant strategies demonstrates the need to actively engage in resistance. . . . [t]herefore, students like Thurston realize they incur a loss of ignorance. Yet such a loss is itself a gain, in that losing one’s blindness to White privilege is ultimately a gain in the war against racism. (p. 21)

Through this excerpt, Matias (2012) demonstrates that resistance actually indexes a process whereby students begin to recognize their White privilege, or in other words, forfeit their “blindness to White privilege” (p. 21). Such resistance, Matias argued, is not inherently negative because it symbolizes an increasing awareness that may eventually contribute to the dismantling of racism.

## Gaps in Multicultural Education Literature

Despite the evolution of theories and research of multicultural education—in teacher preparation coursework and otherwise—scholars call for new research trajectories. Lowenstein (2009) explained,

My intention is to acknowledge that although much important theoretical work has been done in multicultural education, especially around the issues of race and racial identity, the actual practice of teaching and learning about issues of diversity in teacher education is more nebulous. (p. 178)

Similarly, Castro (2010) argued that research “questions for further investigation should focus on the content and delivery of multicultural education courses . . . and the extent to which these variables influence teacher beliefs” (p. 325). Additionally, organizing a toolbox of “practical examples and experiences related to diversity” can supplement theoretical understandings of multicultural education (Milner, 2010, p. 125). More specifically, a better understanding of what particular pedagogical practices contribute to affirmative shifts in how students relate to issues of diversity is imperative. Tienda (2013) argued that much research in multicultural education offered “little concrete evidence about what form” such interventions should take (p. 472). Shedding light on this phenomenon may contribute to understanding *what* practices compel aspiring teachers to incorporate multicultural pedagogy in their classrooms and inspire college students to interact with diversity of ideas and people.

For my dissertation, I contribute to filling this gap in the literature by examining *how* multicultural pedagogies are designed and organized as well as *how*, if at all, students shift in their approaches to issues of race once exposed to such pedagogies. To contextualize this approach, in the last part of this literature review I examine the measurement of racial attitudes.

### Part III: Racial Attitudes

In most social science writing, the term “attitude” refers to a favorable or unfavorable evaluation of an object. The object may be a person, a group, a policy, an idea, or indeed anything at all that can be evaluated. (Schuman, Steeh, Bobo, & Krysan, 1997, p. 1)

In their documentation of American shifts in racial attitudes, Schuman and colleagues (1997) argued that people’s attitudes toward race can potentially offer meaningful indicators for understanding past, current, and potential behaviors related to race; such behaviors may include voting outcomes of anti-affirmative action ballot measures or White flight to suburban neighborhoods. Critics of attitudinal surveys, however, question the reliability of attitudinal surveys to predict future behaviors (Crespi, 1977). Citing a broad range of studies (see Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Fazio & Zanna, 1981), Schuman et al. (1997) responded to such criticisms with assertions that “attitudes and relevant behavior at the individual level are usually correlated to some extent, from small to fairly large” (p. 6). Some correlations between attitudes and behavior, for example, reveal the relationship between attitudes and involvement in desegregation busing movements (e.g., Useem, 1980). I agree with Schuman and colleagues’ positions regarding attitudes and similarly acknowledge that attitudes bring to bear only *one* type of evidence that sheds partial light on the phenomenon of interest. The degree to which attitudes become manifested in behavior can be characterized as the proverbial black box, but the use of surveys to poke holes in the black box—even only partially—may provide important implications for my study.

The first survey regarding racial attitudes and issues came out in 1942 (Schuman et al., 1997). Drawing on results of national sample surveys from over 60 decades, scholars have categorized different types of racial attitudes. *Dominative or old-fashioned*

*racists* openly espouse forms of bigotry about and toward people of color (Kovel, 1970; McConahay, 1982). According to Kovel (1970), the dominative racist is the “type who acts out bigoted beliefs—he represents the open flame of racial hatred” (p. 54). On the other hand, the advent of the Civil Rights Movement spurred a different type of *symbolic racism* or *modern racism* (Kinder & Sears, 1981; McConahay & Hough, 1976); this type of racial attitude characterizes worldviews of people who believe that racism against Blacks no longer exists, and in the absence of racism, Blacks are unnecessarily forceful and aggressive in demands for special rights. Consequently, such domineering behaviors result in unfair practices (e.g., preferential treatment, racial quotas, inequitable access to welfare) such that any advances made by the Black community are undeserved and excessive (McConahay, Hardy, & Batts, 1981; Sears, 1988). On the other hand, *aversive racism* (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986) depicts racial attitudes of people who believe steadfastly in egalitarian value systems where it is immoral to discriminate against and stereotype people of color. Notwithstanding these values, aversive racists “unconsciously harbor feelings of uneasiness toward Blacks, and thus try to avoid interracial interaction” (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2005, p. 619).

More recently, scholars argue that *color-blind racism* (Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011; Neville, Lilly, Duran, Lee, & Browne, 2000) represents a more ubiquitous and contemporary racial attitude that “rationalizes the status of minorities as the product of market dynamics, naturally occurring phenomena, and their alleged cultural deficiencies” (Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011, p. 191). The *color-blind* framework is a conscious or unconscious justification of the current racial status quo and an avenue for explaining away racial inequalities in the United States by using non-racial

rationales (Neville, Spanierman, & Doan, 2006). To develop his argument of color-blind racism, Bonilla-Silva (2010) marshaled evidence from qualitative interviews and identified four prevalent frames used to explain racial inequities: (a) *abstract liberalism*, the argument that we ought to decrease government intervention and increase individual choice; (b) *naturalization*, the use of human nature and behavior to explain racial segregation; (c) *cultural racism*, the idea that certain racial groups possess characteristics (e.g., laziness, stupidity, greed, etc.) responsible for their current situations; and (d) *minimization of racism*, the focus upon America's transformation from a country who enslaved Blacks to a "post-racial" nation that elected the first Black president; evidence of this metamorphosis supplants racial inequities from a central to peripheral concern (pp. 28-29).

### **Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale**

Literature to characterize and understand racial attitudes draws on protocols that focus on cross-cultural competence of counselors and healthcare providers (e.g., Cross-Cultural Evaluation Tool, 2007; Multicultural Counseling Awareness Scale, 2002); student perceptions of campus climate (e.g., Higher Education Research Institute protocol), attitudes toward Black people (e.g., Modern Racism Scale, 1986), public polls that measure attitudes about racial principles (e.g., should everybody be treated equally without regard to race), implementation of racial principles (e.g., should the federal government prevent discrimination), and social distance preferences (e.g., individual's willingness to enter hypothetical contact settings in primarily Black or White schools or neighborhoods; Bobo & Smith, 1998; Washington Post/Kaiser/Harvard University Survey Project protocol). For the purposes of my dissertation, however, I focused on a



protocol that measures color-blind racial attitudes of college students via the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS). The CoBRAS, developed by Neville et al. (2000), is based on more than 1,100 observations in five studies. CoBRAS draws on the following foundational ideas: (a) racism is systemic, (b) racism systemically privileges Whites over people of color, (c) Whites and people of color can have color-blind racial attitudes, and (e) color-blindness is cognitive in nature.

The CoBRAS consists of 20 items rated on a 6-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). Three subscales comprise the CoBRAS: Unawareness of Racial Privilege (e.g., *White people in the U.S. have certain advantages because of the color of their skin*), Unawareness of Institutional Discrimination (e.g., *Social policies such as affirmative action, discriminate unfairly against White people*), and Unawareness of Blatant Racial Issues (e.g., *Racial problems in the U.S. are rare, isolated situations*). Total score that encompasses all three subscales can range from 20 to 120 with higher scores representing more color-blind racial attitudes.

Surveys that generate stable responses—particularly when questions are replaced with differently worded items—are called reliable. One measurement of reliability is Cronbach's alpha, and acceptable indices of Cronbach's alpha are equal or greater than .70 (Thissen & Wainer, 2001; Thompson, 2003). Consider, for example, a respondent who strongly *agrees* with the statement, "Racism is a major problem in the U.S." and strongly *disagrees* with the statement, "Racism may have been a problem in the past, but it is not an important problem today." Such responses may represent good internal consistency and may contribute to higher Cronbach's alpha scores. Cronbach's alphas of CoBRAS among racially/ethnically heterogeneous samples have been adequate,

ranging from .84 to .91 for the total scale (Neville et al., 2000). Additionally, outcomes from CoBRAS results demonstrate high construct validity with similar protocols. More specifically, according to Oh and colleagues (2010), higher CoBRAS scores (high level of color-blindness) correlated with high modern racism beliefs, racial and gender intolerance, belief in a just world (Neville et al., 2000), lower support for affirmative action (Awad, Cokley, & Ravitch, 2005), greater fear of people of color (Spanierman & Heppner, 2004), low receptiveness to ideas about diversity among Whites (Spanierman, Neville, Liao, Hammer, & Wang, 2008), low counseling competence with people of different racial/ethnic backgrounds (Neville et al., 2006), and positive perceptions of racial/ethnic campus climate (Worthington, Navarro, Loewy, & Hart, 2008).

To date, scholars have documented CoBRAS outcomes among college students in nine empirical studies. I gleaned three broad themes from these articles: (a) exploration of individual competencies, such as the ability to counsel and interact with people of different racial backgrounds; (b) examination of attitudes toward affirmative action and perceptions of campus climate; and (c) measurements of shifts in racial attitudes before and after educational interventions. General findings from these studies are summarized in the following section; however, a more detailed explanation of each study, including sample size and respondent demographics, is available in Appendix A.

### **Exploration of Individual Competencies**

The first theme of CoBRAS studies explores multicultural competencies of graduate students and mental health professionals. Neville et al. (2006) distributed the CoBRAS protocol and open-ended survey inquiries that asked respondents to define color-blindness. In their findings, Neville et al. inferred that their sample held low to

moderate levels of color-blind racial beliefs. The authors of this study recommended that all students entering the counseling profession should enroll in courses and trainings regarding multicultural issues and different sources/types of racism—particularly institutional racism—to strengthen competencies related to multicultural counseling.

Spanierman and Heppner (2004) believe that analysis of results from the CoBRAS in conjunction with the Psychosocial Costs of Racism to Whites Scale (PCRW) provides a more robust understanding of the “emotional consequences experienced by White individuals as a result of racism” (Spanierman & Heppner, 2004, p. 250). PCRW is based on three scales: White Empathic Reaction Toward Racism (e.g., *I am angry that racism exists*), White Guilt (e.g., *I feel guilty about being White*), and White Fear of Others (e.g., *I am distrustful of people of other races*). Combined uses of CoBRAS with PCRW highlight important implications for ways in which White people interact with individuals of different races, and arguably, their abilities to effectively counsel people of color. Based upon these measures, they found that among White college students, higher levels of color-blindness (higher CoBRAS scores) were strongly correlated to higher levels of White Fear of Others, lower levels of White Guilt and less anger/sadness about the existence of racism (Neville, 2006). Such findings indicate an opportunity for improving multicultural counseling competencies by incorporating ways for people to understand white privilege (McIntosh, 2001), that is, the advantages Whites accrue by virtue of their skin color.

### **Examination of Attitudes Toward Affirmative Action and Campus Climate**

The second general theme that characterizes CoBRAS studies examines college students’ attitudes toward issues related to affirmative action and campus climate. Awad

et al. (2005) recruited students from introductory and upper-level psychology courses to take the CoBRAS, Attitude Toward Affirmative Action Scale (ATAAS; Kravitz & Platania, 1993), and Modern Racism Scale (MRS; McConahay, 1983). The ATAAS is intended to measure attitudes toward affirmative action policies and programs, with responses on a 5-point Likert-scale ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*). On the other hand, the MRS is intended to measure attitudes toward Blacks and contains seven questions that are measured on a 5-point scale, from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The authors used hierarchical multiple regression analysis to model the relationships between attitudes toward affirmative action and race. Results confirmed that after controlling for race and sex, color-blind attitudes emerged as the strongest predictor of attitudes toward affirmative action, and higher levels of color-blindness were related to unfavorable evaluations of affirmative action. In a similar study, Oh, Choi, Neville, Anderson and Landrum-Brown (2010) used logistic regression analysis and found that students of color were more likely to view affirmative action more positively as compared to their White counterparts. In alignment with the Awad and colleagues (2005) study, high CoBRAS scores were associated with anti-affirmative action sentiments.

Worthington et al. (2008) distributed the CoBRAS as part of a larger campus climate study at a large PWI. Perceptions of campus climate were more positive when participants tended to deny racial privileges of Whites and have a color-blind racial attitude. Based upon their findings, the authors cautioned educators and policymakers from drawing on a color-blind racial perspective, and instead, encouraged postsecondary administrators to “be prepared to respond appropriately . . . in order to enhance the

learning experience for all members of the campus community” (Worthington et al., 2008, p. 17). In a separate study about Facebook, a different aspect of campus climate, Tynes and Markoe (2010) explored whether a relationship existed between responses to online racial content (e.g., racial theme party images on Facebook) and color-blind racial attitudes. The authors used multinomial logistic regression analyses to determine whether a student’s reaction (e.g., no affect, humorous, apathy, disappointment, sadness, or anger) to online racial content was predictable from color-blind racial attitudes or racial group membership. Based upon these analyses, the authors found that White students tended to report not being bothered by pictures from racially-themed parties and having high color-blind racial attitudes, while Black students tended to report feeling bothered or angered by pictures from racially-themed parties and having low color-blind attitudes.

Among the studies characterized by this research theme, scholars have generally found a relationship between high color-blind racial attitudes, low support for affirmative action, and positive perceptions of campus climate; likewise, a relationship between low color-blind racial attitudes, high support for affirmative action, and more negative perceptions of campus climate has been documented.

### **Measurements of Shifts in Racial Attitudes**

The last theme of this portion of the literature review highlights empirical studies that drew on CoBRAS as a pre-test and post-test to measure shifts in racial attitudes of college students who participated in diversity initiatives or race-conscious programs. In the earliest published study regarding CoBRAS and college students, Neville and colleagues (2000) distributed the racial attitude protocol to 45 students enrolled in a year-long diversity course designed to train undergraduates as future leaders at their campuses.

Analysis of variances (ANOVAs) proved to be a useful technique to determine whether differences in scores were statistically different. The authors performed repeated measures of ANOVAS to test for differences in the CoBRAS scores at the beginning of the semester versus the end of the semester. When the authors found statistically significant differences between the pre-tests (average score of 50.21) and post-tests (average score of 45.71), they inferred that students, on average, decreased in color-blind attitudes throughout the course of the academic year.

Burque-Colvin, Zugazaga, and Davis-Maye (2007) leveraged the CoBRAS to examine racial attitudes of students who enrolled in the Self and Other Awareness Project (SOAP), a course created by the first author. SOAP aimed to encourage undergraduates' receptivity to exploring diversity, facilitate opportunities for students to understand their identities, raise student knowledge related to intergroup interactions, and hone skills in cross-cultural interactions to prepare for employment in a diverse society (Burque-Colvin, 2001). The authors conducted a t-test and determined that a statistically significant difference existed between the pre-test CoBRAS scores (average score of 65.04) and post-test CoBRAS scores (average score of 59.37). These findings allowed the authors to infer that students, on average, experienced a significant decrease in color-blind racial attitudes throughout the course of enrollment in SOAP.

Finally, Spanierman et al. (2008) recruited respondents from a large, predominately White university to complete a CoBRAS pre-survey at the beginning of the semester and a post-survey at the end of the semester. In addition to the CoBRAS, students completed the Universal Diverse Orientation (UDO; Fuertes, Miville, Mohr, Sedlacek, & Gretchen, 2000), a 15-item protocol that uses Likert-type responses ranging

from 1 (*strongly disagree*) through 6 (*strongly agree*) to answer questions such as “I am only at ease with people of my own race” (Spanierman et al., 2008). The authors found that among White undergraduates, completing diversity courses such as Ethnic Studies classes or intergroup dialogues and participating in multicultural activities such as Latino Heritage Celebrations predicted higher levels of diversity appreciation and lower levels of color-blindness at the end of the year.

In summary, the literature review on color-blind racial attitudes of college students tends to combine outcomes from the CoBRAS with other types of protocols to measure culturally competent counseling abilities, perceptions of campus climate, and attitudes toward affirmative action. Of import, three empirical studies invoked pre-test and post-test measurements of racial attitudes among students who have participated in a diversity course or training. In this vein, I contribute to this body of work by drawing on the CoBRAS as one measure for exploring whether students who participated in my study shifted in their racial attitudes.

### **Summary**

Through this literature review, I aimed to provide scholarly context surrounding my research questions. In Part I of my literature review, I addressed my first research question: *How do postsecondary educators (administrators, faculty, and volunteers) theorize issues of diversity and race?* Here, I discussed conventional theories used in student affairs and outlined why a weak relationship exists between theory, practice, and research. This is especially important considering that the case studies in my dissertation were located in student affairs programs with foci on diversity and race. In Part II, I addressed my second overarching research question: *How do postsecondary educators*

*organize student learning about issues of diversity and race?* I offered a summary of literature that provides details about the types of assignments and pedagogical practices a variety of educators—professors, student affairs administrators, and K-12 teachers—invoke when organizing how students learn multicultural content. Finally, in Part III, I documented results from numerous studies regarding the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (Neville et al., 2000) to address my third research question: *How do racial attitudes of student participants shift from the beginning to the end of the seminars?*

In the following chapter, I provide an overview of a robust framework of learning and development known as Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), the only theory of learning and development that places cultural mediation, historical context, and social organization of educational practices at the center of analysis (Cole, 1998; Gildersleeve, 2010; Gutiérrez, Hunter, & Arzubiaga, 2009). Of significance, I discuss how CHAT was used as a framework for exploring and understanding postsecondary diversity initiatives in my dissertation.



## CHAPTER III

### CULTURAL-HISTORICAL ACTIVITY THEORY

Cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) assumes that learning is socially organized, culturally mediated, and historically bound. That is to say, we learn things in and amongst other people, while doing the things that we do with those people, and this all happens in a specific space/time. (Gildersleeve, 2010, p. 37)

The ballast of my dissertation is a robust theory of learning and development known as CHAT, which I use for three reasons. First, CHAT's organizing principle of *cultural mediation* enabled me to investigate what philosophies, tools, languages, and practices postsecondary educators harnessed to design and implement diversity seminars. Second, exploring *historical context* uncovered how diversity initiatives evolved and the past trajectories of postsecondary educators that led to their involvement in these programs. Third, analyzing seminars as *social organizations* helped me model these interventions as activity systems layered with multiple elements: students, educators, formal policies, implicit rules, and division of labor. Taken together, these organizing principles from CHAT helped me understand how diversity seminars were conceptualized and implemented in university settings.

In the following section, I explain in greater detail how cultural mediation, historical context, and social organization of educational practices served as a useful framework for exploring and understanding postsecondary diversity initiatives in my dissertation.

#### **Cultural Mediation**

Cultural mediation is the central organizing principle of CHAT used for exploring, understanding, and explaining human nature (Cole, 1996, 1998; Cole & Engeström, 1993,

2007). Lev Vygotsky, the progenitor of a sociocultural approach to learning and development (the predecessor to CHAT), expressed that “the central fact of human existence is mediation” (as cited by Cole & Engeström, 2007, p. 485 from Vygotsky, 1997). The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines “mediate” as “occupying a middle position” or “exhibiting indirect causation, connection, or relation” (2011). Drawing on Vygotsky’s interpretation and the dictionary’s definition of mediation, we can consider how interactions between people and their environment become shaped, honed, and transformed by *artifacts* that “occupy a middle position” and form connections between human beings and their world. Languages, tools, practices, signs, ideas, and rituals are artifacts of culture that *mediate* our relationships with, and understanding of, the world (Engeström, 1991).

Since culture mediates our interactions with the world, envisioning human beings’ relationships with, and within, their milieu becomes unfathomable sans cultural artifacts. What time we awaken, for example, may be mediated by an alarm clock; our choice of clothing may be mediated by the weather forecast; our choice of breakfast may be mediated by grocery store sales; and our knowledge of current events may be mediated by television broadcasts (Moll, 1998). As mentioned previously, language is a type of cultural mediating artifact, and more relevant to education, our understanding of certain student populations can be mediated by language. To take one example, while some students might be labeled “minorities” or “diverse” or “under-privileged,” the phrase “non-dominant population” intends to mediate a more holistic understanding of “power differentials experienced by people by virtue of their membership in particular cultural communities” (Gutiérrez & Vossoughi, 2010, p. 115). Such language mediates our

understanding of students from non-dominant communities by highlighting asymmetric distributions of power, for example, rather than the use of mere descriptors or simple difference. Focusing on what artifacts are available and employed in diversity seminars is important for understanding how institutions and postsecondary educators approach issues of diversity and race, their strategies for organizing how students learn about these topics, and their philosophies about how to discuss these subjects.

To gain a better grasp of what artifacts—ideological and material—inform how postsecondary educators consider issues of race, I draw on *racial projects* (Omi & Winant, 1994), an instructive theory for conceptualizing the mutually influential relationships between how American society assigns meanings to race and organizes race. As explained by Omi and Winant, racial projects are “the discursive or representational means in which race is identified and signified on the one hand, and the institutional and organizational forms in which it is routinized and standardized on the other” (p. 60). Racial projects are developed and sustained within the immediate sphere of an individual’s everyday practices, the local domain of universities, the national level of government legislation, and anywhere in between.

We can understand the idea of racial projects, for example, through the existence of race-based advocacy offices and multicultural centers—e.g., Asian American Student Services, Black Student Services, Latino Student Services, and Native American Student Services—on some college campuses. Let us consider how some institutions may attach “deficit-oriented” meanings to race, thus positioning students of color “as academically and culturally deficient” (Sólorzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005, p. 286). As a result, this “deficit-oriented” meaning of race may manifest in the form of race-based advocacy

offices that offer remedial instruction and programs to help assimilate students to mainstream academic practices. The instrumentality of racial projects here allows us to unravel iterative and discursive connections between meanings assigned to race (e.g., “fix” the problem of “underpreparedness” that students of color bring) and instantiations of these interpretations (e.g., offer remedial services through racially-themed student services).

Let us consider how other institutions may imbue race with expansive meanings. The Equal Opportunity Programs (EOP) at the University of Colorado at Boulder, intended to support students historically marginalized from higher education, remained suspended in a web of constant negotiation to provide meaningful learning practices while challenging “regimes of instruction that privileged reductive approaches” during the late 1970s (Gutiérrez et al., 2009, p. 7). Initially, EOP offered four courses designed around mathematics remediation and enrolled a high concentration of students of color; on average, only 1% of students who registered for EOP mathematics remediation completed the college algebra series (Gutiérrez et al., 2009).

The administrators actively disrupted deficit perspectives and recognized how historical practices socialized many students of color to narrow and circumscribed ranges of remediated mathematics. After eliminating the reductive “one-size-fits-all” approach, the EOP redesigned the learning environment so that multiple forms of mediation were available to enhance learning. In contrast to remediated math that tracked students into homogeneous groups based upon perceived ability, EOP leveraged heterogeneity as a resource, including race, language, grade, gender, as well as varying degrees of familiarity and expertise with different academic practices and disciplines. In this setting,

administrators organized the new EOP to harness the affordances of distributed expertise and cognition as students with wide-ranging backgrounds of college algebra preparation collaborated together. Additionally, the administrators saturated the diversity program with various mediating artifacts, including explicit instruction and technology. After the EOP eliminated use of deficit-oriented practices, within the first year, 65% of students completed college algebra, and within the second year, 85% of students successfully exited the college algebra series—a pronounced increase from the 1% who finished the original remedial mathematics courses undergirded by narrow conceptions of learning and reductive ideas about the potential of non-dominant students (Gutiérrez et al., 2009). Here, racial projects unveil the relationship between dynamic interpretations of race—the importance of addressing “economic, social, and political practices that perpetuate” educational inequities experienced by students of color (Nuñez, 2014, p. 88)—and its manifestation in the new EOP program. These are but a couple of examples of how the notion of racial projects can be applied in postsecondary settings.

### **Historical Context**

To better understand the histories of the diversity seminars and postsecondary educators in my study, I turn to Lev Vygotsky’s *genetic method* (Cole & Engeström, 2007, p. 486), a perspective that urges people to enhance their understanding of particular phenomenon by exploring its genesis. Invoking the genetic method encourages institutions, educators, and scholars to see how long-standing inequitable distributions of funding and resources across school districts weaken equality of educational opportunity, for example, as opposed to deficit-oriented perspectives that position students, families, or their culture as problems. For my study, the genetic method was central for

understanding two main factors: first, the origin of diversity initiatives and how they have evolved over time; and second, the historical experiences of postsecondary administrators that influence how diversity initiatives are designed and implemented.

While the historical contexts of primary, secondary, and postsecondary institutions that shape an individual's educational trajectory are important to note, there are additional social, cultural, and institutional histories to consider. To take one example, Margaret Eisenhart (1990) explained that the cultural models of romance acquired by college women developed against a backdrop of social experiences *prior* to attending college (p. 33). Similarly, cultural models acquired by students, that is, “a set of coherent, taken-for-granted ideas” (Eisenhart, 1990, p. 22) about diversity and race are also shaped by their own histories and interactions with these ideas in different circumstances, including popular culture, media, and cultural practices of family and peer groups. Stanton Wortham's (2006) case study of classroom learning addressed how artifacts—including physical objects and instructors themselves—are imbued with social, cultural, and institutional histories, as explained below:

Questions, answers, and arguments entered the classroom through the textbooks and the teachers, both of which brought particular versions of sociohistorically circulating ideas. The textbooks favored certain positions because of the cultural and institutional contexts in which they were written. The teachers favored certain positions because of their own intellectual histories and points of view. The students had also been exposed to views . . . outside the classroom, from their families and from popular culture. (p. 99)

This excerpt highlights several important features of CHAT discussed thus far. Different types of culturally mediating artifacts to support student learning, such as textbooks and educators, are emphasized. Additionally, Wortham considered the historical backgrounds of educators, students, and culturally mediating artifacts to remind

the reader that classrooms (and educational interventions) do not spring forth and operate within a vacuum devoid of culture and history. Of import, educational interventions, such as diversity interventions, are steeped within a larger system that can be understood as a social organization.

### **Social Organization**

Through the concept of social organization, I reframed diversity initiatives as university programs shaped and influenced by contributions from an entire activity system saturated with people, their surrounding environments, and their interactions *in situ*. Taken together, Vygotsky's (1978) notion of sociocultural theory and Engeström's (1993) rendition of activity theory allow us to envision educational programs as social organizations comprised of the following elements: *subject*—person or peoples involved in the activity system; *mediating artifacts*—tools (idea or material) that help form links between subject and *object*, which is a goal or an accomplishment that the subject seeks to attain, possess, influence, or change; *rules*—explicit and implicit norms, assumptions, and policies; *community*—different actors including the subject(s) who are involved in the phenomenon of interest; and *division of labor*—how responsibilities are distributed among actors within an activity system (Gildersleeve, 2010). For my study, examining how diversity initiatives were socially organized highlighted the ways in which educators and students interacted, co-constructed norms, built relationships, and navigated the seminar.

Within this context, college-going practices represent a phenomenon shaped by contributions from an entire activity system without placing sole blame upon students for attrition (a deficit-oriented perspective) or allocating exclusive responsibility upon diversity initiatives for student success (an approach that dilutes student agency and

ignores the larger social context). Through Figure 1, I offer *one* way for how college-going practices *might be* conceptualized as an activity in CHAT and mediated by a variety of artifacts (adapted from Gildersleeve, 2010, p. 40). It is important to note that Figure 1 represents a sliver of all potential subjects, mediating artifacts, rules, community members, and division of labor within an activity system of this nature.

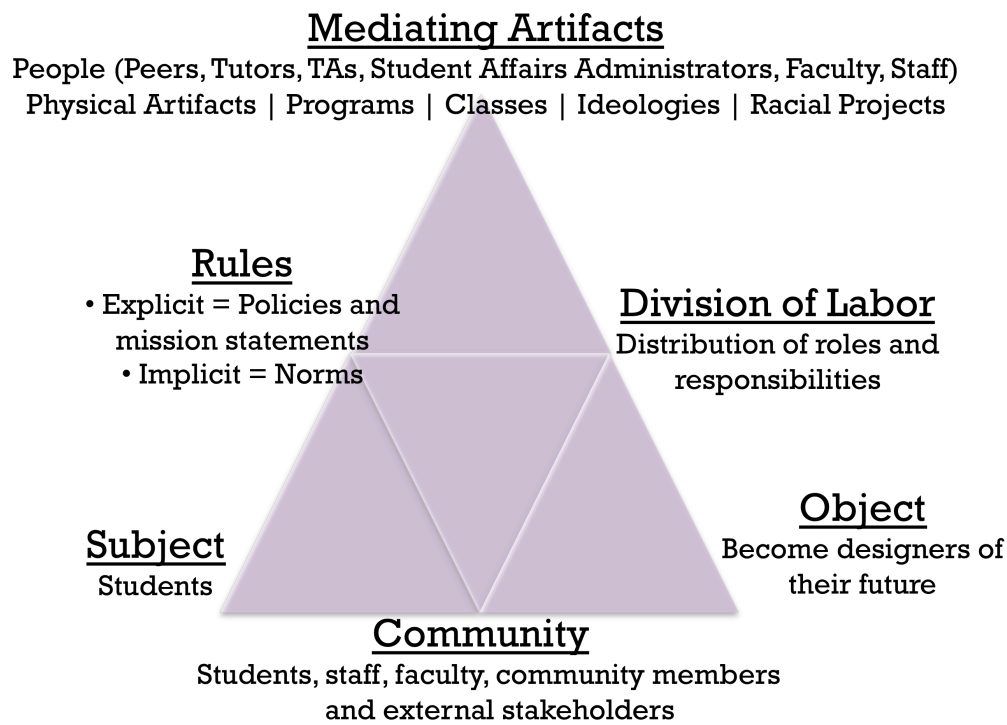


Figure 1. Example of the university as an activity system.

CHAT provided a conceptual terrain to understand and explain how the case studies in my dissertation functioned. Using CHAT, I analyzed how postsecondary educators used different types of artifacts to organize the seminars, and I situated each seminar as an activity system. As part of this process, I identified the affordances and tensions of each seminar. Contradictions in activity represented sites for expansive learning, that is, opportunities for people to develop new artifacts, new ways of acting, and new approaches toward designing their futures (Engeström, 2001). Subsequently, the



constraints, tensions, and contradictions revealed from my findings can propel the postsecondary educators in this study to consider renewed trajectories for organizing student learning. To reach this point, CHAT informed and supported my research methodology for analyzing cultural mediation, historical developments, and the social organization of each seminar, which I discuss in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER IV

### METHODS

In this study, I wanted to examine different ways that postsecondary educators mediated activities during which students discussed topics of diversity and race. I attempted to highlight the complex relationship between how educators physically and socially organized educational spaces, how students interacted with tangible and ideological artifacts in activities, and what was afforded or constrained *in situ* (Vygotsky, 1978; Cole & Engeström, 2007). To address these interests, I asked the following research questions:

1. How do postsecondary educators (administrators, faculty, and volunteers) theorize issues of diversity and race?
- 2a. How do postsecondary educators organize student learning about issues of diversity and race? 2b. What are the affordances and constraints of how postsecondary educators organize student learning?
3. How do racial attitudes of student participants shift from the beginning to the end of the seminars?

I used multiple methods of data collection to answer these questions: participant observations and audio/video records to document what happened during the seminars; phone and face-to-face interviews with 11 postsecondary educators; and 43 student responses from pre-surveys and post-surveys of the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scales (CoBRAS).

#### Site and Participants

I drew on two comparative case studies to address my research questions. I collected data from the STAR Knowledge Community at University of Morrill State

(UMS) and Frontiers of Dialogue at Garland University (GU).<sup>2</sup> The institutional similarities and differences offered interesting terrain for conducting a comparative case study.

### **University of Morrill State (UMS)**

Approximately 15% of the UMS student population was comprised of students of color. For over a decade, the STAR Knowledge Community has existed at UMS as a retention-based initiative that aimed to foster academic excellence, shared learning, leadership development, diversity appreciation, and civic engagement. In order to participate in STAR, all prospective students had to submit applications that discussed how values of the community resonated with them, their understanding of the STAR, how they would benefit and contribute to the community, and how they worked through a challenging experience. In the past, students were accepted into the program based upon perceived level of need, that is, whether administrators believed students from historically under-served backgrounds could benefit from the constellation of STAR's services. However, as STAR increased in visibility over time, students with *and* without a perceived need for comprehensive support services expressed interest in STAR. To simultaneously remain inclusive to all applicants and intentional about reaching under-served students, postsecondary educators primarily advertised the STAR Knowledge Community through partnerships with high schools described as having diverse populations and a high percentage of students receiving free or reduced price school meals.

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<sup>2</sup> Pseudonyms are used for postsecondary educators, students, and institutions to preserve confidentiality.

Once accepted to the program, all students were obligated to participate in a variety of activities (see Table 1 for all activities). One required activity included enrollment in one STAR Freshmen Seminar, a class where 19 STAR first-year students with similar academic interests met on a weekly basis. Seminars covered a range of academic topics such as science, environment, psychobiology, and communication studies. After extensive discussions with STAR administrators, we decided to make the “Culture and Communication” seminar my focal site because diversity and race were foundational to the texts, homework assignments, and dialogues associated with that course. Additionally, the “Culture and Communication” seminar instructor, Bill Harris, was a popular figure on campus and well known for his engaging teaching style and ability to connect with students.

### **Garland University (GU)**

Approximately 15% of the GU student body identified as students of color. GU hosted Frontiers of Dialogue, a program based in intergroup dialogue theory and co-curricular activities. Frontiers aimed to foster opportunities for participants to engage in facilitated reflection and dialogue about different identities and lived experiences. Small groups were brought together to engage in face-to-face conversations regarding group identities (e.g., race, ethnicity, or gender, etc.) and topics about diversity (e.g., social systems, power differentials, etc.). Postsecondary educators publicized Frontiers to all students as an opportunity to talk about similarities, differences, and to share their stories with others. Additionally, Frontiers administrators made concerted efforts to connect to professors whose coursework might have been enhanced by having additional space (outside the classroom) for students to participate in meaningful conversations about

difference; in this way, students could earn credit or extra credit for their involvement.

The program consisted of five weekly sessions led by a pair of trained facilitators. I

collected data from one Frontier dialogue group throughout a 5-week period that, similar

to the STAR seminar, integrated issues of race and diversity. Table 1 provides more

information about my focal sites.

Table 1

*Characteristics of Data Collection Sites*

Institution	University of Morrill State (UMS)	Garland University (GU)
Type	Public institution	Private institution
Student Population	30,000 students 15% people of color 50% women	12,000 students 15% people of color 56% women
Initiative of Interest	16-week course (for credit) for first-year students. Total of 26 classes (75 minutes each).	5-week seminar (for credit, extra credit, or no credit) for undergraduates & graduates. Total of 5 dialogues (120 minutes each).
Student Participants	n=18 students 90% people of color 50% women	n=16 students 50% people of color 60% women
Selection	Required <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Culture and Communication seminar at UMS is <i>one</i> component of the STAR Knowledge Community which requires: (a) participation in 10 activities to learn about leadership, study skills, time management, and service; (b) residence hall living with other STAR students; (c) registration in a “cluster” of 3 classes which are thematically linked and anchored by a seminar with other STAR students.</li> </ul>	Voluntary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For students who are interested in issues of diversity, the GU dialogue is a <i>voluntary</i> co-curricular opportunity.</li> <li>For students who are enrolled in a course that is attached to a dialogue, they have the <i>option</i> of participating in the dialogue as part of their coursework for extra credit or course credit, depending upon the instructor’s guidelines.</li> </ul>

## **Gaining Access**

My previously established relationships with UMS faculty and staff facilitated relatively easy access. In fall of 2005, for example, I collaborated with Tanya Nguyen, the STAR Knowledge Community Director at the time, to teach a leadership course for sophomore participants. From working together in that capacity, I recognized her desire to research different aspects of STAR to better understand how the program functioned. When I contacted Nguyen in spring of 2011, she expressed enthusiasm at the idea of creating a mutually beneficial partnership to help the program and to support my research. During the summer of 2011, Nguyen connected me to Bill Harris to explore the possibility of studying his “Culture and Communication” seminar for my dissertation. Harris immediately agreed to provide access as long as students provided consent.

On the first day of class at UMS (August 23, 2011), I recruited participants by presenting the purpose of my dissertation and emphasizing that regardless of whether students decided to be part of the study, their status at UMS, STAR, and in the course would remain unaffected. Although I encouraged students to take the consent forms to review the text more thoroughly, I was pleasantly surprised when all students submitted the consent forms immediately. Additionally, there were three students under 18 years of age who needed parental permission to participate in my study. The parents of two students gave written consent. Since one student did not have parental consent, I did not include any of his/her interactions or utterances in my final analyses.

Dr. Michele Moses, my advisor, encouraged me to consider GU as another site for my dissertation. She referred me to Dr. Joaquin Trivisa, the founder of Frontiers. No longer involved in Frontiers, Dr. Trivisa referred me to the current director, Dr. Scott

Coenen. During a phone conference in spring of 2011, Coenen articulated his interest in my research agenda and promised to help facilitate access as long as we received IRB approval and students agreed to participate in my study. Serendipitously, Coenen's graduate research projects and dissertation were based in video-recording intergroup dialogues. Well versed in navigating projects in ways that protect participant well-being and contribute to research, Coenen played a central role in helping me craft a proposal for gaining IRB approval from GU and later setting up a time for me to meet Frontiers of Dialogues facilitators. Although some facilitators originally thought video recording the dialogue would possibly decrease registration rates or shut students down, they all agreed to participate in the study. As a matter of fact, many Frontiers facilitators identified as graduate students and conveyed their interest in hearing about my dissertation findings.

When GU students registered for Frontiers in spring of 2012, GU staff informed them about my research study and asked whether they wanted to participate. Their enrollment in Frontiers would remain unaffected by their status in my study. Afterwards, Coenen created Frontiers schedules based upon the availability of student participants and facilitators. I eventually picked a dialogue with only one student who declined to be a research participant. On the first day of this particular dialogue (January 25, 2012), I presented the purpose of my dissertation and emphasized that regardless of whether students decided to participate in the research, their status in Frontiers and the university would remain unaffected. Similar to my experience at UMS, I was pleasantly surprised when all students signed consent forms, including the one student who originally did not want to be involved.

## **Data Collection**

### **Audio/Video Records of Seminars**

From August 2011 through December 2011, I was a participant observer in 26 “Culture and Communication” classes at UMS. Each class lasted approximately 75 minutes. Unfortunately, my video recorder did not arrive until approximately halfway through the semester, so data collection for the first 12 courses was documented through audio records from an Olympus digital voice recorder. Since a handful of other students brought their laptops to class, I felt comfortable using my laptop to take scratch notes.

Once my Logitech Web Camera did arrive, for the remainder of the semester, it was connected to my laptop and situated closely to an electric outlet at the front of the room. The need for an energy source to continually power my laptop and camera restricted where recordings took place, a limitation I discuss at the end of this chapter. During the class, I took scratch notes in a small, spiral bound notebook.

From January 2012 through February 2012, I was a participant observer in five Frontiers dialogues at GU. Each dialogue lasted approximately 120 minutes. Since each dialogue aimed to foster mutual understanding, I helped the facilitators push tables against the walls and set up chairs in a circle to dilute the ambiance of a traditional classroom. Subsequently, I decided to forego using my laptop for notes. Instead, the laptop and camera sat by a VCR in one corner of the room, silently recording the dialogues. After each session, I helped clean up the room and rearrange the furniture. Once I left the building, I usually sat in my car for a few minutes to jot down any emergent hunches, thoughts, and feelings in scratch notes.



For both seminars, I used the Social Organization of Learning Protocol (Gutiérrez, Berlin, Crosland, & Razfar, 1999) to guide my attention during participant-observations of seminars (see appendix for observation guidelines). More specifically, the purpose of the protocol was to document how educators organized learning in two primary ways: first, by physical configuration (where participants were positioned in relation to each other and tangible objects, such as desks and chairs); and second, by task and participation (how speakers were designated, how people responded to one another, who initiated discussions, and who took up what responsibilities).

### **Interviews**

From April 2012 through July 2012, I audio-recorded phone and in-person interviews with 11 educators (six from UMS and five from GU) using an Olympus digital voice recorder. I attempted to interview postsecondary educators involved at multiple levels of the seminars, ranging from the individuals who instructed the seminars to administrative leaders who oversaw broader programs. A brief overview of the roles and institutions associated with the interviews is provided in Table 2. Each interview was based upon a set of semistructured questions (see appendix).

Table 2

*Interviews With Postsecondary Educators*

Institution	Name	Role
UMS	Peter Thyme, PhD	Founder of STAR Knowledge Community
UMS	Bill Harris	Instructor for “Culture and Communication” seminar in which I was a participant
UMS	Ashley Naples	Teaching assistant for “Culture and Communication” seminar in which I was a participant
UMS	Tanya Nguyen	Former Director of STAR Knowledge Community
UMS	Jolene Karapas	Director of STAR Knowledge Community
UMS	Pilar Vazquez, PhD	Instructor for STAR course similar to focal course
GU	Scott Coenen, PhD	Director of Frontiers of Dialogues
GU	Felix Thompson, PhD	Vice Provost of Inclusive Excellence Affairs at GU
GU	Allison Logan	Co-Facilitator of dialogue in which I was a participant
GU	Rainn Blomkvist	Co-Facilitator of dialogue in which I was a participant
GU	Yolanda Lopez	Graduate assistant of Frontiers of Dialogues

**Pre- and Post-Surveys of Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale**

As mentioned in Chapter II (From Theory to Practice: A Literature Review of Diversity and Multicultural Approaches in Higher Education), scholars argue that *color-blind racism* (Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011; Neville et al., 2000) represents a more contemporary attitude that consciously or unconsciously justifies the current racial status quo by explaining away racial inequalities through nonracial rationales (Neville et al., 2006). To measure color-blind racial attitudes of college students, I used the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS; see Table 3), a 6-point

Likert scale developed by Neville et al. (2000). CoBRAS is based on more than 1,100 observations in five studies and contains 20 items that measure the following constructs: (a) Unawareness of Racial Privilege, (b) Unawareness of Institutional Discrimination, and (c) Unawareness of Blatant Racial issues. I used CoBRAS for two main reasons. First, CoBRAS allowed me to situate my study within the body of research already conducted with this instrument, which has been used extensively in postsecondary scholarship. Second, CoBRAS allowed me to measure constructs that captured what the literature identified as modernized and prevalent forms of racism in the United States.

Table 3

*Survey Items From the CoBRAS*

Item
(a) Everyone who works hard, no matter what race they are, has an equal chance to become rich.
(b) Race plays a major role in the type of social services (such as type of health care or day care) that people receive in the U.S.
(c) It is important that people begin to think of themselves as American and not African American, Mexican American or Italian American.
(d) Due to racial discrimination, programs such as affirmative action are necessary to help create equality.
(e) Racism is a major problem in the U.S.
(f) Race is very important in determining who is successful and who is not.
(g) Racism may have been a problem in the past, but it is not an important problem today.
(h) Racial and ethnic minorities do not have the same opportunities as White people in the U.S.
(i) White people in the U.S. are discriminated against because of the color of their skin.
(j) Talking about racial issues causes unnecessary tension.
(k) It is important for political leaders to talk about racism to help work through or solve society's problems.
(l) White people in the U.S. have certain advantages because of the color of their skin.
(m) Immigrants should try to fit into the culture and adopt the values of the U.S.
(n) English should be the only official language in the U.S.
(o) White people are more to blame for racial discrimination in the U.S. than racial and ethnic minorities.
(p) Social policies, such as affirmative action, discriminate unfairly against White people.
(q) It is important for public schools to teach about the history and contributions of racial and ethnic minorities.
(r) Racial and ethnic minorities in the U.S. have certain advantages because of the color of their skin.
(s) Racial problems in the U.S. are rare, isolated situations.
(t) Race plays an important role in who gets sent to prison.

In August of 2011, I distributed the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scales electronically to UMS students through *Qualtrics*, an online platform that saves results and enables exportation to Excel or CSV files for further analyses. After the first week of class, I learned that fewer than 50% of UMS students from Harris's course actually completed the pre-survey. I suspect this occurred because the pre-survey was not affiliated with the course as an official homework assignment, nor did I offer an incentive. Concerned about the low response rate, I sought permission to recruit additional STAR students enrolled in a course similar to "Culture and Communication" taught by Dr. Pilar Vazquez, a postsecondary educator whom I also interviewed (see Table 2). In December of 2011, I distributed the same electronic survey again. Ultimately, a total of 24 UMS students completed both pre- and post-surveys; of this sample, 12 students actually enrolled in the course taught by Professor Harris and 12 students enrolled in the course taught by Professor Vazquez.

Since GU students who registered for *Frontiers of Dialogues* were already required to complete a survey for the program, Coenen added questions from the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scales to their survey. GU students filled out the electronic survey in January of 2012, before the first day of the dialogue. At the end of the 5-week dialogue in February of 2012, participants completed a hard copy of the survey. Coenen explained that asking for survey responses on paper during the last seminar tended to produce higher response rates; otherwise, the number of outcomes decreased substantially with electronic surveys, particularly since there were no penalties or course grades associated with completing the post-survey. A total of 19 GU students agreed to participate in my

study and completed the pre- and post-surveys; this sample included nine students involved in the seminar for which I was a participant-observer. Since Coenen coordinated distribution and collection of CoBRAS surveys, he emailed me a final Excel spreadsheet that included only those students who completed both pre-surveys and post-surveys. The following table summarizes the sources of evidence I harnessed to develop my claims.

Table 4

*Sources of Evidence*

Type of Data	UMS	GU
Participant Observation	26 courses (75 minutes each/32.5 hours total)	5 seminars (2 hours each/10 hours total)
Audio Recordings of Mediated Activities	12 courses (75 minutes each/15 hours total)	N/A
Video Recordings of Mediated Activities	14 courses (75 minutes each/17.5 hours total)	5 seminars (2 hours each/10 hours total)
Audio Recordings of Interviews	6 postsecondary educators (6 hours total)	5 postsecondary educators (5.5 hours total)
Pre- and Post-Surveys of CoBRAS	12 students from observed course; 12 students from a similar course. <i>Total = 24 students</i>	9 students from observed seminar; 10 students from similar seminars <i>Total = 19 students</i>

### **Data Reduction**

#### **Audio/Video Records of Seminars and Interviews**

I transferred electronic files of approximately 40 hours of audio/video records from 31 seminars and 11 interviews into *Transana*. Afterwards, I created content logs, which were summaries that helped me document interactions within each seminar, gain a better sense for the broad lay-of-the land activities, and identify routine as well as infrequent events.

I used three guidelines to create content logs. First, I used a list of concepts and themes generated from previous empirical research as well as theoretical scholarship—known as *deductive codes* (Erickson, 2004)—as a compass for steering my focus. I originally identified this list of deductive codes from my prospectus literature review, which came from scholarship about classroom participation structures (e.g., Gutiérrez et al., 1999) and content that students were likely to learn from critical race studies, intergroup dialogues, and ethnic studies (e.g., Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Zúñiga et al., 2007). Second, I constructed a separate list of codes grounded from the data itself—known as *inductive codes* (Sipe & Ghiso, 2004)—to track emergent interactions, activities, or other occurrences in my research journal. More specifically, these inductive codes represented new ideas or interactions not already captured by the deductive codes. Third, throughout the content logs, I embedded different kinds of *observer comments* (denoted as OC) from scratch notes I took during or after participant-observations, as well as new scratch notes from hearing or watching audio/video records of the seminars. In these OCs, I noted any feelings, hunches, or ideas about what I was seeing and experiencing. I used the same process in *Transana* to create content logs from 11 audio-recorded interviews.

Once I finished constructing the content logs, I imported all 42 content logs (31 audio/video records of seminars and 11 audio records of interviews) into *Dedoose* to begin the coding process. After I completed coding all content logs, I wrote an analytic memo to establish a coding scheme for the first iteration of coding, which included both inductive and deductive codes (see appendix).

### **Pre- and Post-Surveys of Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale**

Since survey data already existed in Excel spreadsheets, there was no need to reformat or reduce data. However, applying reverse scoring on certain items was necessary to ensure consistent item directionality. By reverse coding certain items, low scores across all items indexed high race-consciousness and high scores across all items indexed low race-consciousness.

### **Data Analysis**

I analyzed content logs as my primary data source. After identifying routine and unusual practices from the content logs, I then revisited the audio/video records to transcribe key quotes and provide detailed descriptions of examples for inclusion in the findings chapters.

### **Interviews**

I leveraged interview data to help me understand how postsecondary educators theorized issues of diversity and race. I coded for intellectual “bins” (Miles & Huberman, 1994) to better grasp program history, educator history (personal and professional), institutional barriers, perspectives about diversity and race, and evaluations of the university’s approach to addressing issues of diversity and race.

### **Audio/Video Records**

In my first iteration of coding, I applied inductive and deductive codes (Erickson, 2004; Sipe & Ghiso, 2004) based upon the following “bins” (Miles & Huberman, 1994): Mediating Artifacts (e.g., PowerPoint presentations and texts), Mediating Activity (e.g., I-R-E: When the educator inquires, students respond, and educator evaluates quality of answers), Content (e.g., history, pop culture, affirmative action, privilege, stereotypes),

Educator Participation (e.g., lecture), and Student Participation (e.g., Connects: When students continue a line of thought from other participants). After coding each content log, I then filled out a Social Organization of Learning Protocol (Gutiérrez et al., 1999). The appendix contains Analytic Memo #1, which summarizes the deductive and inductive codes I used, as well as the protocols I completed.

This proved to be an overwhelming process. First, I had difficulty determining which categories best encompassed certain codes. For example, pop culture can be an artifact to mediate how students learn about issues of diversity and race (from the Mediating Artifacts bin); at the same time, pop culture can be content that the instructor delivers in a lecture (from the Content bin). Second, my biases about each seminar emerged as I completed the Social Organization of Learning Protocol. These forms included questions such as “extent of class participation—small core of students or whole group” or “frequency of repairs” that researchers rated on a Likert scale of 1-5. If I recalled feeling bored about a particular seminar or felt restless from watching or listening to records, I was inclined to rate a seminar in more negative ways. However, if one powerful moment emerged in which a student who was normally quiet suddenly spoke out of the blue, I tended to rate the seminar more highly.

To address my analytical inconsistencies, in my second iteration of coding, I developed a taxonomy of codes with stronger connections to the Social Organization of Learning Protocol. I specifically added codes for moments when facilitators corrected students; on the Social Organization of Learning Protocol, this corresponded to frequency of repairs (#12) and whether repairs occurred from teacher to student or student to teacher (#13). Additionally, I added a new code for the bin of Student-Centered Activities, which



indexed when students talked *beyond* the context of Initiate-Respond-Evaluate (I-R-E) or lecture.

In my third iteration of coding, I made more fine-grained distinctions of different types of I-R-E activities and Student-Centered activities for closer alignment to the Social Organization of Learning protocol. For example, I noted different adaptations of I-R-E: moments when postsecondary educators answered their own questions, labels to categorize the *types* of questions that postsecondary educators posed (e.g., questions that implied a right/wrong answer existed versus those inquiries that were more open to interpretation), and codes to identify *how* postsecondary educators evaluated students' responses (e.g., requests for students to expand upon the answer, paraphrase, etc.). For Student-Centered activities, I created distinctions between the following: everybody shares (e.g., activities when all students were expected to participate by responding to a prompt), guided facilitation (e.g., activities accompanied with a set of instructions or guidelines), small group discussions, and student presentations.

In my fourth iteration of coding, I identified students who not only articulated their ideas in the seminar, but who also completed CoBRAS surveys at the onset and end of the seminar. Ultimately, seven students from UMS and six students from GU fit these criteria. By coding utterances from specific students, I tracked the development of how focal participants expressed certain themes and narratives over time. By emphasizing these particular case studies, unfortunately, I took comments or behaviors out of context *without* accounting for accompanying activities and artifacts. In my quest to construct and apply an organized coding structure, to my dismay, I sliced and diced my data into silos that neglected to make connections and relationships between participants, artifacts,

and activities. Essentially, I recreated the very phenomenon I lamented: the notion that student learning is a function of the individual, not of a co-constructed environment, which then lends itself easily to deficit-oriented ideas about what the student lacks.

After coming to this realization, I wrote Analytic Memo #2 to identify “exemplary” students who shifted positively in their racial attitudes (see Appendix). In this memo, I wrote how a student from each seminar (Valerie at UMS and Lauren at GU) participated within the seminars (as per my fourth iteration of coding described in the previous paragraph). I also alluded to the immediate context in which their participation occurred, including postsecondary educator utterances, activities, and artifacts. Writing this memo narrowed my focus for my dissertation chapters because I realized the following: I lacked credible evidence to demonstrate that both Valerie and Lauren shifted in their racial attitudes *in relation* to how postsecondary educators organized the course.

Subsequently, I decided to turn my focus away from individual students and take in a panoramic view of the entire activity system instead. By adapting deductive codes from the Social Learning of Organization protocol and creating inductive codes from the data, I conducted a frequency count of the verbal articulations of postsecondary educators. More specifically, I documented the frequency of the following types of educator talk: (a) *Lecture/Mini-Lecture*: spoke uninterrupted with a prepared lecture or an impromptu sharing of knowledge; (b) *Known Answer Questions*: posed a question requiring a correct answer, students responded, and educators evaluated the quality of answers; (c) *Open-Ended Questions*: posed a question encouraging responses not based upon one “right” answer, students responded, and educators appraised the merit of answers; (d) *Expand/Paraphrase*: extended upon or summarized students’ comments; (e)

*Solicit Input*: encouraged more people to add to the conversation or asked to hear from people who had not yet spoken; (f) *Make Jokes*: told funny stories or “played the dozens” (trade insults) that made participants laugh; (g) *Tell Personal Stories*: shared narratives about their lives outside the context of the seminar; (h) *Serve as Primary Expert*: Answered inquiries that participants asked or answered their own inquiries before waiting for participants to respond; and (i) *Confer Expert*: called out specific participants perceived to have knowledge in areas of interest.

The relative frequencies of these activities helped me to identify different components of activity systems. For example, relatively higher percentages of *Lecture/Mini-Lecture*, *Known Answer Questions*, *Serve as Primary Expert*, and *Confer Expert* may suggest rules and a division of labor where students must seek correct answers or certain people (including the educator) possess accurate knowledge. On the other hand, relatively higher percentages of *Open-Ended Questions*, *Expand/Paraphrase*, and *Solicit Input* may suggest rules and a division of labor where power and knowledge are co-constructed between educators and participants. To document the types of artifacts and activities used in each seminar, I relied upon from my first iteration of codes from the Mediating Artifacts and Content bins. I address this in more detail in Chapter VI (Modes of Silencing in Dialogue: The Closure and Expansion of Entry Points to Diversity and Race). The Appendix contains a codebook and index that highlight definitions of my final<sup>3</sup> codes and all the content logs where I applied the codes.

Following these coding processes, I reviewed all of the seminar audio and video records to document the number of minutes postsecondary educator(s) spoke in their

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<sup>3</sup> The final codebook in the appendix does not document codes from previous coding iterations and only highlights codes most relevant to my analyses.

respective seminars. This process allowed me to chronicle the density of postsecondary educator talk.

### **Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale**

The small number of respondents limited the statistical power of my analysis and the possibility of performing appropriate multifactorial Analysis of variance (ANOVA). I still performed a series of independent and dependent t-test comparisons to examine whether score differences in CoBRAS responses presented among respondents by institution, gender, and race. However, after conferring with Dr. Solano-Flores, we agreed that small sample sizes likely biased the t-test results and limited the generalization of these data. Subsequently, I used descriptive statistical data to identify patterns in results, which I discuss further in Chapter VI (Modes of Silencing in Dialogue: The Closure and Expansion of Entry Points to Diversity and Race).

### **Limitations**

If given the opportunity to approach this research project anew, I would make different choices. Receiving my video recorder later than anticipated yielded inconsistent data sources for my content logs from UMS. When I did use the video recorder, it needed continual power to run smoothly. Without the flexibility to move the camera to different parts of the room(s), I restricted the recordings to one static view that captured the same faces and interactions since participants generally sat in the same seats. In the future, I will acquire equipment in a timely manner and move the camera to different spots to capture diverse perspectives.

Second, UMS students completed the CoBRAS surveys within the first 2 weeks of the semester; ideally, I prefer to collect pre-survey responses *prior* to the first day of

any focal intervention. Also, I inadvertently distributed surveys with 5-point Likert scale points (as opposed to 6-point Likert scale points as specified in the CoBRAS literature). Using an odd number of scale points increases the likelihood of yielding high frequencies in the center since participants may prefer to appear neutral. After checking the distributions of student responses, I found that responses were skewed toward lower scale points and shifted away from the center scale point, suggesting that participants did not gravitate toward neutrality. In an effort to boost sample sizes and run appropriate inferential statistical analyses, however, in the future I will incentivize participants to complete surveys and distribute instruments with the appropriate number of Likert-scale points as identified by scholarship.

Third, absence of student interviews yielded very little understanding of participants' retrospective reflections and interpretations of their experiences in these initiatives. In future work, I will privilege the documentation of meaning-making processes from students and postsecondary educators as the program unfolds. To do this, I may incorporate video stimulated recall where I ask participants to watch video records, share their interpretations of what occurred in particular moments, and analyze how they make meaning of their experiences (Mehan, 1993; Pomerantz, 2005).

Fourth, I found myself participating more fully in the seminars and dialogues without my laptop as a crutch. After reviewing my data multiple times, I noticed that my scratch notes evolved from transcriptions of conversations at the beginning of the fall 2011 semester (when I took notes on my laptop) to scratch notes that captured mood, fleeting thoughts, and immediate reactions (when I took notes with a notepad and pencil).

I anticipate that in future studies, I will leave my laptop behind so I can embody the participant observer role more fully.

Fifth, I intend to use a system that establishes inter-rater reliability, defined as “the consistency and accuracy with which different researchers examining a given data set identify and code the same items within it” (Schensul & LeCompte, 2013, p. 341). In this way, I can collaborate with colleagues to randomly sample data, apply a codebook and set of definitions (of which everybody has a shared understanding), and determine the degree to which the coding process is reliable.

Finally, I found myself somewhat sidetracked because of my overt emphasis on the Social Organization of Learning protocol. As a novice researcher, I felt unsure and hesitant about analyzing each seminar without a solid empirical tool. The protocol served as a useful heuristic for examining how educators structured learning environments. The overarching purpose of the protocol, however, was to help characterize a classroom as a recitation, responsive, responsive collaborative, or community of learners. My interests were not necessarily based upon whether the seminars in my study could be categorized in these ways. Subsequently, I decided to repurpose the protocol by harnessing specific codes more germane to my research agenda. While this worked well for my dissertation, in the future, I will reflect more critically about *whether* and *how* a relationship exists between my research agenda and analytical tools. As such, I hope to make informed decisions during the process of data collection, analysis, and writing to strengthen my conceptual framework and solidify why the means proposed to study my research topic are “appropriate and rigorous” (Ravitch & Riggan, 2012, p. 7).

## Subjectivity

I entered research after four years of coordinating recruitment and retention initiatives for people of color, first-generation college students, and low-income students at a public university. Intuitively, I believed that the interventions I led supported our students academically, financially, and personally. Unfortunately, I had no evidence to corroborate my gut feelings. In this role, I experienced several moments of discomfort vis-à-vis diversity and race.

When budgets grew tighter, money easily fell out of our recruitment and retention bucket to causes deemed more important by administrative leadership. After all, we did not have the evidence and data to demonstrate the impact of our work. When I instructed a leadership course for sophomores, a handful of students often rolled their eyes during class discussions. “Why don’t we have a White History Month?” a student asked. Despite my well-meaning intentions in answering questions like this, I am not sure my responses left students with a better understanding or willingness to consider other perspectives. When I helped plan the Student of Color Leadership Retreat, a 1-day workshop to foster campus dialogues about race, I found myself caught in the middle of a contentious debate between some colleagues who wanted to invite only students of color and others who wanted to open the retreat to everybody. When I interacted with faculty who failed to see the merit in thinking about issues of diversity and race, they reminded that my role was to take care of “that stuff” so they could turn their professional expertise to more important things, like research.

From these experiences, I wondered how to coordinate programs that allowed us to serve non-dominant populations “without reinforcing the idea that these students are

fundamentally (and irreconcilably) different from ‘main-stream’ youth, and different in ways that are inevitably linked to pathology” (Gutiérrez & Orellana, 2006, p. 506). I wanted to learn how to facilitate productive conversations about contentious topics to bring people to shared meaningful understandings, not divisive fractures. And I wanted to know how to bring rigorous research into the co-curricular sphere of higher education and integrate issues of social justice throughout our institutional practices—not through marketing sound bites—but in rich ways that fundamentally transform how we think about and enact equity. These wonderings irritated and bemused me, jolting me in pursuit of a doctoral degree in educational research.

In subsequent parts of this dissertation, my experiences as an administrator are interwoven throughout my findings chapters. I have marveled at the seemingly magical ways that the postsecondary educators navigated difficult conversations, and I have become especially wary of those moments when I am exceedingly critical of institutional practices. In my role as a participant observer, I learned “side by side” (Erickson, 2006) with the students and postsecondary educators, and their perspectives frequently reminded me of the subjective disposition of my research. This chronicle of my struggles, my thought processes, and my emotions is an attempt to unearth my own blind spots and biases that texture my findings. In this way, I believe my subsequent chapters are as much a reflection of not only what participants learned and how they learned, but how I also learned through this process.



## CHAPTER V

### **RACIAL PROJECTS OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATORS: COLOR-MUTENESS AND RACE-CONSCIOUSNESS IN COLLEGIATE SETTINGS**

The purpose of this chapter is to address my first research question: *How do postsecondary educators (administrators, faculty, and volunteers) theorize issues of diversity and race?* To understand how the educators in my study approached issues of race and how these approaches became organized in postsecondary institutions, I drew on the concept of racial projects (Omi & Winant, 1994). Racial projects describe the relationship between the ways in which people make sense of race, and iteratively, how this sense-making manifests in everyday activity, spanning from conversations to institutional programs and policies. As explained in Chapter IV (Methods), I interviewed 11 postsecondary educators affiliated with the focal seminars. I use the phrase “postsecondary educator” to describe the interviewees in my study; regardless of whether they received financial compensation as employees or volunteered their time, these individuals mediated activities that were organized around teaching and learning. Table 5 provides a snapshot of the interviewees, roles, and affiliated institutions.

Table 5

*Interviews With Postsecondary Educators*

Institution	Name	Role
UMS	Peter Thyme, PhD	Founder of STAR Knowledge Community
UMS	Bill Harris	Instructor for “Culture and Communication” seminar in which I was a participant
UMS	Ashley Naples	Teaching assistant for “Culture and Communication” seminar in which I was a participant
UMS	Tanya Nguyen	Former Director of STAR Knowledge Community
UMS	Jolene Karapas	Director of STAR Knowledge Community
UMS	Pilar Vazquez, PhD	Instructor for STAR course similar to focal course
GU	Scott Coenen, PhD	Director of Frontiers of Dialogues
GU	Felix Thompson, PhD	Vice Provost of Inclusive Excellence Affairs at GU
GU	Allison Logan	Co-Facilitator of dialogue in which I was a participant
GU	Rainn Blomkvist	Co-Facilitator of dialogue in which I was a participant
GU	Yolanda Lopez	Graduate assistant of Frontiers of Dialogues

In this chapter, I first begin with a brief overview of the different responsibilities and histories of the postsecondary educators. Second, I describe the historical context and goals of the two focal programs in this study, followed by a summary of the spectrum of theories, research, and other resources postsecondary educators used to design and carry out the programs. Third, I examine how postsecondary educators approached issues of diversity and race. Finally, I end the chapter with a discussion about the racial projects that characterize how the postsecondary educators in this study theorized issues of race and diversity.

## Roles and Histories of Postsecondary Educators

My interviewees carried out a variety of responsibilities depending on their affiliation with the focal seminars. Their tasks included facilitating activities and interacting directly with students or overseeing the seminar from an administrative leadership perspective. In general, postsecondary educators talked about their work as setting the stage for students to grow, learn, and thrive. Tanya Nguyen, the former director of STAR Knowledge Community, described her role as a “composer” at the University of Morrill State:

I see myself as a really kind of a composer of our purpose. So that is how I see it. I am trying to see how to compose all of this together and then how to fit it together . . . how do I tie into the larger mission of the university, and how do I work with folks, how do I build partnerships, how do I supervise my team. You know, those are the questions I ask myself every day . . . there are composers, there are directors, like orchestras, and there are composers of the music and the vision and the conductors who carry it out and those who are playing in the orchestra, and then there are students are the audience. So I think my role is knowing the needs here, knowing what they need, what they want, what music is going to kind of sing to their soul or whatever and then how do we put it together. And then how do I guide who will be the assistant directors now to conduct that process with the coordinators to meet the students' needs. And then how I am here listening to it at the same time.

Allison Logan, a co-facilitator from the Garland University seminar, described herself as a “hyphen” connecting groups and people to each other. In many circumstances, Logan explained, organizations and offices employ talented people who have little awareness of other resources available in university and community settings. Through the power of “hyphen”-ating, Logan fostered relationships among different resources to better serve students and the community at-large.

The “conductor” and “hyphen” metaphors applied to all of the postsecondary educators I interviewed. Even if interviewees did not describe themselves as conductors

or hyphens per se, postsecondary educators demonstrated leadership skills used to orchestrate moving parts of educational programs and interpersonal skills used to sustain links among various constituents. Conductors of orchestras must account for the overall ambience of the song, timbre of diverse instruments, and context in which performances occur. Similarly, as “conductors” in the higher education setting, postsecondary educators must account for the overall mission of the university, contributions of the programs they supervise, and environments where programs take place. As “hyphens,” postsecondary educators not only connect ideas among participants within a classroom setting, but they also connect students to a network of university and community resources to enrich their collegiate experiences. While the hyphen metaphor may appear more passive than the conductor persona, “hyphen”-ating is an important practice that fortifies relationships and partnerships for the mutual benefit of students, communities, and educators.

A significant commonality among the postsecondary educators emerged from their interview data, regardless of role, age, race, or gender: each interviewee had one or more significant personal or professional events, incidents, or defining moments that somehow led them to their current roles in postsecondary settings. Three distinct patterns about educator histories emerged from the interviews. First, the majority of postsecondary educators themselves participated in university or collegiate interventions that helped them navigate higher education. Jolene Karapas, the current STAR Director, shared her story:

I come from a first-gen, low-income, diverse background. That's kind of my, uh, experience coming through college. . . . And just had the experience of working with the TRIO program. I was admitted into the Student Support Services TRIO program at [University X], and it was the first time that people other than my family believed in my ability to be successful at [University X]. Uhm, it was just, like, I don't know, I grew up with family is required to love you and support you.

I was blessed to have that. And other people, it wasn't a requirement . . . and most people didn't actually believe that I would be successful. So it was really cool to have people who cared, and I really felt like they cared about me as a person. And so that sparked my interest in Student Affairs. So I was with that TRIO program for 4 years as a participant and then as a mentor, so I was a peer mentor for that program. And just fell in love with what they did for me as a student. We hear all the time, "I want to give back," right? From students who say, "I want to give back." And so that was where I was at and pursued a master's in Student Affairs because that's what I wanted to do.

In this excerpt, Karapas discussed the connection between her own positive experiences with TRIO programs and her desire to provide the same type of support she felt "blessed" to receive. Eight out of 11 postsecondary educators echoed the same sentiments, citing a combination of resources—Student Affairs programs, professors, administrators, student organizations, and peers—that helped them navigate emotional and academic challenges of being a college student.

While the first theme stemmed from experiences in higher education, the second theme emanated from experiences in the personal domain, related to eliminating and experiencing discrimination during childhood. Harris, for example, talked at length about growing up biracial:

I was born in 1957 in upstate New York, and I lived in a very biracial community. It was biracial in terms of if you looked south, it was my folks, if you looked north, it was all Whites. So the stream divided, and we happened to live right at that division. And my mother's Italian, born in Rochester, New York, and my father's an African American from Shreveport, Louisiana. During the day I went to Saint Francis, a Catholic school, from K-8th grade, and I was the only Black kid in the school. And in the evening, I went to Booker T. Washington Community Center, which was right next door to the Black YMCA in the town that I was born in, and it was all Black people. I've been working with dual populations and dual identities since I was a kid, and I didn't even know it. I think it allowed me, once I got the intellectual part, once I got the academic part, once I began to do reading to have a better understanding, it has also allowed me to relate to a wide range of people because I had to when I was growing up. I had to relate to the nuns, and to the White students at my school, the basketball coaches, and the Black kids who went to the community center and the playground. I think

I've been conditioned since a young age to do this type of work. So I think my background has really contributed to where I am now.

Similarly, Dr. Pilar Vazquez, a UMS colleague who taught a freshmen seminar in the STAR Knowledge Community, talked about how her childhood shaped her decision to become a postsecondary educator:

I went to parochial school for 12 years. I was one of the few Latinas in the town I grew up in, or in the town, we were called Spanish, Spanish Americans. And there was a lot of experience personally in terms of when I would walk home, I would get rocks thrown at me, telling me I was a dirty Mexican, I didn't belong here. Uhm, painful situations with notes being passed, why do we have to sit next to these Mexicans. My clothes being marked and torn and things like that. And, so, I never quite knew and didn't put it together that it was my ethnicity as much as it was me personally. And, I think, probably until I was 5 or 6, I thought dirty Mexican was one word. I heard it quite a bit. When I graduated from high school, I was in the top 10% of my class, but nobody had ever talked to me about a scholarship. And when I investigated further after graduation, found out that the expectation was because I was Hispanic was that I would probably just have babies and get married anyways, so why would they waste their time on me to get an education. So, after my marriage and realizing that I did need an education and coming up to UMS and majoring in social work, and really believing that education is empowerment. That really was something that empowered me to continue on to become more knowledgeable and become, uhm, more of a social contributor and those kinds of things. I do believe education holds so much power and opens so many doors.

For Harris and Vazquez, their personal histories influenced their professional pursuits. When Harris traversed community boundaries, he brokered relationships among different populations and brought this expertise to bear when teaching students about diversity. While Vazquez endured explicit and covert forms of racism, she harnessed higher education to “empower” not only herself, but students who similarly encountered disenfranchisement. This trend emerged among interviews with any postsecondary educator who identified as a person of color, the first in their family to pursue a college degree, and/or a background with limited financial means.

The last theme relates to interviewees who recognized the privilege imbued in their skin tone or their sexual orientation and subsequently sought opportunities to become allies. Allison Logan talked about the first time she witnessed cruelty and abhorrence toward people who identified as homosexual:

I have a family member who identifies as gay and who moved to Topeka, where strong voices of hate were directed against . . . it was a very personal thing to get a sense that that hate was directed at somebody that I loved and not understanding and feeling angry, and like, why do people . . . how could anybody who knows my family member think that way? There was this sense that you must not know people who identify this way. That sort of repeated exposure to these messages of hate with my personal connection to people to whom those were directed. There was that emotional motivation to understand more about that in order to change it. Being unfair and cruel. From a very emotional place, I came to more and more of an understanding of why this divide was here and how that was constructed over time. There's this stuff in history classes, and even though they are definitely biased and kind of a Western, American, and White perspective that there's so much stuff in our past that, you know, makes you feel yucky. And, so, it was all of those little things, with especially a focus on the issue around LGBT identity. . . .

In our conversation, Logan used the metaphor “elbow in the side” to illustrate moments in which people encounter dissonance and witness unjust practices. Coenen shared one of his first moments of dissonance when he attended summer camp:

I went to a summer camp through church, actually, that looked at prejudice and human relations what we called at the time and for the first time, had meaningful contact with anybody who wasn't White. We had people who worked in the house or who served lunches at school or those types of things, and I thought I was pretty good because I didn't burn crosses or do those types of things. We as a region had gotten over that, of course, in the 60s and everything was fine. When I went to that camp and shared meaningful interactions with peers talking about these issues. And that history for them had not gone away and there still were these differences and realizing that my, uhm, what I considered relationships with, at the time, largely Black folks were actually transactions really more than anything else. Kind of woke me up. . . . I got involved with that group with diversity and programming and actually got into communications to see how people interact with each other and it kind of grew from there. With one of my target identities as being gay, that was a way kind of proxy, I was able to build an empathy for other groups that were disenfranchised or looked down upon kind of

thing. So I really cleared my interests in social justice and equity work is selfish for my group, but kind of all our liberations are bound up together.

In this third pattern of educator histories, postsecondary educators such as Logan and Coenen were confronted with dissonance and recognized their own privilege, thus propelling them toward involvement with social justice programs. From the perspective of CHAT, the strong relationship between educators' pasts and current occupations is noticeable here. Using the CHAT framework, Wortham (2006) described classrooms as spaces where scholars must consider the historical backgrounds of educators and remember that educational interventions do not spring forth and operate within a vacuum devoid of history. Of import, both educators and the programs they deliver are shaped by history, and these backgrounds affect how the programs are shaped or carried out.

### **Program Histories and Goals**

To gain a more thorough understanding of programmatic histories, I interviewed Dr. Peter Thyme, founder of the STAR Knowledge Community, and Dr. Scott Coenen, current director of the Frontiers of Dialogues. I also attempted to interview the original Frontiers of Dialogues founder, but this person had since transitioned to a different institution. Although I did not connect with the creator of Frontiers, I did receive a thorough historical account from Coenen. To supplement this knowledge and to better understand goals associated with each program, I relied upon insights from the remaining interviewees.

### **History and Goals of STAR Knowledge Community at University of Morrill State**

Thyme described that little more than a decade ago, the master narrative in Student Affairs defined student success in terms of individual production—yields from student backgrounds, knowledge, behaviors, and attitudes—not institutional production.



After receiving a charge to direct a newly created retention office, Thyme attempted to find other institutions with evidence of increased student success in the form of higher retention and graduation rates. He expressed disappointment upon finding that any positive changes in measurable student outcomes were based in “rigged strategies.” Institutions such as Ohio State University, for example, demonstrated elevated retention and graduation rates after implementing more rigorous admissions procedures. Such institutions, explained Thyme, made “themselves more selective and exclusive rather than being democratic.” He conveyed his concern for the quality of education, particularly for those who received support in sporadic spurts, if at all, when all students deserved support in consistent waves:

Whatever we did had to be a strategy that had the capacity to serve students broadly. But that if we didn't serve students who were at greater risk of success, so first-generation students, low-income students, students of color and so on. If we didn't make sure that we were being successful there that it wasn't going to count for as much as I wanted it to count for. So I wanted it to work for anybody and for it to be successful for students who had greater challenges. So some of the things that I thought about were that students left to their own devices are going to come in and have random experiences. . . . So I was thinking about those things, like, I wanted it not to be a matter of randomness. . . . So trying to create a structured environment and through that, on the one hand, was very honorary and very attractive, and on the other hand, would guarantee the likelihood of information, feedback, support, success, and a community of people who were supportive, a community in which diversity of all and all respects was valued. So it was trying to roll that into a ball and trying to create a structure for it.

Thyme eventually brought to life a rich network of resources to ensure consistent, rather than random, opportunities to foster student success when he founded STAR Knowledge Community. Key components in this infrastructure included peer mentors, positive role models who exhibited strong leadership skills and propensities toward academic success; purposefully designed programs whereby students registered for the same cluster of courses and lived in the same residence halls to sustain relationships with

one another; periodic monitoring of academic progress; and academic seminars with no more than 20 students (such as the “Culture and Communication” seminar in which I was a participant-observer) to ensure at least one class where students could learn and engage with one another in more intimate settings. The foundation upon which STAR was built and continued to grow was the notion of student asset:

The founding of STAR including a set of principles is high expectation for student success. I think many programs are founded around presumptions of student deficit, and we absolutely wanted to found this around student assets. And that means that you expect a lot of students. We wanted to communicate every way the expectations, not just the students could be successful, but we expected them to be excellent. That in many cases they are going to have to work harder than other students just because of accidents in their birth and in their preparation and in their living circumstances that had nothing with their capacity and it had everything to do with circumstance. But they had to take that seriously. And if that meant they had to work twice as hard as somebody else, that's what they needed to do, and we thought they had the character to do that.

According to Thyme, an important goal of STAR was to create educational interventions so engaging, involving, and transformative that students “have every possibility open to them.” While Thyme articulated broader aims that emanated from an entire undergraduate career, postsecondary educators located *within* the seminar who delivered curriculum to students, such as Harris, Vazquez, and Naples, the teaching assistant, voiced more immediate goals, hoping students learned how the histories of disenfranchised communities were threaded with discrimination, oppression, and hope. All of the postsecondary educators wished for students to become critical thinkers with the ability to make their academic knowledge germane to their lives, whether students experienced a sense of empowerment to create social change or recognized appropriate ways for addressing oppression. In addition to integrating course content into students’ lives meaningfully, interviewees aimed to build stable relationships with participants and

foster a sense of belonging so that no matter what their age—as freshmen in STAR or alumni in the workforce—students always perceived STAR as a comfortable and safe home base.

### **History and Goals of Frontiers of Dialogues at Garland University**

Gordon Allport (1979) contributed to psychology research through his formulation of the Contact hypothesis, which stated that heterogeneous mixtures of different populations do not spontaneously intermingle to create positive interactions. Allport theorized that intentionally designed mechanisms and activities were necessary to foster favorable relationships. Social Identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) corroborates Contact Hypothesis by discussing how some social situations may stoke malevolence and ignorance. In 1988, scholars at the University of Michigan incorporated these theories into research and practice by creating Intergroup Dialogues, aiming to promote mutual understanding across different social identities and situations (Zúñiga et al., 2007). Several tenets constitute the framework of Intergroup Dialogues: first, there must be an extended period of time for people from different backgrounds to interact; second, there must be equal status such that if an Intergroup Dialogue aims to discuss gender as the focal topic, half of the group must consist of women and the other half of men; third, there must be a mutually agreed upon goal for meeting so all participants reap the benefits of participating in the dialogues; the goal must be purposeful in ways that encourage participants to collaborate, not compete; and finally, there must be some sanctioned incentive for participation (Zúñiga et al., 2007).

Since Intergroup Dialogues began at the University of Michigan, different versions of this program have been transferred to other postsecondary institutions. Dr.

Joaquin Trivisa brought a form of Intergroup Dialogues to Garland University when he founded *Frontiers of Dialogue* in 2002. According to Coenen, professors and administrators showed enthusiasm for *Frontiers of Dialogue*, and the program generated a considerable amount of interest in the beginning. Over time, however, *Frontiers* gradually dwindled in popularity. Coenen suggested this outcome may be related to decreased marketing efforts as well as the fact that *Frontiers* could not be considered an Intergroup Dialogue per se, particularly since the dialogues were dominated by “White, heterosexual women who were also Christian” and the populations of Garland University did not easily lend themselves toward equal status, the third tenet associated with Intergroup Dialogues. Since *Frontiers* was in the midst of a “rebuilding stage,” Coenen thought the future held much promise for *Frontiers* to regain popularity (through invigorated marketing) and to instantiate its true Intergroup Dialogue roots (through participation from diverse demographic identities).

Notwithstanding these transitional processes, postsecondary educators intend for *Frontiers* to accomplish many goals. Coenen, Blomkvist, and Logan, for example, all hoped for participants to increase their understanding of certain social constructs, including diversity, identities, privilege, and oppression. With this newfound knowledge, then, postsecondary educators aimed for participants to reflect on how these ideas impacted their everyday interactions and to use new language to experience their world. Of significance, interviewees hoped that participants found opportunities to “take action” by dialoguing with peers and family about issues that would otherwise remain ignored.

Dr. Felix Thompson, Vice Provost of Inclusive Excellence Affairs, articulated the overarching goals of his office (where *Frontiers* was one of many programs offered by his

staff). In his interview, Thompson discussed his hope for students to “take ownership” of their educational experiences, outcomes that are possible if they can offer programs and services that increase student engagement and involvement. As part of these goals,

Thompson explained Inclusive Excellence Affairs in the following way:

The driving force for advancing diversity and inclusive excellence here...we try to accomplish that in a variety of ways, but our primary focus areas involve sort of paying attention to historically excluded communities that are on campus. So we do that through a variety of programs and initiatives. We spend some time thinking about access, supporting both undergraduate and graduate admissions and HR in terms of staff and faculty recruitment. We offer a range of educational programs that many I am sure that [Coenen] has talked about. We also do a fair round of campus and community outreach, helping the institution around its mission around the public good... and there is a significant amount of affinity-based support that we do for our various historically excluded communities... as of most recent it includes, at least as it relates to this particular unit, our communities of color, veterans, to some extent first-generation students, the LBGTQIA community . . . so those are the primary communities.

Despite apparent differences in the two focal universities, I found more similarities between STAR and Frontiers than anticipated. While STAR was designed to provide robust support for underrepresented populations, all students were encouraged and welcomed to participate in the STAR community. Likewise, though one goal of Inclusive Excellence Affairs at Garland University included providing support for “historically excluded communities,” all students were invited to their programs. Shifting from the broader contexts of STAR and Frontiers to the more specific settings of the seminars I observed, postsecondary educators articulated their intentions for students to learn new information, apply knowledge from the seminar to their personal lives, and to build relationships. In order to work toward these goals, interviewees talked about the types of resources they harnessed to design and mediate these programs. I discuss this at length in the following section.

### **Intentional Use of Resources**

Through the interviews, I gained insight about the different types of resources that postsecondary educators brought to bear in the design and implementation of their programs. While highlighting any resources or tools—personal experiences, research, theory, best practices, or evaluations—used to mediate the seminars, I also summarize additional resources that the interviewees wished to incorporate in the delivery of their programs.

#### **Resources at the University of Morrill State**

At the University of Morrill State, Thyme talked at length about the process he used for finding resources to design STAR:

It was everything from literature, and I was reading everything I could find, talking to people, going to conferences, anytime I met somebody from another institution, asking them what they were doing, just literally, everything. An awful lot of it was, in spite of yourself, you end up using an awful lot of your experiences. For example, what we used to do with the Bridge program and why that worked so well. We thought, well what is it? Community. Building a community around higher expectation and mutual support and learning and it's this sense of feedback and structured experience. So some of it was trying to figure out how we can translate some of those things that I thought were successful from a precollegiate experience to a collegiate environment. So it was literally everything, I was just soaking everything up at that time. You know, you get fixated on things and then you can't stop thinking about it. And I tried to involve myself in the national discussion. . . . I just wanted to be in the discussion. So I ended up being a lot around national class researchers, and what I learned was that they didn't have practical answers, and that was very disappointing to me. They had theory and lots of great research and people that I still interact with and still think a lot of . . . folks that I think a lot of . . . but they aren't practitioners. And so, I think that something that's helped me is to be a bit of researcher and a practitioner because usually you find people who are one or the other.

In this excerpt, Thyme voiced his wish to utilize research, theory, and practice in meaningful ways. Unfortunately, however, he found chasms between these areas; subsequently, the overlap between higher education scholarship and application was

noticeably absent. Of significance, Thyme noted that despite the flourishing work of postsecondary scholars vis-à-vis student success, researchers “are not practitioners” and scholars do not offer “practical answers” for the challenges faced by administrators and postsecondary educators. In his ability to appropriate roles as researcher and practitioner, Thyme found a way to help make theory and research germane to the world of Student Affairs. Additionally, when Thyme reflected on his past experiences of directing precollegiate programs, he learned how to “translate” what worked well from TRIO interventions to collegiate student services. Ultimately, a foundational resource Thyme used to create STAR was the practice of translation: translations between precollegiate and collegiate programs; translations between theory, research, and practice; and translations of his own experiences and hunches in the past to help inform the future. As a result of Thyme’s role as *translator*, he was able to conceptualize and produce the STAR program, which served as an artifact to help mediate the experiences of students.

Although Thyme sought data-driven research to inform his initial blueprint of STAR, Karapas and Nguyen accessed the majority of their resources from best practices presented at specific conferences (particularly Living Learning Communities), student feedback, and student development theories prevalent in the discipline of Student Affairs. Nguyen noted that feedback was especially important from peer mentors and students. Student feedback, for example, consistently indicated that the three most helpful aspects of STAR were connecting with peer mentors, living in the residence halls together, and taking classes together. Consequently, STAR has employed these three components every year. Additionally, Nguyen talked about the importance of harnessing feedback from peer mentors, the student leaders assigned to groups of students who have the ability to

navigate in and out of the residence halls as well as the seminars. As the eyes and ears immersed in the lives of STAR students, peer mentors have intimate knowledge and interactions with students for which postsecondary educators lack access. Harris corroborated this when he talked about Ashley Naples's role in his seminar:

I also use cues and feedback from the peer mentor, who was Ashley in my seminar. A couple of students in the class were having trouble, a difficult struggle, with their sexual orientation. I made sure, and one of them wrote a really nice note at the end of her exam at the end of the fall, and she said, "I really appreciate what you said, and you attempted to incorporate into different sections and parts of it." At the end of the semester, at the end of her presentation, she sat there and pulled up her chair and she said, "I'm going to tell you my story." And she probably wouldn't have been able to do that if she didn't think the classroom was comfortable. And, I think, I would imagine that was the first time she told 18 other people what her story was in her coming out and how her family, how her father, and her friends reacted to her. And it allowed her that safe space to express herself. Unless I had seen that and unless Ashley had not told me about that, I probably would have incorporated some things about sexual orientation, but I probably wouldn't have done it to the level that I did.

Although the value of student and peer mentor feedback was apparent in these excerpts, if given the opportunity, Karapas wished for additional resources:

I think that something that we don't do a great job in STAR with our professional staff is really helping to set that foundation of why we do STAR. We do it because we love it, and most of us have had personal experience with some type of program that resembles STAR, and we know it works because of our personal experience. And STAR is built upon all of these other foundational pieces, and I don't know if we do a great job of sharing that with our staff, even me of knowing those pieces of why do we do STAR and what is the theory or practice behind it. But I do know that when we look at best practices within learning communities and look at developing new learning communities . . . I know there is some tipping point theory that we use with the number in our communities. And numbers have typically been 190 students, and some of the research indicates that 150 is about the point at which a community will start to break down. And so I fought for 3 years to get STAR reduced to 150 because I was seeing that in our assessment having an impact on the connection that students were having with me and with their mentors. And so wanting to make sure that we were providing students with the most, like, positive and meaningful experience that you possibly could . . . so going back to that theory of how many students to have before a community breaks down was really important. And just Student Affairs theory on students' belonging, and so students feel like they have a home and a place they



belong and a place that they fit in. They're more likely to be retained at a university and to graduate.

Here, Karapas talked about the need for postsecondary educators in STAR to purposefully explore the theories and research undergirding the implementation of STAR. To demonstrate the power of theory and research, and its influence on practice, Karapas used the Tipping Point theory to advocate for the downsizing of her program. To promote the need for smaller STAR clusters, she then complemented her knowledge of theory with student assessments that reflected their desire for smaller clusters and quality relationships with peer mentors. Although downsizing STAR took 3 years, Karapas had the ability to harness research from best practices and assessments to inform the delivery of STAR services.

Karapas voiced her desires to learn about “diversity symposiums across the US where people do like a 1 week immersion and a social justice training, or some social justice institute [to have] all of our full-time staff attend something like that is critical.”

Similar to Karapas, Nguyen also promoted the notion of examining the rationales undergirding the STAR programs:

If I could get out and send my entire team to the Intercultural Communications Institute, which is really expensive, I would because I think basic, any type of cultural competency skill set that my staff could have that they don't already have would be highly valuable if we could all take advantage of NCORE, the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity, that is a huge area that I think we could go to. Any of the TRIO program conferences and summits are really helpful. I think our work with STAR fits better with those conversations than it does the learning community conversations just because of what we're doing. We've gone to learning communities conferences and sometimes I think, gosh, are we getting what we need out of that. And how much better could we be in designing things if we actually became part of these other conversations that are having that have to do with what our students are maybe experiencing. So how do we equip ourselves with more than theory and knowledge about underrepresented students, uhm, if you do not have an Ethnic studies background or whatever, how are we gaining those skill sets. That's what we're missing. And that's what I would be able to love

to be able to do. . . . not just go to conferences where they just talk about program structure, but could help us understand the WHY to more improve our WHAT for the program structure.

In this excerpt, Nguyen characterized STAR as occupying the liminal space between collegiate programs intended to serve students from non-dominant communities and Living Learning Communities, where students live in the same residence halls and attend the same courses together. Despite traversing the boundaries of these two domains, Nguyen experienced greater need to consume materials about issues of race, ethnicity, and diversity to better “understand the WHY more to improve our WHAT for the program structure.” Having the ability to send staff members to professional development sessions to better understand these issues, she believed, held great promise for delivering culturally relevant programs. Ashley Naples, the peer mentor for Bill Harris, echoed similar sentiments during her interview:

There's not a lot of conversation in those clusters about diversity . . . but I know from fellow mentor meetings that I have, some of my fellow mentors that clusters that did not focus on race and ethnicity. When we as a community had, in our first semester, we taught academic success strategies, and we covered all aspects of STAR. So diversity, community service, et cetera. For a week and a half, 2 weeks, we talked about diversity with students . . . and so, for my cluster, like, there were challenges obviously when we were talking about diversity and getting on the same page on what it means to be diverse. Other clusters and other mentors and a lot of them struggled and had a lot of push back, and there was talk about White privilege and what it means to be diverse, a lot of students were just like, oh, skin color and wouldn't think about how they, as an individual, from a lower income is diverse, and how that brings in certain aspects. And, so there are a lot of areas of improvement to talk about with STAR. I know as a community we are trying to figure out how do we implicate these into the clusters that don't have any focus on diverse issues.

During her interview, Ashley spoke at length about her concerns with peer mentors for other academic clusters in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines with generally less exposure to issues of race, ethnicity,

and diversity. Ashley believed that peer mentors ought to receive some formal training to encourage self-reflection about the construct of race and White privilege. For Nguyen, Karapas, and Ashley, exploring race, privilege, and culture were pivotal for delivering robust student services through STAR.

University of Morrill State postsecondary educators were able to integrate issues of race, ethnicity, and privilege fully into their seminars. As the main professors for their respective seminars, Vazquez and Harris experienced flexibility to mediate the seminars for student participants; this is in stark contrast to Nguyen and Karapas who possessed fewer degrees of freedom because of their responsibilities to lead a staff of administrators and manage program budgets.

Both Vazquez and Harris turned to research about social justice, history, and current events to inform their seminars. While Vazquez exhibited a predilection toward resources regarding White privilege and White Identity Development, Harris turned to Ethnic Studies, historical studies, research about popular culture, and personal stories to highlight how seminar content emerged only in his own life, but in the lives of his students. By doing so, Harris hoped to use academic material as a way for students to reflect on their everyday routines. Both Vazquez and Harris aimed for their seminars to kindle a consciousness in their students to critically evaluate events in their lives that they may have, up until taking these STAR seminars, left unquestioned.

### **Resources at Garland University**

Vazquez and Harris from the University of Morrill State were granted much flexibility in how they designed and delivered their seminars. Conversely, facilitators of Frontiers dialogues (including Logan and Blomkvist) led the dialogues according to

Intergroup Dialogue guidelines that were based on research. Scholarship from Drs. Pat Gurin, Ratnesh Nagda, and X. Zúñiga, for example, point to the purposeful scope and sequence of topics routinized in Intergroup Dialogues. The seminars generally began with a discussion about worldview, followed by ideas about personal identity, social identity, systems, privilege, and taking action. Thus far, initial research about Intergroup Dialogues at other institutions indicates that students enhance their ability to communicate, think critically, and resolve conflict. Such positive outcomes can be attributed, in part, to the intentional delivery and processing of content. The broader national conversation about Intergroup Dialogues evince a correlation between research, theory, and practice; subsequently, the majority of resources used to design and deliver the Frontiers seminars came from research conducted by Intergroup Dialogue scholars.

As a “descendant” of Intergroup Dialogue scholarship, Coenen has worked toward coalescing research and practice in ways that strengthen the rationale behind how Frontiers functions and is implemented as a program. Despite this intention, however, Coenen talked about Garland University’s lack of fidelity to the Intergroup Dialogue curriculum:

The program goal is to increase mutual understanding. Period. Parentheses. Around issues of social identity, personal identity, worldview, and systems of inequality. And so we want them to have a greater sense of the intersectionality of their identity. Of how those impact every interaction they have, not only interpersonally, but institutionally . . . this is my biggest concern with the program, with the quarter system, where a lot of things in terms of turn-over with facilitators and those kinds of things. That is the part we have to cut the most to get everything else in. Most programs, it's a 30 hour program, and we have 10 hours of contact time. And, so 25, 26 is the average national contact time. We have 10 hours. And so, uhm, many of these models have four stages, the last one being action, which is putting into practice, whatever that means. And that's the part we have to cut and have a quick talk in the last session. So there's no actual action planning and no coming back and reflecting on it. I think that's the goal

that we fall shortest on, but we know we do. And so, that's another area that we're not quite in line with the larger body of programs of this.

According to Coenen, a major constraint in honoring the true Intergroup Dialogue content was time. With the quarter system institutionalized at Garland University, Coenen recognized the difficulty of recruiting volunteer facilitators and student participants, conducting facilitator training, incorporating more seminars, and dedicating more time for students to “take action” within one quarter. His concerns about time were corroborated by interviews with Blomkvist and Logan, as well as students like Michelle who wondered whether “2 hours a week for 5 weeks” provided enough time to grapple deeply with controversial issues. Considering this constraint, Coenen explained that his office was in the process of brainstorming opportunities to commit more time to Frontiers.

When I interviewed Thompson about resources that Inclusive Excellence Affairs used to mediate their programs, he spoke broadly about all of the services delivered by his team. According to Thompson, the most valuable resources came through “data-driven research and data-informed policies”:

We just finished an inclusive excellence campus climate assessment where we received over 4,000 responses, surveys, and we're in the process of looking into analyzing that data. So we hope to have some reports for the community by October 1. So, that's one resource we've been using. Another, I think, which is a part of sort of my approach, is to really use research to make sure that we have data-driven, data-informed policies and practices. And I'll give you one example. We worked with Estela Bensimon out of USC and have her come talk to us about the Equity Scorecard. And we've been sort of trying to implement a variation of the Equity Scorecard and the Inclusive Excellence Scorecard to help us think about areas we needed to focus on. We piloted two programs this past year. One in our Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences division where folks looked at institution data related to faculty hiring. And then in another area of campus life, we looked at institutional data to help us think through what were some of the academic advising issues that they were dealing with. I'll highlight the academic advising one. One of the things that we ended up doing was creating a new program based on the data we uncovered through that process. So we created a [program] that will have a primarily academic focus and also be an attempt to

meet the social and cultural needs of our students. So we are inviting students, primarily students of color, but not exclusively, to participate in this program. Provide high touch mentoring, or some might call intrusive mentoring, support for students in the program with the hope that some of these students might be interested in going on to pursuing academic careers. And our institutional data show that there was a certain segment of our population finding themselves on the academic probation list at some point during their first year, and they had similar characteristics, so we're targeting these students to be more proactive than reactive.

Thompson relied upon data from the “ground up” to inform the delivery of Diversity Initiative interventions. He used the Equity Scorecard, a tool developed by Estela Bensimon (see Chapter II), to better understand how postsecondary educators interpreted certain phenomena and brainstormed solutions to mediate challenges productively. Additionally, the analysis of campus climate assessments would be instrumental in understanding perceptions of how well (or poorly) Garland University treated students, and subsequently, how postsecondary educators can improve their programs.

In summary, both STAR and Frontiers used similar resources, but to different degrees. While STAR tended to rely upon practitioner-based experiences of best practices and Student Affairs theories because of the relatively easy translation into practice, Frontiers was inclined to use Intergroup Dialogue research and theory (but without complete fidelity to the curriculum). Interestingly, a better understanding of the implications of race, ethnicity, and social justice in the implementation of educational interventions was articulated as a desired resource at STAR, while more time was cited as a coveted resource for Frontiers to function as planned. Both programs, however, found assessments to be especially useful resources, whether that information came in the form of feedback and attitudes from students, peer mentors, or postsecondary educators.

Assessment became especially salient in discussions about issues of diversity and race, as I discuss in the following section.

### **Approaches to Diversity**

Postsecondary educators from both focal universities often used the term diversity as an umbrella term to describe a comprehensive gamut of social identities and backgrounds such as race/ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, first-generation college status, language, socioeconomic status, nationality, ability, intersectionality, academic major/minor, and generally any experiences or interests people may have as a result of where they are located socially, geographically, and politically. Interestingly, the term “diversity” was used as an artifact to communicate different intentions and goals, depending upon whom I interviewed. Administrative leaders such as Thyme and Thompson were responsible for overseeing multiple programs and often used the construct of “diversity” as a strategic artifact. At University of Morrill State, for example, Thyme described diversity as a tactic for inclusivity that must be embedded and integrated throughout “the fabric of the institution.” Thyme elaborated on this idea in the following excerpt:

The answer lies, in everything else, in making it a part of the fabric of the institution. There are things that we do, like in former times, affirmative action and specific programs, but it needs to be something that is a part of the university structurally so that it's next to impossible to have a decision made without people at the table who are among the composition of the whole group of diversity. Because I've always felt that one of my obligations was to make sure that other people were at the table because I know my own limitations even though I know I am a person of good will. The only way you protect an organization from all kinds of unintentional bias is by having diverse people perpetually at the table. And so working to make that happen and then trying to institutionalize as much as you can in the mission and the way things operate the language of the institution and all of that . . . so I think that's where the answer lies, is trying to make it a part of the fabric of the institution, and that's very difficult.

Here, Thyme viewed diversity as one of many strategies to ensure multiple perspectives were represented in decision-making processes. By engendering diversity throughout myriad layers of the university, designing the future of an institution becomes a shared endeavor authored by heterogeneous perspectives. With such inclusive measures, Thyme believed that diversity enabled University of Morrill State to simultaneously widen panoramic views and deepen microscopic lenses. Diversity, then, represented an artifact for eliminating potential blind spots and strengthening opportunities for developing solutions to challenges faced by universities in the 21st century.

At Garland University, Thompson explained that the term diversity became folded into a new “brand” called *Inclusive Excellence*, a philosophical and marketing tool that relied upon how well an institution “values, engages, and includes the rich diversity of faculty, staff, student, and alumni constituents.” Similar to Thyme’s stance that diversity must be embedded in the institutional fabric, Thompson believed that *Inclusive Excellence* must be embodied in, and applied to all facets of, a higher education institution. Coenen offered a detailed explanation of what the brand *Inclusive Excellence* means:

We really try to bring it closely into what the American Association of Colleges and University who came up with the framework of Inclusive Excellence and really try to stick to their explanation. The idea is three-prong. That excellence and inclusion and diversity and success are interrelated and you can't separate them. The individual and the unit and the institution of a community, you by definition cannot be fully excellent if you aren't actively engaging positively the diversity you have, by definition in your community, your unit or your group or whatever. So, again, inclusion and excellence are intertwined, they're unseparable [sic]. Second, the idea of what counts as diversity is a much broader definition than most people and most laws and most institutions pay attention to, which are the protected classes around race, ethnicity, religion and gender or sex. So, it's nationality, it's ability, it's sexual orientation, gender identity. Any way you want to think about it, down to intellectual diversity, all those types of things. A broader definition. Because it's so broad and because it's so intertwined, it's



everybody's responsibility at the institution. So that third piece is embeddedness and a really transformative way of thinking, in our case, of higher education. Every aspect of the university needs to be connected and paying attention to that broad diversity. And so it's not just one office or one person or one day - it's all of us all of the time. In practice, that's the harder piece.

By supplementing diversity with the constructs of excellence and inclusion, *Inclusive Excellence* appeared to be an attempt to ratchet the idea of diversity to the next level, beyond enforcement policies such as affirmative action and beyond the responsibility of just one office to carry out all the diversity efforts for an entire institution. Thompson explained that *Inclusive Excellence* is a strategic measure because it excludes the term *diversity* from its name in attempts to be more palatable to broader audiences who have developed “diversity fatigue”:

Honestly, I think Inclusive Excellence is just the next wave of discourse related to how we talk about multiculturalism . . . diversity . . . Inclusive Excellence. It's sort of the next generation. ***I view it as a strategic way of talking about diversity, and I think it has emerged in response what some view as diversity fatigue. And that we've been sort of ramming diversity down folks' throats, and they're tired of hearing about diversity*** [emphasis added]. And so Inclusive Excellence is the new formation of that discourse . . . we try to have Inclusive Excellence and diversity coupled together whenever we talk about the two. I think operationally, they are the same. I think focusing on Inclusive Excellence has not changed the nature of our work, it's just giving us a different way to talk about it.

At the University of Morrill State, postsecondary educators associated with STAR focused more on supporting students from historically marginalized populations. I noted that multiple postsecondary educators typically utilized the phrase “diversity” to describe non-dominant communities. For example, I asked Vazquez and Karapas to define who were considered underrepresented at the University of Morrill State, and they both used “diversity” as a proxy for describing historically disenfranchised populations, including people of color, people who identified as GLBTQ, low-income students, or those whose parents did not attend college. At Garland University, on the other hand, the term

“diversity” was rarely used to index historically underrepresented communities, and instead, was used more broadly to describe the content learned from seminars or the multifaceted experiences and perspectives constituents brought, whether they came from privileged or non-dominant backgrounds.

### **Approaches to Race**

To avoid conflating diversity with race, I asked a question specifically about issues of race. In response to this question, all interviewees appeared to exude race-conscious attitudes, but I noted two predominant ways in which they expressed their philosophies about race. At University of Morrill State, Thyme believed race was an extremely important social issue and identity to consider, but not at the expense of neglecting other identities:

You said race and ethnicity, but I would broaden that to include first-generation and income and other facets of experiences. I think that people come in to an experience like this one, which has historically been the experience of serving more advantaged classes. People tend to come in thinking there's something wrong with them, and the evidence is all around them if you want to interpret it that way. It's all the things that everybody else seems to understand, the jokes they understand, the references in class, so there has to be a way for people to relativize that and to recognize that it's a facet of differences and experience that doesn't have to do with who is better or who is worse. It always feels worse to know less and to have less experience among people who have more experience. So it always feels worse. But to have some intellectual framework that allows you to take that apart and say this isn't because I am whatever I am, first-generation or whatever. This is more about the fact that this is where I went to school, this is what my teachers expected of me, and this is the information that I have and didn't have. So naturally this is how I am experiencing these things.

On the other hand, Thompson from Garland University believed in the importance of remembering diverse social identities and intersectionality, but not at the expense of forgetting race:

I think whether we want to believe it or not, educational institutions are in the identity development business and part of that is racial identity development. And

that if we thought about our work more in terms of racial identity development, we would see some different results . . . there are other ways beyond race in terms of how people identify, so I would suggest that the intersectionality approach is a promising way to think about diversity issues because we are becoming more and more multidimensional in terms of how we think of ourselves and the issues that we value. And so I embrace that and recognize the value of having a multidimensional approach. That being said, I see a sort of historical, racial context that is embedded in our country that makes moving away from race potentially dangerous.

Regardless of their approach to race, many interviewees commented on the importance of cross-racial interactions. Harris applauded STAR for organizing such interactions through informal and formal means:

[Students] do things outside of the seminar. They do things, a lot of the faculty members will go set it up where they go do a ropes course where they are actually depending on each other for safety reasons or for personal reasons. They have dinners together. They have barbeques together. They go to movies together. They do bowling together. And so social activities outside of the cluster allow them to interact with people who don't look like them . . . STAR is an awesome program . . . because they get to interact with people that are in different clusters and get to interact with people that are interested in the same ideas. Interested in furthering their knowledge about diversity and about difference and about identity and about those types of things. Living in the same residence hall, that is really key about being in STAR. If not, they are spread all around campus. The only thing they have in common is that they're taking courses together. So they would see themselves in the course, but they go onto the next class, they may or may not hang out each other or see each other. At least if they're in the same residence hall, they are down there shooting pool together, they're going into the lunchroom together, they're hanging out together outside of the classroom, which is where most of the education occurs anyways.

In order to foster cross-racial interactions, however, STAR postsecondary educators were compelled to pay close attention to the recruitment and admissions process, a challenging proposition in light of potentially damaging legal ramifications and the need to welcome all students. Nguyen explained this well:

But our greatest impact are on underrepresented students . . . which are students of color, first-gen, low-income, primarily. So that's been hard, and every year, we're like if it weren't for [other programs and alliances], would we reach as many students as we want to. And now we go into orientation wishing a time to have

more space because students will come through, and there are students like me, and I'm like, we can't invite them. How stinky is that, right? That's our biggest challenge. Is maintaining the face of STAR, literally, when it's just impossible. There's no easy way to do it because we are bound by the legal parameters. And I work with our lawyers every year on our recruitment plan because I don't want to do something wrong. So I think this is what we're trying to do. And they're really great at helping us think about what we do. And there's not a lot we can do because we can't just say this is for students of color. It's not, and we don't want it to be just for students of color. Uhm, but we want students of color to have an equal chance at it. It's just, it's just really hard to do all of that . . . I think that what STAR has been is anywhere from 40% to 60% students of color in any given year. And that seems to be a neat way to mix up the community, and that's, you know, let's say 40% or 50% of the students identify as students of color, 50% identify as White . . . there are so many multiracial students and multiethnic students and about half identify as White. And I think that's worked well, and I think it helps because, then, uhm, there's almost like no majority. In some ways, that is helpful. It's a real neat community to be part of in that sense. Our first-gen numbers have gone up, and we've pushed up to 60%, and then low-income probably around 25-30% based on Pell eligibility.

Not having a “majority” has worked well for STAR, but facilitating productive relationships among multiple populations has proven to be a challenging, yet rewarding, undertaking according to Karapas:

So we're bringing together this really diverse population, and unless you are in a cluster that is focused on "Culture and Communication" or "Diversity Awareness" cluster, where are they getting that? And how are we fostering that? And I don't know if holistically within STAR we do a great job of that. And I think how else do students learn. Yes, by living together, and they learn the hard way sometimes. And we're there the entire way to facilitate those things, the situations that come up. And I just think about how are we doing this holistically for that program. I think it is important for students not to just be thrown together and live together with diverse people and hope it works out. I think we need to be really intentional about supporting students throughout that process.

At Garland University, Coenen faced more difficulty facilitating cross-racial interactions in the first place because the majority of Frontiers participants consisted of White women. However, Coenen articulated the importance of fostering such interactions, particularly if the topic of an Intergroup Dialogue mapped on to issues of race.

In summary, approaches to diversity and race unveiled some complex tensions. At the University of Morrill State, diversity was used to describe two approaches: a strategy for encompassing all social identities and experiences, or a proxy for underrepresented students. At Garland University, diversity was also used to describe two approaches: a phrase to describe content covered in the Frontiers dialogues, or one element of Inclusive Excellence that encompasses not only diversity, but also excellence and success. Issues of race also proved to be quite complex, depending upon whether postsecondary educators positioned race as a chief concern to consider or whether interviewees positioned race as important as all other identities.

### **Discussion**

This chapter focused on my data from interviews with 11 postsecondary educators at the University of Morrill State and Garland University to gain a better understanding of their histories and the goals of their programs as well as the types of resources used to design and implement these interventions. Of import, I examined the interviewees' approaches to race and diversity, which has implications for the types of educational interventions available for students, depending upon whether a perceived need exists to support people of color specifically (and underserved communities in general), organize opportunities for students to learn about issues of diversity and race, or facilitate cross-racial interactions.

Different theories and research studies played varying roles at each university, depending upon the level at which postsecondary educators turned their focus. At the *UMS seminar level*, Harris primarily used academic scholarship from History, Sociology, and Ethnic Studies to teach the "Culture and Communication" course. Though I did not

observe her seminar specifically, from Vazquez I learned that in addition to using the same resources as Harris, she pulled from Student Affairs and Psychology literature. Both Harris and Vazquez possessed great independence to conceptualize and teach their classes as they deemed fit.

At the *UMS programmatic level of STAR* (which is comprised of multiple components, including the UMS seminar), in his original conception and delivery of STAR, Thyme turned to higher education research studies about retention and Student Affairs, best practices from precollegiate and collegiate programs regarding student success, and most importantly, his own experiences from delivering student support services that appeared to work well (and, conversely, not work as well). With shifts in administrative staffing, Nguyen and Karapas have since stepped into Thyme's former role. Both Nguyen and Karapas accessed resources in the form of best practices from specific conferences (particularly Living Learning Communities), student feedback, and student development theories prevalent in the discipline of Student Affairs. If the possibility existed for additional resources, Thyme voiced a desire for postsecondary theory and research to translate with ease and relevance to practice. Although Thyme possessed a doctoral degree and helped bridge the gaps between research, theory, and practice, he lamented the challenge for practitioners to consume postsecondary scholarship relevant for their own programs. Nguyen and Karapas both expressed interest in professional development for staff members to have a better understanding of issues of race, ethnicity, and intercultural communication. Karapas conveyed an appreciation for STAR staff members, the majority of whom were passionate about serving students historically marginalized from educational opportunities or who benefitted from

programs similar to STAR in the past. Despite this passion, however, Karapas believed very little opportunity existed for administrators to understand *why* STAR was designed and implemented in a particular way, so she hoped to integrate this knowledge in future professional development trajectories.

At the *GU seminar level*, although Blomkvist and Logan followed a prescribed scope and sequence from Intergroup Dialogue scholarship, they exercised some degree of autonomy with selecting activities tailored to meet their needs. Over the course of five seminars (2 hours per week), the flow of the seminar began with setting goals and co-constructing seminar norms, exposing participants to issues of diversity, practicing opportunities to engage with controversial content through mutual understanding, and, finally, taking action to create change. Although GU adapted the Intergroup Dialogue model by covering certain content within the seminars, GU diverged from Intergroup Dialogue theory and research in two prominent ways: first, very little time was dedicated to training facilitators for the Frontiers dialogues; and second, very little time was available for student participants to have extended contact with each other and to create “take action” projects. If the possibility existed for additional resources, Blomkvist, Logan, and Coenen all expressed a desire for more time to train facilitators and implement the dialogues. Constraints with organizational and logistical structures at GU presented unique challenges for Frontiers to be implemented with complete fidelity to the Intergroup Dialogues curriculum, which I discuss more extensively in the following chapter.

At the *GU programmatic level of Inclusive Excellence Affairs* (which is comprised of multiple components, including the Frontiers Dialogues), Thompson

harnessed theory and research centrally to better understand racialized phenomenon at GU. Of significance, he talked about analyzing institutional climate studies to better understand how staff members and students perceive how well GU facilitates a comfortable and welcoming learning environment. By gaining evidence of how students and staff perceived institutional climate, Thompson aimed to create data-driven policies and programs to improve institutional climate. Additionally, Thompson discussed using the Equity Scorecard (Harris & Bensimon, 2007) to engage faculty and administrators to examine data, policies, and programs through evidenced-based processes to improve educational outcomes for students of color.

To better understand *how* postsecondary educators approached issues of race, I draw on the notion of racial projects (Omi & Winant, 1994). As discussed previously, racial projects illustrate the iterative relationship between what *meanings* are assigned to race and how these meanings of race *manifest* and become *routinized* in everyday practices, spanning from the macro-level of policies to the micro-level of individual actions. For some postsecondary educators in my study, the following implicit and explicit *meanings* were made about race: first, race is important to consider, particularly at predominantly White institutions where students of color are often underrepresented; second, exposure to issues of diversity and race create rich learning experiences for students; and third, cross-racial interactions are important for all students in their postsecondary environments, especially to help individuals after they graduate and enter an increasingly diverse workforce. Embedded in these interpretations of race are notions of the diversity rationale, the idea that from a diverse student body flows educational benefits (Moses & Chang, 2006). These meanings of race become apparent in the



*manifestation* of everyday projects spanning from institutional interventions (e.g., STAR at UMS or Inclusive Excellence Affairs at GU) to daily conversations about race.

One hundred percent of the postsecondary educators I interviewed presented themselves as race-conscious when they affirmed the importance of understanding how social, historical, and political constructions of race shape educational opportunities. When asked to rate the importance of talking about race in collegiate settings among students and educators on a 1 (low) to 10 (high) scale, the majority of interviewees gave race a 10 (or higher) score. In fact, only one administrator rated race below 10; this occurred because she interpreted the question as a way to grade UMS on their performance when addressing issues of race, not necessarily how important she believed race to be. According to Loury (2002), a race-egalitarian perspective defends race-conscious policies, such as affirmative action, due to historic and present racial injustices. In sharp contrast, values of color-blindness undergird the assumption that people from different racial groups will receive similar treatment when race is absent from consideration in the “structuring of public conduct” or institutional interventions (Loury, 2002, p. 148). Similarly, Bonilla-Silva defines color-blindness as a perspective that uses “. . . powerful explanations—which have ultimately become justifications—for contemporary racial inequality that exculpate them from any responsibility for the status of people of color” and “explains contemporary racial inequality as the outcome of nonracial dynamics” (Bonilla-Silva, 2010, p. 2). Based upon these definitions, I claim that all of the postsecondary educators exhibit high levels of race-consciousness, and color-blindness was not evident, *per se*, in their articulations about their perceptions of race.

Despite recognizing and appreciating the concept of race in their interviews, postsecondary educators exhibited racial projects with varying degrees of race-consciousness. For example, postsecondary educators (e.g., Harris, Vazquez, Blomkvist, and Logan) who facilitated the seminars at both universities delivered lessons and activities where race was integral, if not central, to the conversations in these educational spaces. As such, I categorized these racial projects with high race-consciousness since they attached significant *meaning* to race and *manifest* this meaning through conversations explicitly addressing issues of race. For other postsecondary educators who were not directly involved in the implementation of these seminars (e.g., Thyme, Nguyen, Coenen, Thompson—to name a few), however, race was not always addressed directly. I used Mica Pollock's (2004) concept of color-muteness to categorize these racial projects since they attached significant *meaning* to race, yet *manifested* this meaning through discussions or labels that may dilute the significance of race.

According to Pollock (2004), color-muteness is the act of suppressing “race labels to describe people” in an attempt to create some semblance of equity, to avoid appearing racist, or to remain as inclusive as possible (p. 1). Color-muteness is an everyday dilemma that Americans confront, Pollock argues, particularly among educators. She eloquently explains the following:

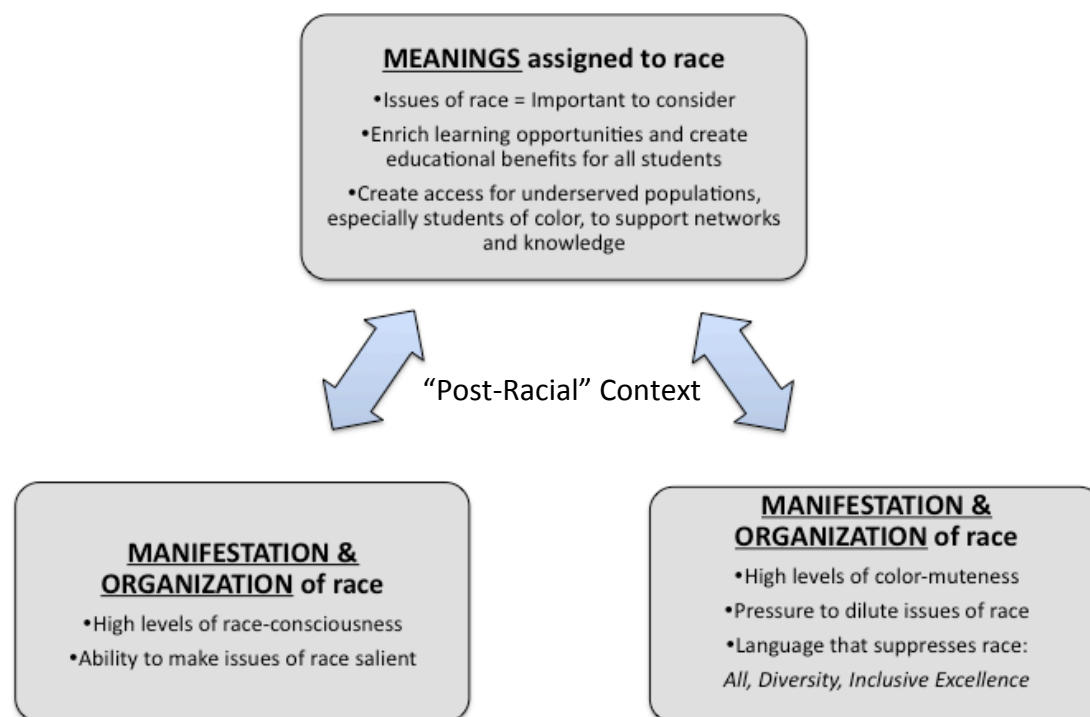
All Americans, every day, *are* reinforcing racial distinctions and racialized thinking by using race labels; but we are also reinforcing racial inequality by refusing to use them. By using race words carelessly and particularly by *deleting* race words, I am convinced, both policymakers and laypeople in America help reproduce the everyday racial inequalities that plague us. It is thus crucial that we learn to navigate together the American dilemmas of race talk and color-muteness. . . . (Pollock, 2004, p. 4)

In this regard, color-muteness was apparent at the University of Morrill State, where postsecondary educators often articulated the term “diversity” as a proxy for underrepresented populations, namely for people of color, but also for first-generation college students and low-income students. Color-muteness was also evident in discussions about interventions for “all” students, where the STAR program was described as an inclusive program for “all” first-year students, but evaluations of the program measured student success by disaggregating persistence by race and other social identities. Though the word “all” does not include any allusions to race, “the phrase seems to generate a lot of controversy over how race does or should matter to educational policy” (Pollock, 2004, p. 74). At Garland University, the postsecondary educators avoided the term “diversity” due to “diversity fatigue,” and instead, the university channeled the idea of Inclusive Excellence to encompass diversity and equity. Implicit in the notion of Inclusive Excellence was race, among many other facets of diversity. All of the postsecondary educators in this study put forth conceptualizations of race characterized by race-egalitarian paradigms (Loury, 2002) and race-consciousness, evinced by the interviewees’ desires to make issues of race more prominent and organize opportunities for students to learn about race and diversity. To accomplish this, however, postsecondary educators wielded color-mute language to make their programs more palatable to all.

In this discussion, it is important to consider not just different aspects of racial projects (meaning assigned to race, manifestation of these meanings, and artifacts that mediate these meanings), but also the contexts through which these racial projects occur. These racial projects emerge in “a less than civil rights-friendly political climate” that has

diluted the prominence of equity and social justice (Moses, 2010, p. 221). This climate is textured, in part, by a “post-racial” America, an era when “Americans begin to make race-free judgments” (Schorr, 2008, para. 5). According to some media commentary, the election of Barack Obama, our first Black president, manifested public sentiment to move beyond race in public policy and public life (Bai, 2008; Billups & Sands, 2008; Taranto, 2009). “Post-racial” advocates argue that the United States’ transformation from Jim Crow to “the Obama phenomenon” (Bonilla-Silva, 2010) unfolds a new chapter in American history where progress is no longer impeded by racism, and success is achievable through hard work and content of character.

Such an interpretation of racial politics has serious implications for education policy. To take one example, affirmative action would be unnecessary in a “post-racial” society because, the argument goes, people of color would have “no more excuses” to take up identities as victims of racial prejudices or disadvantaged peoples (Bonilla-Silva, 2010, p. 208). A “post-racial” America would render not only affirmative action policies unnecessary, but also educational programs intended to serve students of color or teach students about issues of race and diversity. These post-racial sentiments, too often, compel postsecondary educators to use language as a critical artifact that mediates how student services are labeled, discussed, and implemented. As illustrated in the following figure, although significant meaning is *assigned* to race, the way issues of race are *manifested* and *organized* are mediated, in different ways, by institutional contexts embedded within post-racial contexts.



*Figure 2.* Racial projects of postsecondary educators.

All postsecondary educators in my study believed that issues of race were important to address for a variety of reasons, whether they talked about the potential for interactions within heterogeneous populations to enhance learning, or whether they articulated the need to remove systemic barriers faced by students of color in accessing higher education. However, I argue that the so-called “post-racial” context also mediated *how* postsecondary educators could express meanings of race, and this manifested in disparate ways. Let us consider how Harris, Vazquez, Blomkvist, and Logan demonstrated high levels of race-consciousness in their seminars by explicitly talking about issues of race with students. In this instance, the “post-racial” context did not prevent them from discussing race, and in fact, may have fueled their candid opinions that we do not, in fact, live in a “post-racial” society. Additionally, these postsecondary

educators possessed the autonomy to facilitate the seminar without micro-management or oversight from others and could make issues of race salient.

On the other hand, although Thompson (Director of the Inclusive Excellence Affairs at GU) thought race was of chief concern not to be forgotten at the expense of social identities, and although Thyme (founder of STAR Knowledge Community at UMS) thought race was important, but not to be made so prominent at the expense of dismissing other social identities, both administrators used color-mute terms to describe their programs; this occurred when Thompson talked about the notion of “Inclusive Excellence” and Thyme spoke broadly of “diversity.” This was also apparent when Nguyen talked about legal constraints for STAR to be advertised and open to “all” students, even though both Nguyen and Karapas implicitly suggested their desire to support underserved student populations primarily, and even despite STAR’s reputation for positively impacting non-dominant communities, particularly students of color. I argue that the politically charged context of “post-racialism” may compel postsecondary educators to actively suppress issues of race through color-muteness, and this occurred in attempts to make their programs more palatable across the institution and the community. Too often, the livelihoods of programs depend upon the ability of postsecondary educators to craft narratives and outreach that are acceptable and engaging to multiple audiences.

This approach may be reminiscent of suggestions put forward by Wilson (1987) who argued that “. . . to improve the life chances of truly disadvantaged groups” one must focus upon “. . . programs to which the more advantaged groups of all races and class backgrounds can positively relate” (p. 155). Such findings reveal tensions for

postsecondary educators with race-conscious agendas: how can scholars and practitioners make issues of race prominent in light of post-racial contexts that diminish its significance? In the final chapter of my dissertation, I propose one potential solution that makes a callback to bridging the gap between theory, research, and practice.

While this chapter took a broader perspective of how postsecondary educators discussed issues of race and diversity within their respective institutional contexts, the following chapter provides a more detailed exploration of how the postsecondary educators in my study mediated opportunities for students to discuss issues of race and diversity within seminars.

## CHAPTER VI

### **MODES OF SILENCING IN DIALOGUE: THE CLOSURE AND EXPANSION OF ENTRY POINTS TO DIVERSITY AND RACE**

In this chapter, I address the following research questions: *How do postsecondary educators organize student learning about issues of diversity and race? What are the affordances and constraints of how postsecondary educators organize student learning? How do racial attitudes of student participants shift from the beginning to the end of the seminars?* First, to understand how postsecondary educators organize student learning, I used CHAT to model each setting as an activity system and identified the artifacts, activities, rules, and division of labor at each seminar. Second, I analyzed the affordances and constraints of each site. Third, I described shifts in racial attitudes from pre- and post-tests of the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS).

By examining these data points, I attempt to show the mutually informing, co-constructed relationship between how educators organize educational environments and how students approach issues of diversity and race. I argue that how students relate to diversity and race can be promoted or hindered by how postsecondary educators design learning environments. Of significance, I am interested in creating a conversation about the kinds of learning opportunities and attitudinal shifts that become possible when educational environments are centered on topics of diversity and race.

It is important to note the tensions I experienced throughout the writing of this chapter. As my interactions with the postsecondary educators progressed through my study, I grew increasingly fond of Bill Harris, Allison Logan, and Rainn Blomkvist. I so appreciated their willingness to welcome me into their seminars, their passion for equity,



and their gift for connecting to students. Many times I found myself nodding enthusiastically, laughing wholeheartedly, and striving together toward common goals. Other times, though, when contradictions emerged from the activity system of each seminar, I wondered what I would do differently in their shoes. How postsecondary educators pose questions, compel participation, frame ideas, and take up perspectives in moment-to-moment interactions may advance or unintentionally undermine educational goals. Time and again, I rode waves of apprehension in recognizing that doing “diversity work” and “race work” is a complex, nuanced, and tricky venture. And, time and again, I recognized that even on my best days, I lack the pedagogical talents that Harris, Logan, and Blomkvist brought to bear at their respective institutions. I admire the postsecondary educators in this study and across all institutions who continue to roll up their sleeves and engage in this work. As such, I move forward with this chapter in an attempt to contribute to the communal struggle for educational equity.

### **Overview of Seminars**

Using seminar documents,<sup>4</sup> I paint a broad landscape of my case studies by describing the postsecondary educators who facilitated student learning, the goals of each seminar, and a snapshot of topics delivered to participants.

#### **University of Morrill State**

On any given day, a stranger walking past the “Culture and Communication” seminar at the University of Morrill State will hear peals of student laughter and the booming voice of the instructor telling jokes, delivering lectures, and answering questions. A peek inside the seminar setting will show fresh-faced students whose skin

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<sup>4</sup> I used seminar documents for the primary purpose of describing each setting. These were not integrated as part of data reduction and analyses.

tones radiate black, brown, and yellow hues, suggesting that the majority of participants present as people of color while White students constitute a very small minority.

Professor Bill Harris was the official instructor on record for the “Culture and Communication” seminar who self-identified as biracial (half-Black, half-White). Harris was a study in contrasts, with his dark skin juxtaposed against bright grey hair and his short stature belying a larger-than-life personality brimming with energy and humor. On the first day of class, Harris distributed hard copies of the course syllabus. The following paragraph is an excerpt of the syllabus for the course description:

This interdisciplinary seminar integrates ideas, concepts, and/or approaches from the two companion classes [redacted names of classes] around the theme of mass media. Mass media includes newspapers, films, television, radio, and magazines. We will examine the representational and narrative functions of race/ethnicity/culture and explore how the meaning of these concepts, as represented in mass media, have been facilitated and constrained by media decision-making, genre, intertextuality, and the audience. This approach will allow us to better understand the articulation of race/ethnicity in the enduring icon of American popular culture. Mass media both embodies and disrupts racial tendencies and allows us to closely question the representation of racial and ethnic authenticity. Please keep in mind that a critical thinker strengthens, refines, enlarges, or reshapes their ideas in light of other perspectives. A critical thinker is an active learner, someone with the ability to shape, not merely absorb, knowledge. You are **all** expected to be critical thinkers!

According to this snippet of the syllabus, students will learn how to become “critical thinkers” by analyzing how different forms of mass media simultaneously enable and constrain depictions of “race/ethnicity/culture.” Following the course description, a bulleted list of expectations and objectives explicitly articulated a variety of themes, ranging from behaviors necessary for good grades (e.g., “Class participation is **mandatory!** Class absence will drastically impact your grade”) to the ways in which students must interact with each other (e.g., “Students will be respectful of others’ ideas

and engage in dialogue over debate”) to strategies for building a support network, as shown in the following list:

- Students will be introduced to the wide range of campus resources available to enhance their educational experience and academic success.
- Students will develop a sense of community and realize that education is cooperation and not competition.
- During the first weeks of the semester, students will make an appointment to visit with the instructor. We will cover such areas as academic concerns, personal goals, course assignments, and so forth.

Of import, the three preceding bullets consider an approach more expansive than providing a checklist about how to attain good grades in the first-year seminar. Rather, the objectives and expectations Harris highlighted in the syllabus allude to college-going practices intended to support students academically and personally. By including these bullets, Harris encouraged students to develop relationships with postsecondary educators who staffed a variety of campus resources, and in fact, listed some student affairs offices students ought to visit in order to enhance their collegiate experiences, such as the Writing Center, the Career Center, and the University Counseling Center, to name a few.

The UMS seminar ran over the course of 16 weeks<sup>5</sup> during the Fall 2011 semester. The following table is a replica of the weekly topics and timelines from the syllabus, including stylized font such as capitalized and bolded letters.

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<sup>5</sup> While the semester is technically 16 weeks of time-in-class, this table counts Thanksgiving week as an additional week.

Table 6

*Excerpt From Culture and Communication Syllabus*

WEEK	DATE	TOPIC	READINGS/FILMS
1	8/23 8/25	Definitions/personality wheel "The Power of Words" (ppt)	No Readings
2	8/30 9/1	African Americans Multiculturalism/Ethnic Communities	No Readings Handout
3	9/6 9/8	Chicano(a)s/Latino(a)s Diversity in the Media (ppt)	No Readings No Readings
4	9/13 9/15	C 141 Clark/Research Methods Asian Americans	No Readings Film: "Days of Waiting"
5	9/20 9/22	Native Americans Stereotypes/Invisibility/Marginalization <b>(RESOURCE PAPER DUE)</b>	No Readings No Readings
6	*9/27 9/29	Violence and Pornography Comedy and Humor	Film: "Generation M" No Readings
7	*10/4 10/6	Discussion: Film and Disney Representation in Television	No Readings No Readings
8	10/11 *10/13	<b>MID-TERM EXAMINATION</b> OPEN DISCUSSION (bring ideas!!!)	No Readings No Readings
9	10/18 10/20	Slave in a Box (Advertisements) Social activism, social change, ethnic & other specialized media	Handout No Readings
10	10/25 10/27	Racing Toward the Future (Star Trek) Communicators and Audiences	Handout No Readings
11	11/1 11/3	News Coverage of Diversity Issues Colorado Newspapers	Handouts Class assignment
12	11/8 11/10	Advertising and Marketing Communication Discussion: Achievements & Limitations	No Readings No Readings
13	11/15 11/17	<b>Group Presentation</b> <b>Group Presentation</b>	No Readings No Readings
14	11/22 11/24	Thanksgiving Break Thanksgiving Break	No Readings No Class
15	11/29 12/1	<b>Group Presentation</b> <b>Group Presentation (PAPERS DUE)</b>	No Readings No Readings
16	12/6 12/8	<b>Group Presentation</b> Wrap-up Discussion	No Readings No readings
17	12/12	<b>FINAL EXAMINATION</b>	<b>12 DECEMBER 6:20-8:20pm</b> <b>(same room)</b>

Taken together, a brief overview of the syllabus and my participant-observations suggest four themes in seminar topics: first, history lessons regarding communities of

color (e.g., African Americans, Chicano(a)s/Latino(a)s, Asian Americans, and Native Americans) since most high schools conventionally teach “White People History” according to Harris; second, vocabulary lessons that provided students with common language for talking about diversity (e.g., Definitions, Personality Wheel, Stereotypes, and Marginalization); third, portrayals of diversity in mass media and popular culture (e.g., Star Trek, Disney, Slave in a Box, and Colorado Newspapers); and, fourth, student perspectives as evidenced during group presentations and the 11/10 topic for the “Discussion: Achievements and Limitations” seminar. During this particular session, Harris invited alumni to speak authentically about their experiences at UMS, including their successes, failures, and strategies for negotiating the collegiate environment and making their UMS career as successful as possible.

### **Garland University**

At Garland University, I attended a Frontiers seminar facilitated by two postsecondary educators: Allison Logan (self-identified White woman) and Rainn Blomkvist (self-identified half-Black, half-White man). While Logan and Blomkvist enrolled at GU as graduate students pursuing master’s degrees, Logan was new to the Intergroup Dialogues and Blomkvist was a second-time facilitator for the Frontiers program. A self-proclaimed “geek,” Logan warmly tended to conversations with nods, smiles, and steady eye contact. Blomkvist exuded a placid and confident persona, frequently inviting participants to remain after the designated dialogue time if anybody felt compelled to discuss issues in more depth.

On any given day at Garland University, a stranger strolling past Frontiers will hear discussions about oppression, discrimination, and identity echoing down the

hallways. A brief look around the classroom will show a circle of participants who appear to vary in age, gender, and race, presenting a fairly equal breakdown between men and women as well as people of color and Whites. A more careful examination will suggest that the co-facilitators were mindful of physically organizing the dialogue in an open forum. This began from the very first day, when I helped the postsecondary educators reorganize the classroom. To accomplish this, we pushed desks against the walls and positioned the chairs in a large circle so all participants could see each other. According to Logan, this physical arrangement opened up the space so the dialogue “felt less like school” and “there were fewer barriers” despite taking place in a traditional classroom setting (January 25, 2012 Content Log). Within this circle, Blomkvist and Logan always sat across from one another to read each other’s cues as well as the nonverbal language of the participants they faced. The ability to communicate with their eyes and slight movements of their heads, without uttering words, suggested a trusting collegial relationship.

On the first day of the dialogue, Blomkvist and Logan distributed a “Contract for Participation” that established ground rules foundational for fostering productive dialogue and a safe atmosphere. The following bullet points in the contract stood out in prominence with bolded and capitalized text:

- **I AGREE NOT TO REVEAL NAMES, PERSONAL EXPERIENCES, OR PERSONAL INFORMATION TO PEOPLE OUTSIDE THE GROUP.**
- **I AGREE TO REFRAIN FROM VENTING OR ENGAGING IN DEBATES WITH OTHER GROUP MEMBERS.**
- **I AGREE TO DIRECT MY QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS IN A WAY THAT WILL GENERATE GREATER UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN GROUPS.**

- **I ACKNOWLEDGE THAT AT ANY TIME I MAY ASK FOR A SITOUT, TIMEOUT, OR GROUP DEPARTURE.**
- **IN THE INTEREST OF MAINTAINING SAFE AND PRODUCTIVE DIALOGUE GROUPS, I AGREE THAT FACILITATOR(S) MAY ASK ME TO TAKE A SITOUT, TIMEOUT, OR GROUP DEPARTURE.**
- **I AGREE TO MAINTAIN RESPECT FOR ALL GROUP MEMBERS AT ALL TIMES.**

**I AGREE TO ABIDE BY ALL OF THE GROUND RULES STATED ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THAT IF I DO NOT DO SO, I WILL BE WITHDRAWN FROM THE PROGRAM.** (Excerpt from “Contract for Participation” distributed during January 25, 2012 session)

To participate in Frontiers dialogues, GU students agreed to maintain confidentiality and avoid conflict (verbal and physical) or otherwise risk formal removal from the program. The “Contract for Participation” mediated GU students’ understanding of the baseline expectations for participating in the dialogue. From the first day, transparent norms and expectations set the tone for acceptable and unacceptable behaviors and actions. While Logan and Blomkvist set these guidelines for students, they also invited participants to share their own ideas for ground rules. Though nobody contributed ideas for establishing ground rules, the GU postsecondary educators encouraged participants to reflect on characteristics of productive conversations and welcomed any additional feedback in future sessions.

After establishing mutual understanding and agreement about the norms for participating in Frontiers, Logan discussed the history of intergroup dialogues and the purpose of Frontiers. According to text from the “Train-the-Trainer” manual distributed to all Frontiers facilitators,

[t]he mission of the [Frontiers of Dialogue] program is to organize **intergroup dialogues** for the purpose of:

- fostering meaningful, structured interaction between students from diverse

- backgrounds.
- increasing students' understanding and awareness of themselves, the groups they belong to, and of other students who belong to diverse groups.
  - increasing students' understanding about intergroup issues.
- (Excerpt from “Train-the-Trainer” manual)

This mission statement suggests that Frontiers placed great emphases on encouraging students to learn about themselves *in relation* to the world around them, particularly other people who identify differently, such as gender, race, sexual orientation, and other identities of interest. The following table provides more information about the topics covered in the Frontiers of Dialogue seminar over a 5-week period.

Table 7

*Excerpt From Frontiers of Dialogues Manual for Facilitators*

<b>Week</b>	<b>Concept</b>
ONE Jan 23 <sup>rd</sup>	GROUP BEGINNINGS Introductions Groundrules Roles Distinguishing Dialogue Worldview
TWO Jan 30 <sup>th</sup>	OUR IDENTITIES Personal Identity Social Identity
THREE Feb 6 <sup>th</sup>	SOCIAL SYSTEMS Privilege/oppression
FOUR Feb 13 <sup>th</sup>	HOT TOPICS
FIVE Feb 20 <sup>th</sup>	ENVISIONING CHANGE & TAKING ACTION Advocate / Ally Cooperative Action

Additional excerpts from the manual offered detailed descriptions on a weekly basis, thus enabling postsecondary educators the opportunity to come to mutual understandings about the purpose of each session:

**Week 1 – Group Beginnings:** The foundation for the successful participation of students in the dialogue groups is created during the first dialogue meeting.



Students receive an overview of the goals of the program, guidelines for participating in the intergroup dialogues, training in active listening skills, and how to understand and enter another person's worldview.

**Week 2 – Our Identities:** This session explores two levels of identification that influence our worldview (Week 1) and thus our interactions with one another. The challenge of holding the “both/and” nature of individual and group identities is important to help us engage the complicated way in which we understand others and are understood by them. Multiplicity, intersectionality, changeability, observability, choice/fixed and other dynamics of identity provide depth to perspectives on our relationships and society.

**Week 3 - Social Structures:** Week 3 focuses on social structures, how our memberships in and worldview of many different groups impacts us and others in both negative and positive ways. Participants learn how our participation in different groups can be beneficial to them (i.e., the in-group tends to favor itself) but detrimental (i.e., the in-group discriminates against the out-group) to people outside those groups. The dialogue centers on the concepts of saliency (e.g., we are more conscious of some identities), meaning (e.g., there are particular stereotypes attached to some identities), and value (e.g., we value some identities more than others), especially as related to social identity.

**Week 4 – Hot Topics:** Our fourth session applies the learning we have done to date to specific, tangible intergroup issues and events in our society. It also provides the group the opportunity to practice their dialoguing skills around topics that can carry powerful emotions, topics that are of interest to and selected by the participants themselves. Perceptions, stereotypes, opinions, misunderstandings, personal intergroup experiences, discrimination, and intra- and intergroup dynamics are explored.

**Week 5 – Envisioning Change and Taking Action:** This is the last session of the program which focuses on affirming each other (e.g., I want to thank participant X for her support during the dialogues), affirming each other's social identity (e.g., as a White person, I want to say that now I have somewhat of an understanding about the experiences of African Americans; as an African American, I now understand the issues that Whites are struggling with), and discussing a personal action plan for improving intergroup relations. Participants reflect on and provide feedback regarding the intergroup dialogues.

The scope and sequence of Frontiers topics can be summarized in the following ways: first, students learned how to interact productively with one another; second, students gained awareness about their own identities in relation to the identities of others;

third, students understood how their relationships took place within larger social and institutional structures; fourth, students practiced how to dialogue with each other, regardless of the degree to which perspectives differed or conflicted; and fifth, students reflected on how their peers and facilitators helped to increase understandings of themselves and the world around them. Of import, students left the last session with a strategy for helping to create positive change and enhancing relationships with people unlike themselves.

The Frontiers curriculum represented an interesting contrast to the UMS seminar. Based upon the course description and timeline in the UMS syllabus, Harris wanted students to learn about the world around them (not about themselves per se) through mass media representations of “race/ethnicity/culture” as a vehicle for developing critical thinking skills. Alternatively, text from the “Train-the-Trainer” manual suggested that Frontiers was designed for students to participate in critical analyses of the external world, combined with internal introspection about themselves, to enhance understanding of diversity and intergroup interaction.

### **Activity Systems**

One way to increase understanding of the seminars as activity systems was to analyze how postsecondary educators participated within each seminar. Subsequently, I conducted a frequency count to determine how often they contributed verbally to the seminars in the following ways: (a) *Lecture/Mini-Lecture*: spoke uninterrupted with a prepared lecture or an impromptu sharing of knowledge; (b) *Known Answer Questions*: posed a question requiring a correct answer, students responded, and educators evaluated the quality of answers; (c) *Open-Ended Questions*: posed a question encouraging

responses not based upon one “right” answer, students responded, and educators appraised the merit of answers; (d) *Expand/Paraphrase*: extended upon or summarized students’ comments; (e) *Solicit Input*: encouraged more people to add to the conversation or asked to hear from people who had not yet spoken; (f) *Make Jokes*: told funny stories or “played the dozens” (trade insults) that made participants laugh; (g) *Tell Personal Stories*: shared narratives about their lives outside the context of the seminar; (h) *Serve as Primary Expert*: Answered inquiries that participants asked or answered their own inquiries before waiting for participants to respond; and (i) *Confer Expert*: called out specific participants perceived to have knowledge in areas of interest. These frequencies are documented in Figure 3.

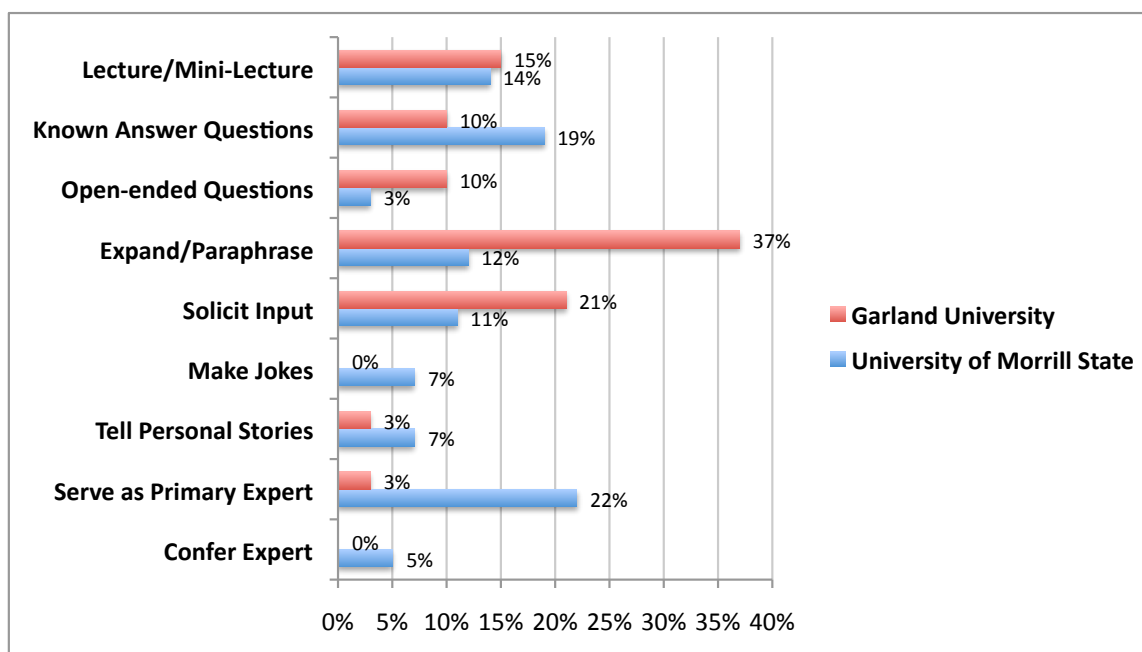


Figure 3. Types of postsecondary educator talk.

An examination of Figure 3 suggests different approaches that postsecondary educators used to organize how students learned. Facilitators at both institutions delivered

lectures, incorporated questioning sequences, affirmed responses through expansions and paraphrases, sought participation, told stories, and answered questions. However, the percentage rates of these verbal articulations differed between the seminars. Additionally, some verbal moves occurred primarily at the University of Morrill State, such as invoking laughter through funny jokes or determining who possessed certain expertise, and did not emerge as saliently in the analysis of Garland University.

In the subsequent sections, I analyze how verbal articulations from Harris, Logan, and Blomkvist—taken in concert with mediating artifacts and activities—offered a more detailed description of phenomena occurring in each seminar. I selected these passages as illustrative moments of routine practices in which students and postsecondary educators participated. Through my analyses of postsecondary educator talk, I also identified possible and emergent contradictions in each seminar. According to Engeström (2001), contradictions and tensions are “sources of change and development” that can “generate disturbances and conflicts, but also innovative attempts to change” within an activity system (p. 137). To be clear, contradictions are not inherently negative, and arguably, this is what makes these case studies so meaningful. The contradictions<sup>6</sup> noted herein represent a rich opportunity for strengthening programs already imbued with well-meaning intentions.

### **Contradictions at the University of Morrill State**

Harris often used icons from popular culture as a central stage from which to project and critique representations of diversity. He explained that some forms of media, such as *Star Trek*, attempted to reflect progressive, historical, and political contexts. For

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<sup>6</sup> In this dissertation, I use the terms contradictions and tensions interchangeably.

example, during a lecture about two *Star Trek* characters, Lokai and Bele, from the planet Cheron (Figure 4), Harris posed the following *Known Answer Question* sequence:

“What do these figures represent?” Some students shrugged their shoulders, and Sara suggested, “Maybe good and evil?” Harris nodded his head. “Sure, it could be about good and evil and the struggle it can be in one person. What else are they talking about? Especially if they’re Black and White?” After a few beats of silence, Harris answered his own question. “They’re talking about the struggle in society and in between the races and use these individuals to represent that struggle that was happening in the Civil Rights and Chicano movements. They’re using these characters to talk about how to facilitate and bring together people as one.” (October 25, 2011 Content Log)



Figure 4. Pop culture artifact from UMS seminar.

More specifically, these characters represented polar opposites of a war on the planet Cheron, with one character charged to lead a revolt in the fight for equality and the other charged to sustain oppressive practices that enslave and marginalize other populations. The physical manifestation of conflict and segregation of Black/White faces mirrored the conflict associated with the Civil Rights Movement, explained Harris, and *Star Trek* was one of the first forms of media to champion racial integration efforts.

Overall, he argued that *Star Trek* reflected what the United States was experiencing:

In other words, it’s simply a mirror to take a look at society, a mirror to take a look at the issues that were in society, especially in the 1960s, where you’ve got counter-culture movements, you’ve got Brown Power, you’ve got Black Power, you’ve got the Gay Rights Movement, you’ve got so many social movements during that period. They’re using the show during that time to actually talk about

those social movements in a way that's more palatable to the audience, in a way that they could actually accept it. (October 25, 2011 Content Log)

As part of this seminar, students read a chapter out of the book *Star Trek and History: Race-ing Toward a White Future* (Bernardi, 1999) to better understand how issues of gender, as well as race, were portrayed in the media. In another example of posing a *Known Answer Question* sequence requiring a correct response, Harris talked about starships.

**Harris:** What is the ultimate female representation in this article?

**Multiple students:** The ship! The starship!

**Harris:** You're right. So why is the ship always a she?

**William:** There's a quote here [pointed to handout] that says that behind every Star Trek hero is a beautiful starship. That's kind of like that saying that behind every strong man is a strong wife.

**Harris:** Okay, so the ship is like a woman who is in a supporting role and not necessarily a leadership role. What else does the ship represent? The ship that's *cutting* through space [moved hand in an upward motion] . . . the ship that's *powerful* . . . what else does the ship represent? I see you laughing [pointed to me and another graduate student chuckling in the back of the classroom] and you know what the hell I'm talking about. What else does the ship represent?

**Claire:** Big phallus.

**Harris:** Big phallus. It's a phallic symbol. Anybody know what that is? It's a penis. [Students erupted in laughter, and in the background Roger slapped his knee and murmured, "Yup, I know what that is."] That's what the ship represents, that's why the ship is a she. (OC: Bradford and Melvin turned to each other with raised eyebrows and mouthed, "What?" to each other. I feel confused, too.) That's what the ship actually represents, the powerful men who are in control of it, who are using it to go through space and to make sure they leave their ever-lasting influence and impression on those behind. Got it? [Harris paused momentarily before moving on to the next slide]. (October 25, 2011 Content Log)

This excerpt exemplifies how Harris used the *Star Trek* starship to demonstrate how an icon of pop culture can embody notions of gender. To spark classroom participation, he posed a question and William responded with his own interpretation. Although Harris seemed open to the idea that William presented—starship as a metaphor for women and wives—the instructor clearly had one correct answer in mind. In his quest

for participants to find the accurate response, Harris provided verbal clues for students (“*cutting* through space . . . powerful”) and hand motions. Since he thought that Claire and I knew the correct answer (a subtle example of conferring experts), he called on us to respond to his inquiry. Once Claire answered the question, Harris affirmed the accuracy of her response.

Interestingly, nobody clarified *how* the starship simultaneously represented a woman (“she”) and a man (“penis”). If we were discussing the fluidity of gender identities, this would be a moot point; however, we were *not* dialoguing about the malleable nature of gender. Despite my own confusion and what I interpreted as quizzical facial expressions of Bradford and Melvin, we did not second-guess Harris. Posing doubt about the validity of this interpretation may be equivalent to correcting Harris and disputing the legitimacy of his claims. Arguably, the *silence* of participants and the *absence* of any repairs oriented toward Harris suggest that he was positioned—by students and by himself—as the primary arbiter of knowledge.

To corroborate this claim, I highlight the following excerpt as an example of what transpired when somebody attempted to repair Harris. This occurred during a seminar in which students clipped or printed forms of mass media to interpret how issues of diversity were depicted.

**Harris:** Gays can't get married, that's obvious discrimination. Outside of that, that gays can't get married, name the most blatant discriminatory law. I know every single person in this room has talked about it. I know this. It was on your test, okay? [He waited a beat. When nobody offered a response, he answered his own question.] It's called *affirmative action*.

**Multiple students:** [Some participants their heads back. Some students groaned, “Ooohhhhhhhhh!” or “Ohhhh, God.”]

**Harris:** Okay? It is the most blatant racist law we have on the books right now. Anybody disagree with that? [Nobody raised their hands to indicate disagreement]. White men are not eligible for affirmative action. It's blatant discrimination. Yeah.

It's for the seven protected classes. The only people who do not fall in the seven protected classes are, quite frankly, White males. It is blatant discrimination against White males. [I raised my hand.] Christina?

**Me:** I've heard, though, that affirmative action, depending upon the university, uhm, could use White males as their category y. . .

**Harris:** NO. They cannot.

**Me:** But if they're underrepresented for private, local universities . . .

**Harris:** Oh, private! You can do anything for private, local universities. Anything whatsoever. But for public business and institutions, there are only seven protected classes because under affirmative action, White males are not one of the seven protected classes. So people put forward two arguments. That they are *indirectly* impacted by affirmative action because the number one recipient of affirmative action is who?

**Students:** White women.

**Harris:** If White women are benefitting, then you know White men are benefitting. So that. The second one is this. If it takes discrimination to wipe out past discrimination, that is a sad legacy to pass discrimination. Think about that for a second. If it takes discrimination to wipe out past discrimination, that is a sad legacy to pass discrimination. We shouldn't have been discriminating for the past 200 years, then we wouldn't be needing affirmative action.

For the next 5 minutes, Harris continued what I describe as a soliloquy about affirmative action. After delivering a brief history lesson about the Civil Rights Act, he described how voters banned affirmative action in Texas, and subsequently, how educational institutions collaborated to implement new policies for increasing student access to public universities. He ended his soliloquy by describing how critics of affirmative action too often forget an important aspect of the policy:

They're forgetting what the intent of the law is and they're just reading it literally. Does that make sense to folks? Once you figure out what the intent is, wasn't the intent to increase opportunities for Blacks and Latinos and Asians that they didn't have before? For both of those laws, that was the intent, but when people argue what they forget about is intent. What was the intention for passing them? What did they have in mind? That's what they had in mind. (November 3, 2011 Content Log)

Harris concluded this portion of the seminar by asking students to not forget about the intent of affirmative action. Instead of remembering the purpose of affirmative action, however, I argue that students primarily recalled how Harris sensationalized the policy in



a negative light. Of significance, when Harris characterized affirmative action as the most “blatant racist” and “blatant discriminatory” law, students likely dismissed or forgot its original intent, an outcome evident in the CoBRAS when UMS students indicated decreased support for affirmative action at the end of the semester in comparison to the beginning of the semester. I visit this issue in a latter part of this chapter.

When I suggested that affirmative action, in some contexts, can target White men as beneficiaries, Harris abruptly interrupted my line of thinking and shut down further opportunities to reframe the policy. Instead, he dominated the conversation with his perspective of affirmative action and esoteric facts about equal opportunity policy that captured the attention of participants, provoked feelings of shock, and further bolstered his position as the primary expert. For me, this interaction exemplified one mode of silencing because Harris allowed no space for alternative perspectives regarding affirmative action: his knowledge reigned supreme. In subsequent sessions, I rarely offered a viewpoint that challenged or repaired Harris. Instead, I remained silent to avoid the risk of being shut down or positioned as being wrong.

Modes of silencing emerged in other seminars. Approximately halfway through the semester, Harris asked students to be prepared to tell jokes. These jokes were not of the knock-knock variety, however, as the following vignette illustrates:

One crisp autumn morning, Harris asked students to arrange desks in a large circle, a marked shift from all previous lectures where we sat in straight rows. Amid increased volumes in conversations and the shuffling of desks, we reorganized our physical space so we could see each other. I was pleased to have the opportunity to see everybody’s faces. After making announcements about the impending mid-term, Harris transitioned to the main event of class today: humor in racist jokes.

Harris held up a book titled *On the Real Side and African American Humor: The Best Black Comedy From Slavery to Today*. Harris explained that slaves used to make fun of

White people all the time, particularly since slaves thought Whites were timid and uptight when talking about sex. He then recited the following joke from slaves:

“White folks on the sofa,  
Black folks in the grass,  
White folks talking lowly,  
Black folks getting ass.”

A handful of soft chuckles echoed around the room. Harris solicited people to share racist jokes they had heard, and several students waved their hands briskly in the air, expressing excitement. Harris asked Lisa to tell the first joke, which she read from a piece of paper. “So, uhm, a Mexican and a nigger jumped off the top of a building. Who hits the ground first?” Lisa asked. Some students mumbled, “Who cares?” And Lisa replied, “Yeah, who cares. They’re both minorities. Okay, then, here’s another one. Why do Jews have big noses?” Wilson answered, “Because air is free.” There was a little bit of laughter, and Lisa said in an almost apologetic manner, “Okay, so maybe they are not that funny.”

Other students jumped in to tell jokes, and the level and volume of laughter increased in spikes, depending upon the joke. Harris asked, “What’s the most confusing day for Black children?” Bradford replied, “Father’s Day.” And Harris affirmed, “Yup. It’s Father’s Day.” Sara asked, “What’s the difference between a Black man and a bunk bed? A bunk bed will support your children.” The room erupted in laughter, with a mixture of loud cackles and apologetic chuckles. Some students threw their heads back with deep guffaws, others covered their mouths as if to indicate shock or embarrassment, some students turned their heads away from the center of the classroom, and one student leaned forward, slapping his knee. Chong’s comment punctuated the laughter, “Oh, that’s bad, that’s bad, that’s messed up” – an apparent admission of contrition.

Afterwards, Roger raised his hand and asked, “Why do Mexicans only jump the border in pairs?” Chong said, “Why?” Roger replied, “Because there’s no **TRE**Spasing.” More students laughed, and some said, “Oooohhhhhhh!” Roger said, “I got another one. Why does the Mexican only tie one shoelace?” Chong said, “Why?” Roger said, “Because the shoelace is made in Taiwan.” As he uttered the word Taiwan, he raised one finger.

Throughout the 10-minute period of telling racist jokes, students shared a variety of jokes about different racial and ethnic groups. Other students told jokes that mocked social structures, phenotypes, and cultural practices.

As the jokes continued, the volume and frequency of laughter decreased substantially, replaced by silence or apparent feelings of contrition with comments such as, “That’s not right” or “Oh, daaannngggg.”

Harris concluded the session with one last joke he read from a book written by comedian Chris Rock: “The country is in an uproar. Everybody’s mad at each other. It’s sad. Black people are mad, White people are mad, Black people yell racism, White people yell reverse racism, Chinese people yell sideways racism.” At this point, nobody laughed. I

sensed a dramatic shift in the ambience, and in a matter of minutes, the classroom transformed itself from roars of laughter to silence.

After this final joke, Harris facilitated a lecture about out-group humor, in-group humor, inequitable distribution of power, and history. Although Harris sprinkled his lecture with opportunities for students to participate, the remainder of the session revolved around his lecture. Toward the end of the session, Harris asked students to write a quote from Ralph Ellison: "Change the joke, and slip the yoke." After asking for interpretations of this quote, Harris explained that since the yoke represents "the yoke of oppression," and by joking about another group, the joke-teller will no longer be the target of ridicule. Harris then told students to write another quote, this time from Wylie Sypher: "Comedy is both hatred and revel, rebellion and defense, attack and escape. It is revolutionary and conservative. Socially, it is both sympathy and persecution." He repeated the quote a couple of times, at the request of students, as they curved their bodies over their desks and papers to document his words.

At the end of this particular seminar, Harris explained that jokes often reflect the powerful and the oppressed. The people who tell these jokes often have the power to label and define "others" while the object of the jokes is often marginalized or oppressed in society. He also talked about the inherent tension in humor and jokes, which simultaneously serve as buffers against pain and mirrors that reflect realities. The activity appeared to initially engage students since they had permission to drop curse words, make racial slurs, and laugh riotously in a formal, academic space. Within this atmosphere, Harris attempted to communicate that jokes represented broader structures about social groups. Arguably, students may have forgotten this take-away message, and instead, learned that seminars with Harris were lively, fun, and exciting because telling racist jokes gave them permission to indulge in exchanging profanities and breaking taboos. In fact, after Harris finished his lecture and the seminar ended, I scarcely remembered the purpose of telling racist jokes until revisiting the video records and my scratch notes afterwards. If I felt this way, I wondered whether students recalled this activity as a free ticket to push social norms or as a lesson about the complex relationship

between race, history, humor, and power. Similar to the mini-lecture on affirmative action, I sensed that students likely remembered feeling excitement, shock, awe, and guilt. In this way, this sensationalized experience potentially muted any opportunity to learn content in meaningful ways.

Comments such as “That’s not right” or “Oh, dang” suggest that students felt guilt, contrition, and remorse. Although students laughed out loud at some jokes, some appeared to be reluctant about expressing their chuckles, as evidenced by some individuals who shook their heads, turned their faces away from the center of the room, or covered their faces. However, the absence of student talk and laughter toward the end of the seminar weighed heavily in the seminar. Arguably, this occurred since the novelty of telling inappropriate jokes wore off rather quickly. Quite possibly, too, the jokes felt less like exaggerated caricatures and more like somewhat authentic narratives about our own histories, backgrounds, families and communities. In fact, due to the demographic backgrounds of participants, jokes about phenotypes, immigration histories, family structures, and social institutions impacted every participant, Harris and myself included, because each of us became the target of ridicule.

Taken together, these excerpts from the University of Morrill State suggest that tensions existed between goals for students to become critical thinkers *versus* the rules/division of labor where the locus of knowledge and power resided primarily with the postsecondary educator. As depicted in Figure 1, approximately 60% of verbal utterances from Harris stemmed from a combination of delivering lectures/mini-lectures, serving as the primary expert, posing *Known Answer Questions*, and determining who possesses expertise.

I base my claims upon the following evidence. First, Harris was the central artifact for mediating students' understanding of course content by organizing the freshmen seminars primarily around his lectures and PowerPoint presentations. This was further corroborated by normative routines where 22% of all of his verbal utterances consisted of Harris answering questions students asked, ranging in topic anywhere from clarifications about his lectures to interpretations of articles, or answering his own questions. In this way, Harris served as the primary expert on the types of questions that people might solicit from an encyclopedia or a search engine on the Internet. Second, the predominance of *Known Answer Questions* sequences cultivated social practices where students "hunted" for "right" answers, which may have yielded little opportunity for students to be positioned as knowledge-producers in the quest for answering inquiries correctly. Third, his routine of establishing the experts—whether this appeared in the form of his naming those as experts or whether he answered his own questions without waiting for student responses—determined *who* possessed knowledge. Fourth, though Harris proclaimed his desire for students to verbally participate in the seminar, modes of suppressing certain kinds of talk occurred frequently enough to make silence a salient aspect of the seminars.

These interactions index a recurrent theme where power and knowledge reside centrally with the postsecondary educator. This motif can be traced back, in part, to his pedagogical practices governing what is right and what is wrong. If students are socialized to answer questions in a certain way or to echo sentiments of the educator, what room is there for students to be legitimate designers of critical thinking? Being socialized to hunt for or guess the "right" answers in Initiate-Respond-Evaluate (I-R-E)

sequences may have yielded little opportunity for students to be positioned as critical thinkers. This format for organizing the seminar represents a teacher-centered approach (Gutiérrez, 1993/1994) and is associated with the banking model of education (Freire, 1970) since the students accumulate information from deposits made by instructors.

To be fair, Harris sometimes organized the seminar in ways that positioned students as critical thinkers. Several *Open-Ended Questioning* episodes included opportunities for students to share their interpretations of media artifacts, which had no basis in what was right or wrong, but rather, what experiences and ideas textured the meanings students made of pop culture. In the following excerpt, for example, Chong initiated a discussion about *Twilight*, applied her own interpretations, and sparked commentary from her peers.

Chong raised her hand to talk about *Twilight* and asked if anybody else noticed how Edward is “all White and sparkly and everything.” Another student nodded his head vigorously and agreed, “Yeah! It’s true!” Chong added, “And then they make the bad guy dark.” Lisa pursed her lips and said, “Well, yeah, but he’s hot.” The class laughed. Ashley [teaching assistant] said she attended a conference that critiqued *Twilight* from a feminist perspective because of what the movie is portraying to little girls. Roger said, “I love it.” (OC: Roger must be joking because the *Twilight* franchise is consumed by a mostly female audience of tweens, teens, their mothers, and their grandmothers.) Harris said, “I’ve never seen *Twilight*.” (November 8, 2012 Content Log)

Harris reserved 4 days at the end of the semester for students to be the knowledge-producers in their presentations, where participants had the freedom to choose their topic of interest and to deliver their presentation in whatever medium they found appropriate. Students presented on topics ranging from environmental racism, contemporary Native Americans, GLBTQQ populations around the world, and unequal educational opportunities among different Asian American ethnic groups. The frequency

of these types of moments, however, was outnumbered by the more ubiquitous practice where Harris remained the primary artifact.

To better understand the salience of silence, I relistened and rewatched all of the audio and video records from UMS. During this process, I documented the number of minutes Harris spoke and calculated the percentage of time he talked in each seminar. As shown in Figure 5, Harris talked the majority of the time in multiple sessions. This was an interesting find, especially during the Gender Discussion seminar when Harris asked students to sit in a circle because, “I don’t want to lecture today. I want to have a conversation” (November 1, 2011 Content Log). Despite his intention to facilitate a group dialogue, the voice of Harris inevitably occupied over three-fourths of the class period. Arguably, the amount of time that postsecondary educator talk inhabited the learning environment, combined with modes of silencing, may have contributed to marginal amounts of student talk<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Since I did not begin recording the dialogue until *after* I collected consent forms, the percentage of postsecondary educator talk in Figure 5 may be slightly over-inflated on the first day since I could not capture opening conversations and my talk about the informed consent process. Also, this figure excludes any seminars where I was absent (one day for jury duty), Harris was out of town, or videos took up seminar time.

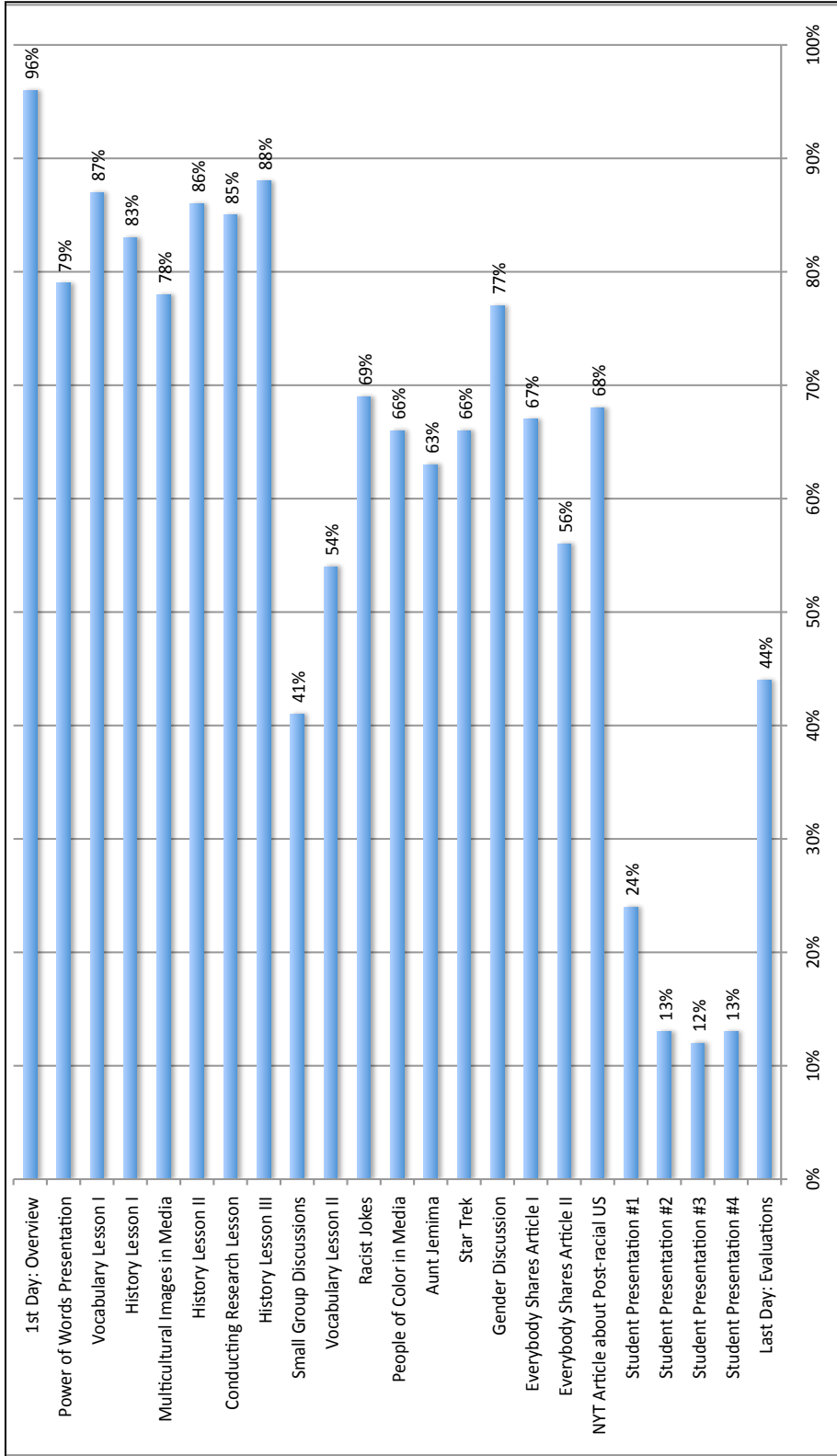


Figure 5. Percentage of seminar time occupied by UMS postsecondary educator talk.



## Contradictions at Garland University

Each session at Frontiers followed a 2-hour routine that began with “getting-to-know-you” icebreakers, followed by some combination of lectures, guided activities, discussions, and a closing activity where participants shared new reflections. Throughout these activities, each co-facilitator frequently posed a question encouraging responses not based upon one accurate reply, expanded upon or synopsised comments from participants, and encouraged more people to add to the conversation or asked to hear from students who had not yet spoken. The following excerpt exemplifies these verbal contributions from Blomkvist and Logan as they facilitated a discussion about the relationship between worldview and identity:

**Blomkvist:** Can anybody else talk about . . . are there other ways . . . about the importance of the differences between worldviews?

**Lauren:** Well, like, I think it’s really important to understand differences, ‘cuz, you know, you can’t really judge someone or you, like, can’t make assumptions about them because you have a different worldview. So even if you disagree with someone, like, understanding their worldview is a better way than, like, just disagreeing with what they’re saying.

**Mario:** Well, and like because you have different worldviews you've had like entirely different experiences? And even if you've had similar experiences, if you have different worldviews, like you're gonna react to those experiences differently so, realizing that THAT plays a role in like how you interact with it like currently is important, just because, I don't know, like the way that me and Mandy would react to something could be possibly really different just because *she's a White woman and I'm a Latino man*, you know? So just realizing those differences like, is important.

**Logan:** So, yeah, I mean you guys have sort of in that discussion about how experiences, um, exposure to diversity, I think it's absolute . . . and not just like diversity of people, but diversity of uhhmm diversity of experiences, diversity of uhm ideas, uhm, where there’s more and less of that in different places, um, but, yea, u- *Mario, you were just pulling it back sort of into different identities* and, sort of, and maybe the expectations . . . involved in that? And so I think that transitions us really well back into a discussion of personal identity. (February 1, 2012 Content Log)

In this instance, Blomkvist invited new perspectives to the conversation and asked the type of question that welcomed multiple viewpoints to texture the terrain of the dialogue. Subsequently, students who had not yet spoken about worldview and identity contributed to the dialogue. Additionally, since Blomkvist posed an open-ended inquiry, the postsecondary educators ushered in diverse approaches to the seminar with no need to dismiss or reduce participant commentary to one acceptable answer. Finally, Logan legitimized Mario's ideas by attempting to summarize his thoughts and creating connections back to the topic of interest.

Despite using verbal moves to help create openings for students to participate in the Frontiers dialogue, issues of race and gender were diluted in the following ways. When Mario brought up how his worldview might differ from Mandy's because he is a Latino man and she is a White woman, Logan inhibited an opportunity to talk about race and gender substantively. Instead, she quickly wrapped up the dialogue with references to "identities" in general rather than addressing race and gender specifically. In this small excerpt, perhaps she unintentionally overlooked the role these identities played in our everyday interactions due to the desire to talk more broadly about the central topic, which was personal identity. Additionally, either Logan or Blomkvist could have solicited Mario for further clarification to see if he might have any personal stories to share about how his worldview may differ from Mandy's worldview based upon race and gender. Here, issues of race and gender emerged a little bit, and were pregnant with possibility, but this trajectory became suppressed before it could grow into a legitimate topic to help mediate understanding of race and gender. Though this type of suppression was not quite

as explicit as shutting down a line of thinking (as documented within the UMS seminar), I do characterize this moment as a *subtle* form of silencing.

Silence descended on the Frontiers dialogue in more explicit ways. In the penultimate session, for example, Logan and Blomkvist organized a Gallery Walk where students took approximately 7-10 minutes to walk around the room to silently review factual and fictional statements associated with affirmative action. As students milled around the room, Blomkvist reminded participants that the goal of the Gallery Walk was to “test students for their ability to dialogue” and “that just because there is a source next to the sign does not mean it is true” (February 15, 2012 Content Log). Some of the artwork featured in the Gallery Walk included statements such as “Affirmative action is a form of reverse discrimination” and “More White women have benefitted from affirmative action than any other group” (February 15, 2012 Content Log). Afterwards, students discussed immediate reactions, impressions, and lingering questions about the validity of the statements. Blomkvist and Logan punctuated the dialogue with short lectures about the historical context and facts of affirmative action. Although it is difficult to determine who supported or challenged this policy, many students expressed their gratitude toward the co-facilitators for clarifying the myths and facts about affirmative action.

In addition to reaching shared understandings of affirmative action, Blomkvist and Logan facilitated a “meta-dialogue (a dialogue about dialogue)” (Leonardo & Porter, 2010, p. 153) to reflect on the quality of their interactions and ability to communicate within Frontiers. The following excerpt is based upon this meta-dialogue:

**Blomkvist:** So, how was that for you guys?

**Carissa:** I know affirmative action better [Laughed].

**Blomkvist:** You know affirmative action better. Cool. Were there any arguments? [People looked around the room. Some murmured, “No,” and others shook their heads. A couple of participants pretended to throw punches at each other]. (OC: I assumed they were joking since they were smiling and no fights emerged throughout the seminar.) Speaking of dialogue, we just had a good session of dialogue. And I wanted to talk a little bit about, uhm, what you guys think? How did we do in terms of the communication we just had? How did it go? Was it a dialogue? Was it a debate? Was it interesting?

**Benally:** [Video recorder did not capture his words, but he said something that caused participants to laugh]. It's something that needs to be addressed, and I'm glad that I have the opportunity to talk about this issue and to speak about where I come from.

**Blomkvist:** Any other thoughts about our communication? [There was about 20 seconds of silence as people looked around the room and said nothing. Some students fidgeted in their seats, and others adjusted their positions in their chairs.]

**Lauren:** For me, it cleared up, uhm. I guess, since people, in the past, I feel like in high school, and maybe it's because my high is very non-diverse, we didn't really ever talk about affirmative action. Or when it was brought up, it was, it was not clarified. It was just a mention and not really. I've only really learned about it like from other people but never like actually, with like, what it actually is and facts about it. So I liked this discussion because it was just, like, clearing up my understanding so I have a better understanding of what it actually is. Which it changed my opinion on it, too, or not changed. I didn't really have an opinion because I didn't really know it before, so it gives me opinion.

**Logan:** And so, like, having that part of the discussion where we are able to have that discussion of what is believed right now versus what do the words of the legislation actually say and what does it look like. And there's still a lot of tension there, but we had the opportunity to dispel those myths without a lot of heat.

**Blomkvist:** I'd just like to point out that that heat thing wasn't here. I mean, this is called a hot topic, and we definitely had disagreements, but I'd like to congratulate all of you for not debating because with heat comes debate, where I'm going to win and you're going to lose. Uhm, and I didn't hear, I think, any debate today. This was all us sharing from our perspective, ahhh, and, uhmmm, you know, what we felt or thought and not saying that, you know, because that was the case that it was our perspective that I was right. And this is a big part of what this program is for. Is to teach you guys, and girls, how to have, how to dialogue, how to talk about difficult subjects and realize that it's possible to talk about difficult or sensitive subjects without things, you know, melting down. Without people getting hurt or without shouting or any of the stuff that goes along with debate. And I hope you guys feel good about this . . . do you feel good about it? [Benally nodded. Nobody said a word. People looked around the room.] So . . . we're going to move forward. (February 15, 2012 Content Log)

In this meta-dialogue, Logan and Blomkvist asked participants to reflect on their experiences with the “hot topic” of affirmative action. They made verbal moves to solicit

input and feedback from participants. When Blomkvist guided the meta-dialogue, Carissa, Benally, and Lauren commented on their enhanced understanding of affirmative action, but did not specifically allude to the process of dialoguing. And when Blomkvist asked whether people felt good about practicing their dialoguing skills, his questions encountered silence and stares. Logan and Blomkvist attempted to convince the students (and themselves) that we created a successful dialogue due to the absence of heat, arguments, shouts, meltdowns, and hurt. But does the lack of heat, arguments, shouts, meltdowns, and hurt demonstrate a triumphant application of dialoguing skills? I believe that a void in these types of actions and verbal moves within the dialogue—arguably another form of silencing—possibly indexed apathy, distance, and an unwillingness to engage deeply in a hot topic. Quite potentially, since the overarching goal was for participants to dialogue, not debate, students actively *avoided* any forms of participation that might incite their anger, and quite possibly, the embarrassment of getting kicked out of Frontiers. Additionally, many participants appeared to have little or no prior interaction and experience with affirmative action; subsequently, this group of participants scarcely positioned the equal opportunity policy as a hot topic.

In the following excerpt, I offer another example of how modes of silencing occurred at Frontiers. Here, the postsecondary educators asked students to disentangle race from ethnicity and to help spark the discussion, Logan offered her interpretation of ethnicity.

I have the experience of ethnicity also including, uhm, a religious component. This is maybe, most, sort of known, uhm, with, uh, Judaism. There are people who identify as Jewish, not just because of they're following a religion but because that's an ethnic background. I sort of generally feel the same way about being [redacted religious affiliation], there's a sort of, an ethnically, defining ethnicity in terms of nationality may come a bit from all over the place but they

have sort of a certain pathway through which they diasporated [sic] across the world, and, uhm, sort of, a set of a culture they share in a lot of ways. I do think ethnicity is a really complex, uhm, identity, to to sort of and to sort of tag it as one thing is incomplete to be sure. I . . . I've heard that sort of broken out further into phenotype. Any of you guys have genetics background? Phenotype is the physical expression of what your genes and your DNA expose you to, and so, but what's complex about that one, is, I wanted to ask you guys about phenotype in terms of . . . social constructs of, uhm, and maybe the phenotypes that are, for one reason or another, associated with particular developmental disabilities. That's the thing that I'm working with right now and there is something where particular face types that get associated. And, so, yeah, again, what we consider visible identity uhhh is not so simple as that in a lot of cases. So please feel free to react to that one, and I also wanted to ask you guys about, uhm, relationship identities, for instance, is being a parent a social identity? [Some students looked down at the floor, and others looked at each other. Nobody answered the questions.] How about being in a relationship with them? [More silence as people stared at each other or the wall or the facilitator.] Single or married or divorce. There are a lot of social scripts around that that are different in different areas. Those-those are ones that I wanted to highlight maybe in there somewhere or associated with some of those, but there are so many social identities, but again, there are particular is that have more of a social structure around them. (February 1, 2012 Content Log)

In describing her interpretation of ethnicity, Logan divulged a bit of her background and interests, such as her religious identity and her work with people labeled with developmental disabilities. As a participant-observer in the Frontiers dialogue, I valued how both postsecondary educators shared stories about their personal experiences. In fact, the willingness of both Logan and Blomkvist to talk about themselves enabled me to feel more comfortable in divulging my own stories. However, the sheer volume of questions and the desultory nature of her inquiries within this excerpt—from DNA to physical attributes to parents to relationship identities—possibly produced silence if participants did not know what question to address and felt confused about what type of response she hoped to solicit.

To be fair, silence did not always inhabit the Frontiers dialogues. In fact, Blomkvist and Logan facilitated group discussions in ways that encouraged contributions

from all participants, particularly through icebreakers. The general format of icebreakers commenced with one person who volunteered to speak first, followed by a person seated next to him/her who spoke afterwards. Student participants generally shared their stories based upon their seating arrangements, and people made very little commentary in between each individual contribution.

During the penultimate seminar, for example, Blomkvist asked people to think of a situation in which they felt uncomfortable or surprised about one of their identities (February 25, 2012 Content Log). Benally, a senior who identified as Native American, lamented how people often assumed he attended Garland as a recipient of race-based scholarships. After a beat of silence, his peer sitting next to him, a White woman named Carissa, talked about how people dashed her dreams of becoming a firefighter because she was a small woman. People only wanted “strong” firefighters, as if to imply that all small women were weak. I talked about commuting to Boulder from Fort Collins with a group of White men who were engineers. As the only female in the vanpool, I was surprised that my identity as a woman became more salient than my identity as a person of color. Two chairs down from me sat Mario, a student who graduated from a high school that enrolled mostly White, wealthy individuals. In his AP history class, the teacher brought up the topic of illegal immigration. As the only person of color and the only Latino in the classroom, the teachers and classmates asked Mario pointed questions about illegal immigration, assuming he would know. More stories emerged, including Bryan (White male) who attended a babysitting course and felt “creepy” as the only man in the class and Lauren (half-Asian, half-White woman) who traveled to Kentucky with her boyfriend. When they dined at a restaurant, the waiter asked where the couple was

from and responded with surprise that somebody who looked like Lauren could be from Colorado. After everybody had the opportunity to share their experiences during the icebreaker, Blomkvist graciously thanked students for sharing their stories. Logan asked students what themes they noticed from this activity, participants all agreed that the icebreaker made *context* salient because feeling discomfort or shock about identity is often related to being the minority in a group.

In addition to icebreakers, each Frontiers dialogue ended with a closing activity designed to encourage all participants to speak. Similar to the icebreakers, these closing activities involved questions from the facilitators that prompted student participants to reflect on dialogues, discuss their reactions, set intentions for the next dialogue, and offer suggestions for what they hoped to see in the future. From these closing activities over the duration of the dialogue, students felt “strangely comfortable” despite just meeting each other on the first day (January 25, 2012 Content Log), hoped to “hear more personal experiences from the participants” (February 8, 2012 Content Log), and wished that Frontiers could “run longer than 5 weeks” (February 22, 2014 Content Log). The structure of icebreakers and closing activities provided students with the formal space to broadcast their voices and legitimize their perspectives, a feature of Frontiers that enabled us to hear from *all participants* at the beginning and end of the dialogues.

In summary, rules and division of labor at GU were informed by the contract that student participants signed, the presence of *Open-Ended Questions* (10%), the predominance of expansions and paraphrases of students’ responses (37%), and the frequency that Blomkvist and Logan solicited student input (21%). These types of verbal



talk suggest that, for the most part, power and knowledge were co-constructed between educators and students.

Despite the co-construction of power and knowledge in *Frontiers*, however, a contradiction existed between the goal of “creating shared understanding,” and rules from the contract may have resulted in superficial responses instead of deeper, shared understandings. As mentioned previously, disregarding contract rules could negatively impact some students participating in *Frontiers* for course credit. The need to follow ground rules, then, may have limited opportunities for students to go deeper into conversations. With such emphasis placed on having mutual understanding and a good dialogue, abiding by the contract could potentially become a proxy for being politically correct, playing nice, or responding in socially acceptable and desirable ways (Paulhus, 2002). With the potential risk of being removed from the *Frontiers* dialogue or disrupting the seminar norms, participants may have chosen to take the path of least resistance by remaining silent or agreeing with others.

As discussed previously in this chapter, the contract for participation outlined explicit rules, including one that specifically discussed safety. More specifically, this rule articulated the following: “in the interest of maintaining **safe** and productive dialogue groups, I agree that facilitator(s) may ask me to take a sitout, timeout, or group departure” [emphasis added]. The following excerpt from Leonardo and Porter (2004) eloquently addresses the issue of safety in dialogues intended to foster productive conversations about diversity:

One of the main premises of safe-space discourse is that it provides a format for people of color and whites to come together and discuss issues of race in a matter that is not dangerous as well as inclusive. Thus, the conventional guidelines used to establish a safe space - such as being mindful of how and when one is speaking,

confidentiality, challenge by choice, and speaking from experience - are used to create an environment where fundamental issues can be broached and no one will be offended. Taken unproblematically, this trend is reasonable. However, the ironic twist is that many individuals from marginalized groups become both offended and agitated when engaging in apparently safe spaces. (p. 147)

According to Leonardo and Porter (2010), the notion of safety within a dialogue is a contradiction in and of itself. When people of color participate in a dialogue regarding issues of diversity and race, they put themselves at risk for “being conceived of as illogical and irrational” (Leonardo & Porter, 2010, p. 140). When White people participate in a dialogue centered on issues of diversity and race, they put themselves at risk for being called racist, experiencing guilt, feeling “confronted with a different reality,” and finding ways to “resist against something that differs” from their worldviews (Matias, 2012, p. 20). Though Frontiers seminars and similar types of dialogues may attempt to create some semblance of safety (with perhaps the attainment of physical safety), participating in educational spaces that ask students to consider new perspectives, share stories about themselves, and unfold themselves into vulnerability is inherently unsafe. Behaviors that constitute unsafe dialogue—arguments, debates, physical threats, sarcasm, eye rolls, and elevated voices—*never* occurred in the GU seminar. Arguably, the desire of participants to maintain safety, avoid vulnerability, and evade removal from Frontiers contributed to the weight of this silence.

Quite possibly, my presence may have also jeopardized the notion of a safe environment. Despite my attempts to be a legitimate participant of the Frontiers dialogue—contributing to the conversation, divulging personal stories, and sharing authentic emotional reactions—some students still viewed me as a researcher, not a peer. The following excerpt highlights this hunch:

**Blomkvist:** I want to just hear some discussion. What do you guys think about this? I don't want to, like, structure this too much, because, this is, like, a dialogue. And I want you guys to say what is on your mind. So, what does this discussion bring up for you?

**Me:** Uhm, for me, it sort of brings up what, like, identity I construct for myself versus what identity people are imposing on me. Sort of the tensions and contradictions that might come about from the assumptions that people make about me. How do I identify versus how do other people identify me. . . ?

**Blomkvist:** Definitely, that's sort of how you see yourself versus how other people see you.

**Bryan:** You know, I think about that a lot. How people see other people. Because, like, you know, I see you [Gaze turned directly to me] as a researcher.

**Me:** Oh, no! I'm sorry. [Laughter.]

**Bryan:** But that's all right. I don't know that much about you. You know, and, so, for me, it's a lot about how other people see you. [Turned to the whole group.] Because I don't, I don't know that much about her. That's just basically all I know about her at this point. So that's all I have to really worry about at this point. That's how I think about it. How do other people see me. (February 1, 2011 Content Log)

In this conversation about identity, Bryan explicitly called me out as a researcher.

In scratch notes I wrote after that seminar, I documented feeling disappointed and bewildered that people still viewed me as researcher. After all, I dressed casually in jeans and spoke very little about graduate school; in fact, I talked more about my experiences in triathlons and as the daughter of a military soldier who traveled the world. Despite engaging in normative *Frontiers* behaviors, however, I was still identified as an outsider. Although I saw myself as a participant, some people likely positioned me as an interloper. From this one interaction, I could not help but wonder whether *Frontiers* conversations stayed superficial because participants wanted to present their best selves for documentation. After all, my video camera recorded every word and action for me to later watch, rewatch, dissect, and analyze. Interestingly, I felt more integrated at the UMS seminar—in a room filled with first-year students—than I did at the GU seminar. One possible reason for this is the limited amount of seminar time at Garland University.

The intended *design* of the dialogues (based upon research and theory) versus the actual *practice* of the dialogue unveiled a large tension with regard to time. According to the research undergirding the practice of intergroup dialogues, extended and sustained contact among participants is crucial. However, *Frontiers* ran for only 10 hours a week for 5 weeks, a fraction of the time in comparison to other universities with similar programs. Postsecondary educators associated with *Frontiers*, as well as students, have acknowledged this practice. On the first day of the dialogue, for example, Michelle voiced her concerns for the constrained time and wondered whether 5 weeks was enough time to move beyond the superficial to the deeper content. The co-facilitators also recognized that the limited time prevented students from moving to the heart of the program, which is to take action once recognizing oppressive practices. In fact, throughout our 5 weeks together, both postsecondary educators and participants talked about the constraints of time on 13 separate occasions.

To better understand the notion of time, I relistened and rewatched all of the video records from GU. During this process, I documented the number of minutes that postsecondary educators spoke, and then calculated the percentage of time they talked in each seminar. As shown in Figure 6, the GU postsecondary educators averaged talking a little over 50% in each seminar, with the exception of the “Day 4: Hot Topic (Practice Dialogue)” session.

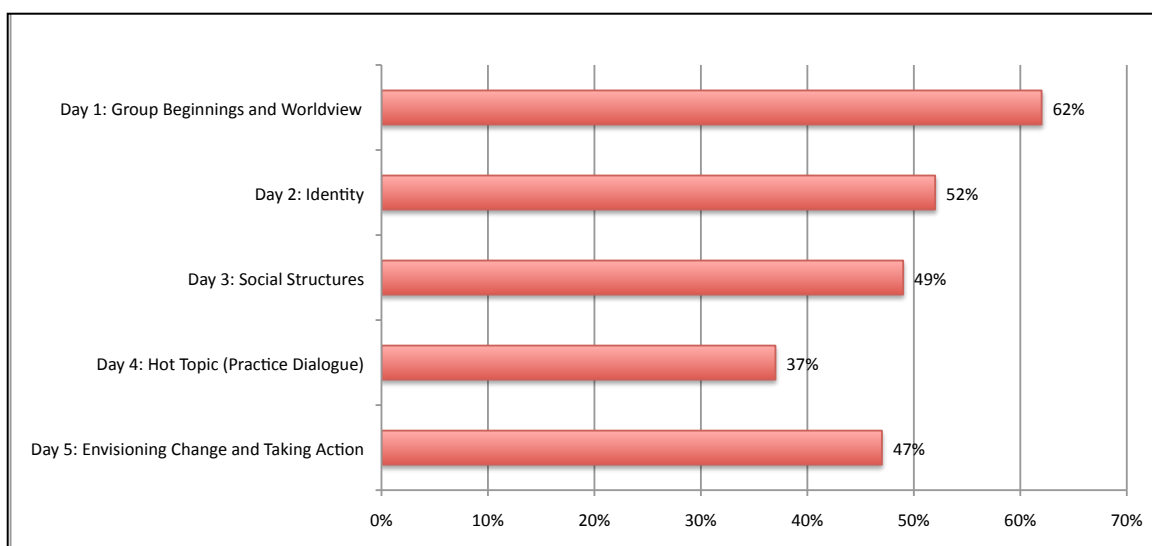


Figure 6. Percentage of seminar time occupied by GU postsecondary educator talk.<sup>8</sup>

While this appears to index an equitable distribution of talk time between educators and students—especially in comparison to the UMS seminar—when computed within the context of a dialogue that spanned 10 hours, then *Frontiers* participants had approximately 5 hours to talk. During the interview with Coenen (Director of *Frontiers Dialogue*), I learned that the average national contact time in Intergroup Dialogues was 25 hours (see Chapter V). Even if educators in other dialogues talked 50% of the time (approximately 12.5 hours of talk time) according to the average national contact time, this means that participants in other settings have approximately 7.5 more hours of talk time than *Frontiers of Dialogues* students.

To be clear, by discussing the tensions identified in each activity system, I do not seek to condemn what may appear to be blunders or mistakes made by the postsecondary educators in this study. I echo the sentiments expressed by Mica Pollock (2004) when she discussed race-based dilemmas: any opportunities to strengthen pedagogical interventions

<sup>8</sup> I did not begin recording the dialogue until *after* I collected consent forms. Subsequently, the percentage of postsecondary educator talk may be slightly over-inflated on the first day since I could not capture the initial icebreaker or my talk about the informed consent process.

are seen *not* as dilemmas that belong solely to the facilitators in this study, but actually belong to us all as educators. If opportunities for improvement manifest in programs where postsecondary educators explicitly address issues of diversity and race, what potential limitations emerge in collegiate settings where educators curtail (intentionally or otherwise) dialogues about diversity and race? Subsequently, research findings from this study can potentially fortify programs even if they are imbued with well-meaning intentions.

The next section focuses on the affordances of each seminar. In these contexts, I conceive of affordances as facile entry points for students to enter dialogues and engage with ideas about diversity and race. In each seminar that I observed, numerous affordances emerged from the constellation of rules, division of labor, subject, object, community, and mediating artifacts and activities of activity systems of both seminars.

### **Affordances at the University of Morrill State**

Seeing pop culture through fresh eyes at the University of Morrill State seminar can be described as a “culture shock assignment” or an “educultural project” (Lea, 2010). These artifacts take what is so *familiar* to students—such as products consumed, movies watched, and foods consumed—and render it *unfamiliar*. Harris identified meanings and messages of different forms of mass media and questioned what purposes they served. As expressed in the syllabus, he used this practice to encourage student participants to critically question the world around them and to deeply analyze the messages produced by mass media and consumed by Americans. The affordance in “educultural projects” is that students are inherently interested in the artifacts of their everyday lives, so

positioning pop culture as the center of an academic experience organically creates an access point for students to engage with issues of diversity and race.

Harris was the quintessential “edutainer”: an educator and entertainer. Numerous times throughout my scratch notes and content logs, I expressed admiration for his ability to build rapport with students, tell compelling stories that captured audience attention, and make people laugh wholeheartedly. Central to this “edutainer” persona was the passion Harris exuded for students and education. Such orientations were palpable in the following passage, when Harris explained why he made high demands of students:

**Harris:** How many people are shy about talking in class? [Several students raised their hands.] This is my suggestion to you. *Get over it.* I hate to be so hard, but you have to get over it. Communication skills are so important for employment, and you have to be able to develop your critical thinking skills, so how can you become a leader on campus? Everybody knows there are 10 STAR Clusters, but *this* [pointed around the room] is the *leadership* cluster. Take a look at the peer mentors, service mentors, and government leaders at [UMS]. A high percentage of those leaders came from this cluster because that’s what I emphasize. You need to take leadership roles in campus, and you need to look at opportunities so you can exert leadership role and change the culture of [UMS].

**Belinda:** I appreciate you. *So much.* [She gazed at Harris with wide, brown eyes and a big smile.] (OC: This is heartwarming. Rarely have I seen students, especially first-year students, express so much admiration and appreciation for their professors. There is something about Harris that makes students—even me as a graduate student—want to meet his expectations and work hard for him.)

**Harris:** I am a hard-ass, as you will find out. But you gotta ask for help. I’m always here to help because I want you to succeed and want you to be challenged. If you’re not challenged, you should ask for a reimbursement from the registrar’s office. Every class should teach you something new. If you’re just sliding by and getting an A, what are you doing? It’s just a GPA booster, and we shouldn’t have that in college. If you do, you need to ask for a refund. You should be working hard. (September 13, 2011 Content Log)

Several themes emerged from this passage not only characterizing what happened within this moment specifically, but within the seminar generally. As a result of Harris setting high standards for participants, over the years his STAR cluster developed a reputation for cultivating and producing UMS leaders. (In fact, this was one of the

reasons why STAR administrators suggested using this seminar as a case study in my research.) Such high expectations and hopes for student success compelled participants, including myself, to seek his approval. This was evident when Harris asked *Known Answer Question* sequences to solicit accurate answers, students clamored to give him the right answer, and participants routinely celebrated correct answers with high-fives, fist pumps, or murmurs of “Yesssss!”

Harris genuinely cared for his students. As written in the syllabus, he required students to make an appointment, outside of class, to discuss “areas as academic concerns, personal goals, course assignments, and so forth.” Additionally, Harris repeatedly encouraged students to ask for help—“you gotta ask for help”—from him, peer mentors, professors, staff members, and even from me. As the director of an advising office within Academic Affairs, STAR constituted a small part of his workload. However, no matter how cramped and busy his schedule became, Harris prioritized meetings with STAR participants. In fact, if any STAR students and alumni mentioned their affiliation with the “Culture and Communication” seminar to his administrative assistant, she immediately added STAR students to his calendar in the first available opening, or she rearranged his schedule so STAR students met with Harris sooner rather than later. Such willingness to make himself available and be responsive to the needs of students, I argue, manifested his authentic care for students.

The language that Harris used was often oriented toward the future in that he invited students to see themselves as critical thinkers, leaders, and scholars. He helped students imagine their lives beyond their current status as first-year students, as *leaders* who will create positive change in their local and global communities. As proof of the



endless possibilities for current students, Harris frequently spoke about STAR alumni, who were once freshmen in his seminar, now on their way to pursuing inspirational trajectories, including law school, research, and teaching. During the November 10, 2011 seminar, Harris asked STAR alumni to chat with current first-year students about any tips, strategies, and advice for successfully maneuvering through collegiate life. The fact that five STAR alumni, anchored to schedules populated with heavy junior/senior course loads, extra-curricular activities, and employment, took time out of their busy calendars to help students and visit with Harris, spoke volumes to me about his ability to mentor students and sustain meaningful relationships.

Helping students grow holistically was another affordance of the UMS seminar. The “Communication and Culture” course was embedded within a larger structure of student support services called STAR. STAR was designed and organized to allow for multiple entry points for college students to engage with the university, whether that occurred directly within the classroom, with other student participants in the residence halls, or in other extracurricular activities. Students were immersed within a network of programs where they gained exposure to not only each other, but to a cluster of courses intentionally connected to one another, as well as diverse resources intended to support their academic, emotional, and professional development. Additionally, students routinely interacted with professors in multiple settings, inside and outside the classroom. Of import, STAR postsecondary educators frequently crossed boundaries from formal classroom settings to other domains of student life, including the residence halls, cafeterias, restaurants, community sites (e.g., parks, hiking trails, recreation center, restaurants) and sometimes even the homes of postsecondary educators (e.g., Harris

invited students to his home for an annual barbeque). In this way, STAR students had the opportunity to see instructors not just as professors of their seminars, but as multifaceted people with broad interests and multiple roles.

### **Affordances at Garland University**

At Garland University, affordances abounded as well. With Logan identifying as a White woman and Blomkvist identifying as a male person of color, student participants had the opportunity to relate to either co-facilitator in terms of race or gender. Additionally, over 50% of utterances from Logan and Blomkvist were based in expanding upon student feedback, soliciting input, and paraphrasing student contributions, suggesting that the facilitators were very mindful of guiding conversations to have equitable distribution of talk time. They purposefully asked to hear from participants who had not yet spoken. Such consciousness about *whose* voice remained silent suggested an egalitarian division of labor such that the postsecondary educators never positioned one person as the most expert or most legitimate speaker.

To complement lectures, Frontiers facilitators often brought props to the dialogues that served as metaphors for intangible ideas. After a lecture about identities, for example, Blomkvist and Logan used hula-hoops to represent social identities. Logan placed a hula-hoop on to Blomkvist as she articulated her assumptions of Blomkvist's race/ethnicity, gender, nationality, religion, ableness, occupation, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic background. Afterwards, Blomkvist proceeded to take each hula-hoop off himself and express how he identified for each social identity. The educators then facilitated a discussion about reactions students experienced when others *assumed* or *imposed* identities upon us when we had already constructed our own identities.

**Bethy:** There were things, that, could be offensive, or if you're wrong, maybe to that person. But then I kept thinking about how I probably give people those names and labels in my head without really considering it.

**Logan:** So that sort of visual, and maybe slightly emotional difference, between, I-I loved Rainn's words for these. Avowed, so what he says that he is identity-wise, and then attributed, or [Blomkvist: Ascribed], ascribed—thank you! There we go. And so the difference between that. And, yeah! It was done very explicitly, but sort of considering how that is done to us and we do it to others, sort of on a day-to-day basis, yeah, is definitely interesting.

In this excerpt, both Bethy and Logan admitted to ascribing identities on other people. Witnessing the hula-hoop labeling of Blomkvist helped to make explicit processes that were not only normally implicit, but also could be perceived as “wrong” and “offensive,” which is why such a process typically occurs in one's mind (and is not always expressed verbally). In a latter portion of this same discussion, Logan confessed to feeling discomfort as she made assumptions about Blomkvist's identities.

**Logan:** I was standing up there, and I, I'm not ashamed to admit that there were certainly moments like, wow, I hope this settles okay. [Chuckles] Uhm, and, and knowing that we were in a safe space doing this and doing this for discussion. But, yeah, I mean, uncomfortable, and uhhh, definitely affected by how well, uhm, and how uncomfortable we were with interacting in that way.

**Kal:** Uhhh, yeah, I was just going to say that, that the visual thing, like, it was just, it was just good to see, like visually, like, placing those hula hoops on you and kind of like constructing you, you know, like, yeah, it was basically powerful.

**Blomkvist:** What else did this make you guys think about? [Silence]. How'd you feel while she put those hula hoops on me?

**Lauren:** A little uncomfortable.

**Blomkvist:** Why?

**Lauren:** Just 'cuz. I guess, I was thinking, uhmmm, like feeling pretty strong. Like if somebody was saying that was not right, that it would be just kind of uncomfortable, I guess.

**Logan:** Sure. Absolutely. Uhm, there's, there's a quality in American culture in general that's very, I mean, we are very individually-oriented, and we reserve the right, uhm, we reserve the right to describe ourselves and personally identify.

Lauren echoed the discomfort that Logan expressed. Apparently, the graphic layering of hula-hoops gave visible weight to not only how people perpetually constructed identities of themselves and others, but now uneasy this process felt. Kal's

comments suggested that the kinesthetic movements of layering and removing hula hoops helped participants see the inherent tension between the normative, yet reductive, practice of labeling (February 1, 2012 Content Log).

Physical space served as a metaphor for privilege and marginalization during one exercise where Blomkvist asked everybody to line up. He read a series of statements and asked people to step forward if the statement applied to them. Some of the statements he read included:

If you can read or write, please step forward.  
 If you were ever called names because of race, ethnicity, gender, class or sexual orientation, please step forward.  
 If the majority of your classmates have always resembled you in terms of race, ethnicity, class, or sexual orientation, please step forward.  
 If your ancestors did not come to this country by choice, please step forward.

In between each statement, he said, "Step forward, notice who's with you, notice who's not, notice your feelings, and then step back." Depending upon the statement, the space people occupied could be a metaphor for a point of privilege or a point of marginalization. Afterwards, Logan and Blomkvist facilitated a dialogue where students admitted to attaining heightened understanding of privilege through their discomfort, as evident in the following excerpt where Blomkvist solicited participants to talk about "how this activity made them feel":

**Me:** I was just going to say, I felt really uncomfortable, like, as I began to sort of have a tally in my head of all the privileges that, that I have. And, I was just, like, wow, and I felt extremely uncomfortable in realizing, damn, I have a lot of privileges.

**Blomkvist:** Why did that make you feel uncomfortable?

**Me:** Uhm, because I like to believe in equality and in issues of equity, and so to know that by virtue of my location, I am automatically getting certain benefits. That's uncomfortable to me.

**Blomkvist:** Other people? What did this activity make you think of?

**Logan:** Along the same lines as Christina, uhm, I think I have trouble acknowledging the impact that privilege has played in my life. Because I've

grown up in a society that has this mantra that if you pull yourself up by your bootstraps, you deserve the things you work for. And I-I feel like I do put in a lot of effort into my life, but you have to sort of step back and acknowledge that, great, you put in the work, but you also got some stuff that other people don't just by virtue of being you or living in a good area or having a good family and, yeah, like, a good social group that you didn't have control over or anything.

**Kal:** Like it's hard to acknowledge that you have a lot of things you don't deserve. Definitely unnerving to think about.

**Blomkvist:** That is a huge part of why privilege makes us uncomfortable. Because we live in a society, especially here in America, that says that, you know, if you work hard that you earn everything that you have.

In this discussion, several participants, including the postsecondary educators, admitted to experiencing feelings that were “extremely uncomfortable” and “unnerving.” In fact, every single participant found at least one statement about privilege and one statement about oppression that resonated with their experiences or identities. At the conclusion of this activity, the co-facilitators emphasized the effortless process of identifying as victims, and simultaneously, the uncomfortable process of recognizing privilege. In this way, Blomkvist and Logan expressed their belief that everybody, regardless of their backgrounds and identities, possessed enough privilege, and subsequently, enough power, to advocate for positive change (February 8, 2012 Content Log). But in order for students to even *desire* to participate in the struggle against unequal social conditions, they must first experience *emotions* of dissonance. In fact, intergroup dialogue scholars argue the following:

Emotions as part of the intergroup dialogue experience also are an important part of becoming action-oriented. Attending to and learning from emotions is not always accepted as a legitimate concern in academic courses, but in intergroup dialogue courses emotions and affective learning complement cognitive learning. . . . Facilitators play a crucial role in normalizing expression of emotions by encouraging students to bring both their own thoughts and feelings to the dialogue as well as listen to the thoughts and feelings of others (Gurin-Sands et al., 2012, p. 75).

As the previous examples illustrate, Frontiers educators used palpable objects to represent

abstract ideas. Take, for example, how hula-hoops symbolized multiple layers of identities, physical space served as a metaphor for privilege or marginalization, and a classroom-turned-art gallery provided a platform for students to interact with the facts and fictions of affirmative action. The routine of *repurposing* everyday items and spaces functioned in ways diverging from their original roles, and though this practice may appear almost too prosaic to document, I argue that it opened access points for participants to engage with issues of diversity and race by invoking *emotion*.

The last affordance I discuss from the Frontiers of Dialogue highlights the experiences of Lauren, a first-year student who expressed how much she learned and changed as a result of participating in the dialogue. Lauren admitted to always feeling like she had an open worldview, but after 5 weeks in the Frontiers Dialogues, she believed she may have possibly been in denial about being open-minded. Within a few short weeks, friends and family members noticed shifts in Lauren, especially when people made derogatory jokes, and she called them out on the inappropriate nature of the joke. Additionally, although co-facilitators did not prompt students to talk about specific changes they would make as relates to race and ethnicity, Lauren shared that she wanted to grow in awareness about her Asian background. She wanted to “join the Asian Club and acknowledge more of that identity because I have not always acknowledged that” (February 22, 2012 Content Log). Over the course of the seminar, Lauren recognized changes she already made or intended to make, which included the following: prevent friends and family members from telling offensive jokes in her presence, boycott the purchase of products that may send negative connotations about her, and join the Asian Club. Although Lauren’s transformation was not generalizable across the entire seminar,

arguably, her experiences exemplify the kinds of shifts that are possible when postsecondary educators organize educational environments mindfully.

### **Shared Artifacts Across Both Sites**

Although educators at both UMS and GU applied different tools to mediate student understanding of diversity and race, several similarities emerged. Harris, Logan, and Blomkvist utilized traditional classroom artifacts, such as whiteboards or chalkboards, worksheets, texts, or different mediums for projecting images (PowerPoint presentations, videos, computers), to present a variety of topics.

At both institutions, personal stories were rich tools that impelled discussions about race, especially when students connected to each other through their own stories. These lived experiences helped shed light on the academic matter in more real ways. At UMS, Harris frequently asked students to share personal stories about their own journeys. For example, Marina, a first-year student who identified as Black and Native American, shared stories about the differential treatment she received from high school educators.

Marina said that her high school was, “more focused on the White kids than the Black kids. I once asked the counselors about Black scholarships. The counselor pointed out a little bulletin board that I had never ever noticed, but the bulletin board for other students was bigger and had more resources. I was also upset about not being told about the PSATs and you had to check off a box to get a Black scholarship. By the time I found out about it, it was too late even though I qualified for that scholarship.” Later on during that same class period, Marina said, “The counselors will encourage Black students to take easier classes. Since I was in the Gifted and Talented group, people started directing me to other classes and some of the counselors thought I was really smart. So I was in Honors Physics my junior year, but then another counselor told me to be in Astronomy my senior year. A different counselor could not understand why I was in Astronomy, and I finally realized it was because that other counselor assumed I could not do Honors Physics.” (November 15, 2011 Content Log)

This personal story highlights the complex relationship between race and educational opportunity by aligning statistics of low college-going rates among African

American populations (as discussed in a history lesson taught by Harris) and the practices that limit access to postsecondary education (as told by Marina from her own personal experiences with counselors). Harris invited personal stories frequently, and this was such a common practice that one student, Willow, officially “came out” to the class during a group presentation at the end of the seminar:

Willow took a deep breath and announced that she was going to share her coming-out story. She talked about her infatuation with an office TA. She knew she liked other girls and even conducted a Google search, “How do you know you’re gay?” She tried to shove those “gay” feelings aside because being raised in a Christian home, she learned that being “gay” was bad and wrong. Then she decided to come out as “bisexual” first because that seemed more welcoming. When she eventually confessed to “feelings of being gay” to her parents, they were devastated and asked her to go to counseling. She went, but was worried that it gave her parents “false hope.” At this point, Willow’s parents still do not really accept her sexual orientation, but “they love me anyways.” At the end of Willow’s story, the entire class clapped their hands, and Harris said, “Great job!” (December 6, 2011 Content Log)

Similarly, at Garland University, the co-facilitators frequently encouraged student participants to share personal stories. In one of the dialogues, for example, Benally spoke at length about his perspective on being Native American. He said:

For me, being Native American, government, religion, laws, policies, jokes, just all these things have never really been about my people, in some sense, you know. You never hear about stuff [about us] . . . they just forget about us. Like, it’s, the largest form of racism is to be forgotten. And, you know, sometimes people come up to me and say, “I’ve never met a Native American before!” and it’s like, “Thanks.” I can tell them that I grew up on a reservation, and they’re like, “Very cool!” No, it wasn’t. You don’t understand, you know, being in a constant state of oppression is not something fun.

Immediately after this, Blomkvist took up this personal story and responded by affirming and paraphrasing Benally’s story:

The worst kind of oppression is being forgotten. That’s what we mean by marginalizing. Where it is this sort of thing, just like, and over there. But you don’t even name what’s over there. Native Americans are just marked as “other”



and marginalization is, you know, part of the systemic relationship these different identities get put into by all of these interactions and these different things.  
(February 8, 2012 Content Log)

In this moment, we see how Benally's personal experience became an artifact to mediate people's understanding about race and racism. This happened in a couple of ways: first, through Benally's willingness to share his own perspective, he helped to "open new windows into the reality of those at the margins of society" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 36); and second, when Blomkvist took up Benally's comments, he further legitimized his perspective by revoicing ideas of oppression and being forgotten. In this way, Benally's story, or his counter-story, "is a tool for exposing, analyzing, and challenging the majoritarian stories of racial privilege. Counter-stories can shatter complacency, challenge the dominant discourse on race, and further the struggle for racial reform" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 32).

The following example, though not necessarily a counter-story per se, exemplified another moment when a personal story helped foster mutual understanding at Garland University. After Blomkvist and Logan delivered a lecture about the definition and meaning of privilege, Michelle (White woman in the military) pushed back on the notion of privilege. She argued that privilege was earned from hard work. After all, Michelle explained, you can choose where you live, where you work, and how you go about your life. Erin, a younger White woman, jumped in and talked about how her recent medical diagnosis—a condition she did not choose and could not control—helped her see how speaking normally and having good health is a privilege. She emphasized the importance of considering different contexts before making assumptions about whether privilege is really earned. After learning about (and resisting) privilege in multiple settings over the

years, Michelle viewed privilege differently and thanked Erin profusely for shedding light on the concept in a way she had not considered before (February 8, 2012 Content Log). In these examples, postsecondary educators at both universities organized seminars in ways that created space for students to tell stories and craft narratives about themselves. Subsequently, when students served as experts on their lives, they helped their peers encounter and perceive the world in new ways.

With an understanding of how postsecondary educators organized learning and how participants co-constructed phenomena in each seminar, I now turn to analyses of the CoBRAS to examine how students related to issues of race.

### **Racial Attitudes**

I analyzed Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS) responses to address my last research question: *How do racial attitudes of student participants shift from the beginning to the end of the seminars?* By examining how respondents completed pre- and post-tests of CoBRAS, I measured how students changed in their racial attitudes, from the onset to the conclusion of their respective seminars.

The 20-item CoBRAS instrument examined three constructs that constitute racial attitudes: (a) Unawareness of Racial Privilege, (b) Unawareness of Institutional Discrimination, and (c) Unawareness of Blatant Racial Issues (see Appendix for survey items). Low CoBRAS scores indicate low levels of unawareness regarding racial issues (i.e., high race-consciousness). Because some of the items express a positive orientation toward the underlying construct whereas others express a negative orientation, I reverse-scored the responses on certain items to ensure consistent item directionality. In this way,

low scores across all items indexed high race-consciousness and high scores across all items indexed low race-consciousness.

A total of 43 students completed the pre- and post-surveys: 19 at Garland University and 24 at the University of Morrill State (see Table 8). At each university, women constituted nearly two-thirds of the seminar participants. While there was a balance between people of color and Whites at GU, over 80% of UMS participants were students of color.

Table 8

*Demographic Backgrounds of Respondents*

Demographics	Garland University ( <i>n</i> = 19)	University of Morrill State ( <i>n</i> = 24)
Gender		
Female	58% ( <i>n</i> = 11)	61% ( <i>n</i> = 15)
Male	42% ( <i>n</i> = 8)	39% ( <i>n</i> = 9)
Race		
People of color	53% ( <i>n</i> = 9)	83% ( <i>n</i> = 19)
White	47% ( <i>n</i> = 10)	17% ( <i>n</i> = 5)
TOTAL ( <i>N</i> = 43)	100%	100%

As mentioned before, the small number of respondents limited the statistical power of my data. Therefore, I used descriptive statistical data to address my research inquiry and interpreted these results with the recognition that any generalization of these data is limited by the small cell sizes. Tables 9, 10, and 11 summarize *differences* in average pre- and post-test scores by comparing three factors: (a) *Institution* - Garland University (GU) versus University of Morrill State (UMS), (b) *Gender* - All females (GU and UMS combined) versus all males (GU and UMS combined), and (c) *Race* - All People of color (GU and UMS combined) versus All Whites (GU and UMS combined). Each table focuses on one of these three constructs.

Table 9

*Unawareness of Institutional Discrimination: Average Differences in Pre- and Post-Survey Scores Among the Three Factors*

Items	Institution		Gender		Race	
	GU	UMS	Women	Men	People of color	Whites
(c) It is important that people begin to think of themselves as American and not African American, Mexican American, or Italian American.	-0.79	-0.25	-0.35	-0.71	-0.61	-0.27
(d) Due to racial discrimination, programs such as affirmative action are necessary to help create equality.	-0.11	0.67	0.04	0.76	0.32	0.33
(i) White people in the US are discriminated against because of the color of their skin.	-0.32	-0.46	-0.50	-0.24	-0.50	-0.20
(m) Immigrants should try to fit into the culture and adopt the values of the US.	-0.16	-0.38	-0.42	-0.06	-0.39	-0.07
(n) English should be the only official language in the US.	-0.32	-0.04	-0.15	-0.18	-0.25	0.00
(p) Social policies, such as affirmative action, discriminate unfairly against White people.	-0.53	-0.13	-0.50	0.00	-0.29	-0.33
(r) Racial and ethnic minorities in the US have certain advantages because of the color of their skin.	0.05	-0.29	-0.15	-0.12	-0.18	-0.07

For the construct of Unawareness of Institutional Discrimination, students generally scored lower on the post-survey at the end of the seminar, implying a higher awareness of issues of race and racism. However, post-survey scores on item D, which

asked respondents to rate their level of agreement with the statement that affirmative action is necessary to help create racial equality, indexed possibly color-blind approaches from respondents. With the exception of one group (the entire GU population combined), all other groups generally appeared to question the need for affirmative action. The most notable jumps toward lower race-consciousness, in this regard, occurred among UMS students (+.67) and all men (+.76). Arguably, the decrease in support for affirmative action among UMS students may be related to how Harris characterized the policy as one of the most “racist” and “discriminatory” laws against White men in the United States. It is curious to note that while many students questioned whether affirmative action was necessary for racial equality (Item D), they did not characterize affirmative action as a discriminatory policy against White people (Item P). Quite possibly, this occurred because both seminars positioned White women as the primary beneficiaries of affirmative action.

Table 10

*Unawareness of Racial Privilege: Average Differences in Pre- and Post-Survey Scores Among the Three Factors*

Items	Institution		Gender		Race	
	GU	UMS	Women	Men	People of color	Whites
(a) Everyone who works hard, no matter what race they are, has an equal chance to become rich.	-0.63	-1.13	-0.54	-1.47	-1.11	-0.53
(b) Race plays a major role in the type of social services (such as type of healthcare or day care) that people receive in the US.	-0.26	-0.54	-0.65	-0.06	-0.57	-0.13
(f) Race is very important in determining who is successful and who is not.	-0.21	-1.17	-0.58	-1.00	-0.75	-0.73
(h) Racial and ethnic minorities do not have the same opportunities as White people in the US.	-0.37	-1.00	-1.19	0.00	-0.75	-0.67
(l) White people in the US have certain advantages because of the color of their skin.	-0.74	-0.71	-1.15	-0.06	-0.79	-0.60
(o) White people are more to blame for racial discrimination in the US than racial and ethnic minorities.	0.00	0.17	0.12	0.06	0.04	0.20
(t) Race plays an important role in who gets sent to prison.	-0.37	-0.88	-0.81	-0.41	-0.75	-0.47

In general, students yielded lower post-survey scores for the Unawareness of Racial Privilege construct at the end of the seminar, which suggests higher race-consciousness or more affirmative racial attitudes (see Table 10). However, there were a

few exceptions. Item O, which asked whether Whites were more to blame for racial discrimination, generally yielded higher post-survey scores (implying higher levels of color-blindness), but this occurred among more groups: UMS students, women, and Whites. The inclination to disagree with Item O, especially among White students, corroborates the fact that nobody wants to be accused of being racist or the cause of racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Pollock, 2004). Additionally, this may reflect a broader understanding that racism is a complex web spun from a wellspring of sources.

Table 11

*Unawareness of Blatant Racial Issues: Average Differences in Pre- and Post-Survey Scores Among the Three Factors*

Items	Institution		Gender		Race	
	GU	UMS	Women	Men	People of color	Whites
(e) Racism is a major problem in the US.	-0.26	-0.25	-0.31	-0.18	-0.39	0.00
(g) Racism may have been a problem in the past, but it is not an important problem today.	-0.47	-0.17	-0.38	-0.18	-0.43	-0.07
(j) Talking about racial issues causes unnecessary tension.	-0.26	-0.29	-0.31	-0.24	-0.29	-0.27
(k) It is important for political leaders to talk about racism to help work through or solve society's problems.	0.00	0.04	-0.15	0.29	-0.07	0.20
(q) It is important for public schools to teach about the history and contributions of racial and ethnic minorities.	-0.58	0.00	-0.15	-0.41	-0.36	-0.07
(s) Racial problems in the US are rare, isolated situations.	-0.58	-0.21	-0.50	-0.18	-0.39	-0.33

In general, for the construct of Unawareness of Blatant Racial Issues, students yielded lower post-survey scores at the end of the seminar, which suggests more positive racial attitudes overall (see Table 11). This was true for all groups except for men and White students with regard to Item K, which stated the following: It is important for political leaders to talk about racism to help work through or solve society's problems. This outcome may suggest that participants want the government to operate through color-blind lenses, an attitude corroborated by students who decreased in their support of affirmative action as a solution for achieving racial equality.

Broadly, these findings suggest that GU and UMS participants increased in awareness and favorable attitudes vis-à-vis all three constructs of Unawareness of Racial Privilege, Unawareness of Institutional Discrimination, and Unawareness of Blatant Racial Issues. However, there were a few exceptions that indicated otherwise. Although findings were not statistically significant, these survey outcomes suggest that, for the most part, each seminar productively mediated the racial attitudes of student participants so they appeared to be more open and engaged with issues of race. Higher levels of color-blindness regarding some items, however, imply the possible need for postsecondary educators to reconsider how they organize student learning with regard to useful tools for challenging racism. I explore this topic in more detail within the next (and final) chapter of the dissertation.

### **Conclusion**

I began this chapter with an overview of each seminar based upon textual data. Afterwards, I identified affordances and contradictions in each activity system, which can be instructive for considering what features to keep and adapt for future seminars.



Finally, I highlighted quantitative changes in racial attitudes at each university through measurements taken from pre- and post-distributions of the CoBRAS.

Based upon these findings, I argue that it is critical to examine the “rules” and “division of labor” of any educational environment, particularly since such practices may compel participants to “acquire the deep-seated rules and patterns of behavior characteristic to the context itself. Thus, students learn the ‘hidden curriculum’ of what it means to be a student: how to please the teachers, how to pass exams, how to belong to groups” and how to behave in educational settings (Engeström, 2001, p. 138). In each seminar, the rules and division of labor constituted some modes of *silencing* students; quite possibly, participants learned the hidden curriculum of silence in deference to the omniscient instructor at the University of Morrill State or to maintain the semblance of a safe environment at Frontiers. Since this study was conducted within the span of a seminar (one semester at UMS, 5 weeks at GU), however, it is beyond my scope to discuss any enduring effects of these pedagogical practices. After all, students may have simply appropriated the hidden curriculum to participate in the seminars.

However, within the scope of this study, I do believe some pedagogical moves uprooted silence, created openings for students to engage with issues of diversity and race and shift affirmatively in their racial attitudes. Saturating the educational environment with multiple tools—objects, ideas, and stories from students’ everyday lives—provided entry points into robust opportunities that would otherwise remain stagnant or unapproachable. Using familiar materials and connecting concepts with everyday life may therefore support students in making connections between their personal experiences, academic content, and systemic phenomena such as discrimination and racism. This

involves appreciating the ways that right/wrong tends to be defined and engaging with the ways in which students interpret their world, rather than treating them as misunderstandings in need of fixing. Arguably, sharing and hearing personal stories from other people co-constructed some of the most powerful moments in each seminar, as evident from Marina at UMS discussing the effects of unequal educational opportunity or from Michelle's appreciation for the notion of privilege as brought up by Erin when she talked about her medical condition.

From a theoretical perspective, this may be attributed to notions of vertical and horizontal forms of expertise (Gutiérrez, 2008). More specifically, vertical expertise delves deeply into domains and disciplinary specific types of knowledge that schools value. On the other hand, horizontal expertise is based upon everyday practices “at home, on the way to school, or crossing geographical and sociocultural borders” (Gutiérrez, 2011, p. 33). Bridging stories about one's experiences (horizontal expertise) to an understanding of the historical contexts that give rise to not just one individual's story, but multiple lives on a systemic level (vertical expertise) is a promising prelude to an even richer pedagogical practice that *merges* and *honors* “not only what students learn in formal learning environments such as schools, but also what they learn while participating in a range of practices outside of school” (Gutiérrez & Larson, 2007, p. 71). Jeff Duncan-Andrade (2008) discussed these ideas eloquently in a chapter about teaching students how to conduct critical analyses of unequal social conditions:

To prepare students to critique those conditions and to struggle against them collectively, educators can link discussions of texts about inequality to students' experiences of inequality. This move raises critical consciousness and can empower students to act collectively to transform these structures. (p. 158)

A key element of this practice means moving beyond the use of horizontal forms of knowledge as a *bridge* to vertical forms of knowledge (which inherently privileges school-based disciplinary learning) toward a syncretic *blending* that privileges both domains (K. Gutiérrez, personal communication, March 9, 2014). In the following chapter, I examine possible implications from this specific idea and other general findings. I seek to promote academic discourse toward designing and fabricating spaces that are sensitive to the potential and resilience of students, remain anchored to equity, and foster entry points into dialogues about controversial topics.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUDING COMMENTARY AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The analyses in this dissertation documented multiple approaches to diversity and race at a freshmen course in a public university (University of Morrill State) and an intergroup dialogue in a private university (Garland University). I considered ways that postsecondary educators not only theorized about issues of diversity and race, but also organized how students learned these concepts within these seminars. My research examined how features of each site potentially nurtured or inhibited how students interacted with ideas of diversity and race. To this end, I asked the following research questions:

1. How do postsecondary educators (administrators, faculty, and volunteers) theorize issues of diversity and race?
- 2a. How do postsecondary educators organize student learning about issues of diversity and race? 2b. What are the affordances and constraints of how postsecondary educators organize student learning?
3. How do racial attitudes of student participants shift from the beginning to the end of the seminars?

To address these questions, I analyzed three sources of data: audio recordings of interviews with postsecondary educators, video recordings of seminars, and student responses to the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS). These mutually reinforcing data points produced a topographical map of each seminar detailing what artifacts postsecondary educators harnessed—racial projects, theories, research, physical, and philosophical tools—to mediate student learning. Further analyses depicted the relationship between how educators organized educational environments and how students related to issues of race. Through this process, I modeled each setting as an

activity system by envisioning how students, postsecondary educators, artifacts, division of labor, rules, goals, and racial attitudes jointly constituted each seminar. Using the CHAT framework, then, I unearthed simultaneous tensions and possibilities for transforming pedagogical practices and creating forays for students to engage with issues of diversity and race within activity systems. I conclude this dissertation with commentary about the practical implications of my findings. Of significance, I highlight tools and ways for postsecondary educators, administrators, and researchers to reorganize activity systems and evoke robust learning practices from contradictions.

As described in Chapter V (Racial Projects of Postsecondary Educators: Color-Muteness and Race-Consciousness in Collegiate Settings), I learned that postsecondary educators used “diversity” in many ways, depending upon context and purpose. For some, diversity became a surrogate to describe students of color, and for others, diversity was a referent for all social identities, including race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic background, spirituality, ability, and first-generation college status. A few interviewees discussed diversity not only in terms of demographic markers, but also interests, skills, and hobbies. As Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) have lamented about multiculturalism, I similarly believe that diversity “attempts to be everything to everyone and consequently becomes nothing for anyone” (p. 62).

Interestingly, all educators whom I interviewed claimed to be race-conscious and placed great importance on race. However, in describing their philosophies about serving and educating students, postsecondary educators sometimes suppressed issues of race by using other types of language such as diversity, inclusive excellence, and all. This practice of stifling issues of race—otherwise known as colormuteness—exemplifies the

types of dilemmas we face daily (Pollock, 2004). In making decisions to address or circumvent issues of race, educators navigate a complicated quagmire. Focusing on issues of race and people of color, for example, may reify deficit-oriented and remedial approaches to “fixing” students. Alternatively, foregrounding race in interventions, programs, and coursework may provide robust support for students to deeply engage in college-going practices. Conversely, colormuteness may represent an astute political move to work around climates imbued with post-racial, anti-affirmative action, and anti-Ethnic Studies sentiments. Given this context, I revisit the question I posed in an earlier chapter: how do scholars and practitioners who wield colormute language make issues of race prominent in light of contexts that diminish its significance?

In her book regarding the dilemmas of race talk, Mica Pollock (2004) offered questions that educators can critically reflect upon and address in the struggle for social justice: “Is racial equality being adequately addressed and achieved by our reforms as stated? When would targeting ‘race groups’ in our reforms help children more? When would racial equality actually be best achieved by reforms designed for ‘all’?” (p. 223). Though these discussion prompts are suggestions for K-12 educators to consider, these important and provocative questions are relevant for postsecondary educators as well. Addressing these inquiries provides a platform for professors and administrators to analyze when, how, and why explicitly discussing issues of race (or not) complements and depreciates educational goals. This type of deliberation and critical reflection can be especially productive among those who work collaboratively within the same program.

Additionally, I recommend that deliberating about these questions occur privately, at least initially, while educators clarify what purposes their interventions serve and what

messages they want to circulate about their programs. According to Mansbridge (1999), “The venues for deliberation fall along a spectrum from the representative assembly . . . to the public assembly producing a binding decision . . . to the ‘public sphere’ . . . to the most informal of venues of everyday talk” (p. 227). Mansbridge argued that discussions occurring behind closed doors, without the strain of public surveillance at every utterance, might yield more meaningful dialogues. This is especially important considering condemnations that higher education institutions are “wasting our money and failing our kids” (Hacker & Dreifus, 2010), thus leading to increased scrutiny for universities to prove their worth. Given this context, I argue that “struggling together through the basic dilemmas of talking racially” are especially critical behind closed doors so that administrators, professors, and staff are better prepared to articulate shared understandings and messages when the time comes to speak in public forums (Pollock, 2004, p. 225).

In Chapter VI (Modes of Silencing in Dialogues: The Closure and Expansion of Entry Points to Diversity and Race), I depicted each seminar as an activity system to uncover what elements of the learning environments potentially stimulate or hinder student learning. Meaningful moments surfaced when postsecondary educators organized the seminars to bridge what students knew from the range of practices outside of school (horizontal knowledge) to disciplinary scholarship privileged within formal learning spaces (vertical knowledge). Of significance, when postsecondary educators harnessed repertoires and tools from everyday life, they created entry points for students to make connections between personal experiences and abstract concepts.

Opportunities for further strengthening seminars transpired when contradictions, or tensions, within activity systems were identified. At the University of Morrill State seminar, for example, contradictions existed between goals to cultivate critical thinkers *versus* questioning practices that primarily sought one right answer. At the Garland University seminar, tensions surfaced between rules mandating that participants maintain a safe space for dialogue *versus* goals to foster mutual understanding. Such contradictions, I argue, resulted in powerful modes of silencing that thwarted opportunities for deeper, richer dialogue. To reiterate from a previous chapter, contradictions and tensions are “sources of change and development” that can “generate disturbances and conflicts, but also innovative attempts to change” within an activity system (Engeström, 2001, p. 137). The incongruities documented in each seminar, then, are illustrative of opportunities to remediate educational practices and further enhance how postsecondary educators meet their goals.

In this vein, I offer suggestions for reorganizing pedagogical approaches and practices with robust student learning in mind. First, educators may benefit from considering what implicit and explicit philosophies they hold about issues of diversity, race, and student success. Postsecondary educators have consciously and subliminally developed “theories about students: why they succeed, why they fail, and what, if anything, they can do to reverse failure” (Bensimon, 2007, p. 446). These notions about course content and the students they serve manifest in how educators organize curricular and extra-curricular programs. Subsequently, critically questioning ideologies about diversity, race, and student success can support educators in (re)designing educational environments to ratchet up potential for students to learn.



Second, educators may seek opportunities to strengthen skills necessary for choreographing productive discussions. Bierema (2010) detailed a toolkit of skills foundational for mediating how participants interact with controversial ideas, including “intervention, facilitation, conflict management, asking tough questions, flexibility, managing group dynamics, knowledge of law, and managing resistance strategies” (p. 322). The ability of educators to adroitly orchestrate difficult conversations creates openings for students to interact more deeply with topics that would normally be inaccessible. Consummate facilitation skills, for example, involve recognizing the types of inquiries that may unintentionally silence participants, preparing structured sequences of questions that address the topic(s) of interest, and acknowledging when to stop talking. Additionally, for some educators, the wherewithal to successfully navigate challenging dialogues involves establishing a shared understanding that learning comes not from a premise of safety, but one textured by risk and humanizing violence. For example, Leonardo and Porter (2010) stated the following:

A pedagogue may begin a course simply by having a meta-dialogue (dialogue about dialogue) about the assumptions of safety so pervasive in the academy when it comes to the topic of race. By redefining classroom space as a place of risk . . . we need to be clear that a place of risk does not promote hostility but growth . . . this apostasy—of creating risk as the antidote to safety—leads to more transformative learning opportunities. (p. 153)

Pollock (2004) similarly discussed the vulnerability inherent in talking about race and racism by offering the following recommendations:

Acknowledge the difficulty we all face in talking about race. Acknowledge explicitly that every speaker will make mistakes in talking about race precisely because racial inequality is a pernicious system. Acknowledge that both speaking and not speaking racially *can* always be wrong [and] to disarm fears of error, try stating directly that the task at hand is to work together through inevitable errors: in our quest to make things better we will fail in countless small ways that we must continually repair. (p. 225)

Although Leonardo and Porter (2010) and Pollock (2004) offered these insights vis-à-vis issues of race and racism, I argue that these principles are relevant when talking and learning about other facets of diversity. Such practices may be foundational for uprooting modes of silencing participants.

Third, integrating mediating artifacts and activities that merge vertical and horizontal forms of knowledge may be a powerful way to engage students. Some examples of this fusion include the following: position students as researchers to critically examine what systemic forms of oppression currently exist on campus and develop a plan to dismantle them (Duncan-Andrade, 2008) and bring administrators, educators, scholars, and students together to negotiate and co-write institutional policies that address racism and discrimination (Gillborn, 2008). Such practices may exemplify *sociocritical literacy*, which is “a pedagogical approach that focuses on how individuals and their communities influence and are influenced by social, political, and cultural discourses and practices in historically specific times and locations” (Gutiérrez, 2008, p. 150). Said differently, students engaging in sociocritical literacies can diagnose and critique “how dominant power relations, practices, and social systems” marginalize people from non-dominant communities (Nuñez, 2014, p. 90). This is possible when postsecondary educators purposefully design environments that coalesce students’ repertoires from multiple spheres of their lives, inside and outside the classroom.

Fourth, reconceptualizing all postsecondary educators (administrators, researchers, and professors) as learners expands the notion of learning beyond stereotypical professional development workshops and conferences. In fact, postsecondary educators can participate in rich learning practices by developing

partnerships with colleagues who have different sets of expertise. Many administrators seek to evaluate the efficacy of their practices and question how to solve persisting dilemmas, but do not have the time to seek evidence-based solutions that are all too often geared for consumption by scholars. Many professors pursue research agendas in hopes of publishing peer-reviewed journals and moving forward on the tenure track, yet these findings too often are not germane to the needs of practitioners. As Gutiérrez and Penuel (2014) noted, “Making relevance to practice a key criterion of rigor is an important step toward more equitable and consequential research” (p. 22). Relationships between practitioners and scholars can result in mutually beneficial collaborations that enable translations between theory, research, and practice, “help[ing] us to organize conditions for learning in a way that takes up present and future problems society faces” (Gutiérrez & Penuel, 2014, p. 22).

Survey findings from Chapter VI suggest that students generally shifted affirmatively in their racial attitudes. Responses to pre-tests and post-tests of the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS) imply that participants, on average, exhibited increasing awareness about issues of racial privilege, institutional discrimination, and blatant racism. While the majority demonstrated heightened race-consciousness, there were a few instances where aggregations by gender and race showed predilections toward color-blindness. More specifically, color-blind attitudes surfaced among responses—averaged across all men and all White students—when asked to rate the importance of affirmative action to mediate racial discrimination. Such findings suggest the need to better understand how to productively organize the ways in which students learn about the sources of racism and the tools to deconstruct racial oppression.

To accomplish this, I recommend that pedagogues gain a better understanding of the histories and experiences that inform any ideas and conceptualizations students may have about issues of diversity and race. Prior to teaching any course grounded in issues of colorblindness and whiteness, for example, Matias (2013) distributes a survey with the following questions:

1. Who are you? Tell me about yourself.
2. How do you like to learn?
3. What languages do you speak? Which language do you prefer for learning?
4. How many teachers/professors of color have you had growing up (elem, middle, hs, college)? What courses? How did the prevalence (or lack thereof) of educators of color impact you? Please describe.
5. Have you had experience with people of color who are in authority? How about one who was not in authority? Please describe the circumstances.
6. What do you hope to learn? How do you hope to get there in your learning?
7. Have you talked about race and racism before? Who do you feel most comfortable in talking about this topic? Please describe.
8. What can a teacher do to make you feel s/he is committed to your learning?
9. Do you believe yourself to be an antiracist educator committed to racial equity? What does this mean to you?
10. How might learning be different for you when learning about race, class, and gender from a female, professor of color who came from poverty as opposed to a male, White, middle class professor? (p. 9)

Whether responses to these types of questions are collected from surveys or interviews, this practice can offer postsecondary educators valuable insight. Of significance, routine assessment of how students relate to course content, connect to their peers, and perceive what constitutes effective teaching enables educators to continually respond to shifting needs and attitudes of their students.

The findings and implications from this dissertation, taken together, constitute perspectives about organizing how students learn about diversity and race. Creating opportunities for educators, researchers, and students to reflect and talk critically about diversity and race holds great promise for achieving racial integration, kindling rich

learning opportunities, and promoting educational benefits for all students (Anderson, 2010; Tienda, 2013).

Though I maintain a profound commitment to enacting diversity and racial projects that promote student learning, I argue that an approach centered solely on diversity and race is a necessary but insufficient condition. Espousing diversity-focused and race-conscious ideologies is not enough to create racial integration and remedy unequal educational opportunities. Teaching students about topics of diversity and race is insufficient. Instead, I echo the sentiments of Gutiérrez and Jaramillo (2009) who argued for educational interventions “organized around robust learning practices that are simultaneously race-conscious and equity-oriented” (p. 174). To truly transform pedagogical practices, I contend that postsecondary educators must mindfully design and implement environments with the ballast of equity. Teaching students about issues of diversity and race, without a foundation for equity, may unintentionally re-inscribe the reductive practices we hope to dismantle. Alternatively, facilitating learning through an equity-oriented framework cultivates potential to kindle student dialogue and growth. As Vossoughi, Escude, Kong and Hooper (2013) eloquently articulate:

Equity is not only a matter of broadening access to high quality learning experiences. Rather, we argue that equity lies in the *how* of teaching and learning: specific ways of designing the learning environment, using pedagogical language, incorporating students’ cultural and intellectual histories, and expanding the meaning and purposes of learning. (p. 2)

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## APPENDIX A

### COLOR-BLIND RACIAL ATTITUDES SCALE

Table A1

*Survey Items from the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS)*

Item
(a) Everyone who works hard, no matter what race they are, has an equal chance to become rich.
(b) Race plays a major role in the type of social services (such as type of health care or day care) that people receive in the U.S.
(c) It is important that people begin to think of themselves as American and not African American, Mexican American or Italian American.
(d) Due to racial discrimination, programs such as affirmative action are necessary to help create equality.
(e) Racism is a major problem in the U.S.
(f) Race is very important in determining who is successful and who is not.
(g) Racism may have been a problem in the past, but it is not an important problem today.
(h) Racial and ethnic minorities do not have the same opportunities as White people in the U.S.
(i) White people in the U.S. are discriminated against because of the color of their skin.
(j) Talking about racial issues causes unnecessary tension.
(k) It is important for political leaders to talk about racism to help work through or solve society's problems.
(l) White people in the U.S. have certain advantages because of the color of their skin.
(m) Immigrants should try to fit into the culture and adopt the values of the U.S.
(n) English should be the only official language in the U.S.
(o) White people are more to blame for racial discrimination in the U.S. than racial and ethnic minorities.
(p) Social policies, such as affirmative action, discriminate unfairly against White people.
(q) It is important for public schools to teach about the history and contributions of racial and ethnic minorities.
(r) Racial and ethnic minorities in the U.S. have certain advantages because of the color of their skin.
(s) Racial problems in the U.S. are rare, isolated situations.
(t) Race plays an important role in who gets sent to prison.

Table A2

*Coding scheme of Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS)*

Original	Normal Code	Reverse Code
Strongly Agree	1	5
Agree	2	4
Neither Agree nor Disagree	3	3
Disagree	4	2
Strongly Disagree	5	1

Table A3  
*Summary of CoBRAS studies with College Students.*

Study	Sample Demographics	Statistical Analysis
Neville, Lilly, Duran, Lee, & Browne (2000)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 28 students recruited from year-long diversity course</li> <li>• 21 women/7 men</li> <li>• 19.57 years = average age</li> <li>• 7 Asians</li> <li>• 7 Blacks</li> <li>• 5 Chicano/Hispanic</li> <li>• 5 Multiracial</li> <li>• 3 Whites</li> <li>• 1 Native American</li> </ul>	ANOVAs used to determine whether there were statistically significant differences in racial attitudes between beginning and end of year.
Spanierman & Heppner (2004)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 230 students</li> <li>• 147 women/83 men</li> <li>• 29.42 years = average age</li> <li>• 230 Whites</li> </ul>	Used the CoBRAS to provide estimates of convergent validity with Psychosocial Costs of Racism to Whites Scale (PCRW).
Awad, Cokley, & Ravitch (2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 375 students</li> <li>• 254 women/121 men</li> <li>• 20.2 years = average age</li> <li>• 220 Caucasian</li> <li>• 103 African Americans</li> <li>• 9 Hispanic American, Latino, and/or Chicano</li> <li>• 4 Asian American</li> <li>• 9 marked "other"</li> </ul>	Hierarchical multiple regression analysis used to model relationships between attitudes toward race and affirmative action via Attitude toward Affirmative Action Scale (Kravitz & Platania, 1993), Modern Racism Scale (McConahay, 1983), and CoBRAS.
Neville, Spanierman, & Doan (2006)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 51 graduate students and mental health professionals</li> <li>• 30 women/19 men/4 did not report gender</li> <li>• 30.12 years = average age</li> <li>• 20 Blacks</li> <li>• 20 Whites</li> <li>• 5 Asian Americans</li> <li>• 2 Native Americans</li> </ul>	Used bivariate correlations to determine relationship between CoBRAS and open-ended survey questions that asked participants to define color-blind racism.

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Burque-Colvin, Zugazaga, & Davis-Maye (2007)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 did not mark race</li> <li>• 1 Latina</li> <li>• 110 students enrolled in Self and Other Awareness Project (SOAP)</li> <li>• 22 years = average age</li> <li>• 66 women/44 men</li> <li>• 89 Whites</li> <li>• 21 students of color</li> </ul>	<p>Authors used a t-test to determine whether statistically significant difference existed between pre-test and post-test scores.</p>
Spanierman, Neville, Liao, Hammer, & Wang (2008)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 644 first-year students</li> <li>• 361 women/238 men/26 did not identify gender</li> <li>• 18.17 years = average age</li> <li>• 315 Whites</li> <li>• 158 Asian Americans</li> <li>• 60 African Americans</li> <li>• 56 Latinos/as</li> <li>• 43 Multi-racial</li> <li>• 1 Native American</li> <li>• 1 student marked “other”</li> </ul>	<p>Students completed the CoBRAS and the Universal Diverse Orientation (UDO), a survey intended to measure how open and comfortable respondents are to cultural differences. Authors developed causal mediation models to test the mediating effects of participation in diversity experiences and conducted structural equation modeling to test relationships between the variables measured from each survey.</p>
Worthington, Navarro, Lowey, & Hart (2008)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 144 undergraduate students</li> <li>• 22 through &gt;53 years for age range (no average provided)</li> <li>• 91 women/53 men</li> <li>• 94 White/Caucasian</li> <li>• 22 African American</li> <li>• 22 Asian/Pacific Islander</li> <li>• 2 Middle Eastern</li> <li>• 2 Native American/Alaskan Native</li> <li>• 7 Chicano/Latino/Hispanic</li> </ul>	<p>Participants completed the CoBRAS, campus climate surveys, and Social Dominance Orientation survey (Sidanius &amp; Pratto, 1999). Authors conducted one-way multivariate analysis of variance to test hypothesis of whether Whites would report more positive perceptions of campus climate, higher levels of color-blindness, and greater orientation toward social dominance (e.g., inclination toward hierarchical relationships) than people of color.</p>

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Oh, Choi, Neville, Anderson, & Landrum-Brown (2010)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 631 students</li><li>• 20.44 years = average age</li><li>• 420 women/208 men, 3 did not mark gender</li><li>• 280 Whites</li><li>• 154 Blacks</li><li>• 121 Asians</li><li>• 57 Latino/Hispanic</li><li>• 19 Multi-racial</li></ul>	In addition to the CoBRAS, participants responded to a survey with open-ended questions about defining racism and beliefs regarding affirmative action. Authors used logistic regression analyses to predict students' attitudes toward affirmative action and race.
Tynes & Markoe (2010)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 261 undergraduates (Education Psychology majors)</li><li>• 134 women/82 men</li><li>• 20 years = average age</li><li>• 169 European Americans</li><li>• 48 African Americans</li><li>• 15 Latinos</li><li>• 16 Multi-racial</li><li>• 9 Asian Americans</li></ul>	The authors used multinomial logistic regression analyses to determine whether a student's reaction (e.g., no affect, humorous, apathy, disappointment, sadness, or anger) to online racial content was predictable from color-blind racial attitudes or racial group membership. Multinomial logistic regressions are a form of statistical analyses that measures the probability of individuals behaving in a particular way or falling in a particular category.

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## APPENDIX B

### FINAL CODEBOOK

This codebook reflects the *final* set of codes I used for my analyses. Codes that I discussed in Chapter 3 (Methods) from older iterations may not appear in the appendix if they were irrelevant to my findings. Some examples of these excluded codes include focal students and repairs (student-to-student, educator-to-student, or student-to-educator).

Table B1

*Mediating artifacts: Physical or ideological tools harnessed to organize student learning*

Code: Definition	Example
Text: Articles, books, blogs, websites, worksheets, and other textual materials for students to read	Harris gave students an article to read in class called "No Such Place as 'Post-Racial' America from the <i>New York Times</i> (November 10, 2011 Content Log)
Re-purposed tools: Concrete objects used as metaphors for intangible ideas	Blomkvist and Logan used hula-hoops to represent social identities (February 1, 2012 Content Log).
Video: Recordings from Youtube, library, and other sources for students to watch	Blomkvist wanted to show a video of the first time of a Hindu priest gave a prayer in the US Congress (February 15, 2012 Content Log).
PowerPoint presentation: Visual display of slides	Harris announced that he wanted to show a PowerPoint presentation of images from Star Trek (November 18, 2012 Content Log).

Table B2

*Content: Topics addressed in the discussions*

Code	Example
Class logistics	Lauren asked whether attendance was required for every dialogue (January 25, 2012 Content Log).
University or community resources	Alumni talked about different offices that provided academic support and different organizations or extracurricular activities they were involved in (October 27, 2012 Content Log).
Race/ethnicity/racism	Mario talked about how his high school lacked diversity and enrolled lots of rich kids. In an AP history class, they talked about illegal immigration. As the only person of color in the classroom and the only Latino, his peers and teacher asked him about illegal immigration, assuming he would know because of his race (February 15, 2012 Content Log).

Power of language	The PowerPoint presentation popped up on the screen with this title: The Power of Words: Niggers, Coons, Boys, and Tigresses. (August 25, 2012 Content Log)
Gender	Harris encouraged people to go to the library and access the public book that compares salaries and ranks by gender and job title to dispel or support the myth that women get paid less than men. (November 1, 2011 Content Log).
Sexual orientation	Bryan said if anybody he met ever uttered the phrase, "That is gay," he would "not travel further in that relationship" (February 22, 2012 Content Log).
Affirmative action	Quote from Harris: "Gays can't get married, that's obvious discrimination. Outside of that, that gays can't get married, name the most blatant discriminatory law. I know every single person in this room has talked about it. I know this. It was on your test, okay?" [Harris waited a beat. When nobody offered a response, he answered his own question.] It's called <i>affirmative action</i> ." (November 3, 2011 Content Log)
Religion	Blomkvist thought that people may argue that "we are a Christian nation and bounded by Christian morals." (February 15, 2012 Content Log)
Stereotypes	Lauren said, "A positive stereotype about Asians is that all Asians are smart, but I'm not good at math." (February 8, 2012 Content Log).
Pop culture	Quote from Harris after projecting pictures of Star Trek characters: "They're talking about the struggle in society and in between the races and use these individuals to represent that struggle that was happening in the Civil Rights and Chicano movements. They're using these characters to talk about how to facilitate and bring together people as one." (October 25, 2011 Content Log)
Identity	Quote from Logan: " <i>Mario, you were just pulling it back sort of into different identities and, sort of, and maybe the expectations...involved in that? And so I think that transitions us really well back into a discussion of personal identity.</i> " (February 1, 2012 Content Log)
Diversity	The facilitators assured us that they do not necessarily have extra knowledge nor are they

	trying to train people to be sensitive to issues of diversity. (January 25, 2012 Content Log)
Privilege/Power/Oppression	After this final joke, Harris facilitated a lecture about out-group humor, in-group humor, inequitable distribution of power, and history. (Excerpt from vignette based upon October 16, 2011 Content Log)
Intersectionality	Logan articulated her ideas about the intersectionality of Blomkvist's identities (as a male of color) as well as the intersectionality of age and sexual orientation. (February 1, 2012 Content Log)
History	Quote from Harris: "Any other concerns before we move into Latina/o history? That's our topic today." (September 9, 2011 Content Log)
Social justice/Taking action	The facilitators asked people to share, if they were comfortable, what actions they intend to take to combat oppression. (February 22, 2012 Content Log)
Ethnocentrism	Quote from Harris: "My culture is superior to other cultures out there and everybody else's sucks. It leads to wars, colonialism, imperialism – why do we have right to conquer other country? Because we're superior as individuals. Ethnocentrism falls under particularistic because we think it is far superior." (August 30, 2011 Content Log)
Offensive jokes	Lauren said that with friends, when they make a derogatory joke, she felt uncomfortable but typically avoid addressing the joke, even if she wanted to say something. But now she does challenge it, and even her family noticed her change (February 22, 2012 Content Log)
Worldview	Quote from Blomkvist: "Your worldview is this lens that fits in front of your face and in front of your ears, and just like a lens, bends everything that comes in and shifts it a little bit and puts it inside of your own understanding." (January 25, 2012 Content Log)
Socioeconomic status/Class	Quote from Harris: "In single parent homes, what's the parent look like? Generally female. If people are on welfare, they are generally female." (September 6, 2011 Content Log)
Systemic/Institutional	Quote from Logan: "Ultimately, the four 'I's are interpersonal, institutional, internalized...when the hierarchy in the world has been become so



	factualized people exist in it...” (February 8, 2012 Content Log)
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Table B3

*Student-centered activities: Practices not centered on I-R-E sequences or lectures*

Code: Definition	Example
Everybody shares: Activities when all students were expected to participate by responding to prompts	Harris announced that the purpose of today’s class is to hear from everybody about an article they found. (November 3, 2011 Content Log)
Guided facilitation: Activities accompanied by a set of instructions or guidelines	Physical space served as a metaphor for privilege and marginalization during one exercise where Blomkvist asked everybody to line up. He read a series of statements and asked people to step forward if the statement applied to them (February 8, 2012 Content Log)
Small group discussions: Activities that divide the seminar into smaller groups	Harris proceeded to explain that we would break up into groups of 4, where each group needed to talk about stereotypes and discuss where those stereotypes come from as well as the validity of the stereotypes – how do we justify them? He also said we needed to assign one person to take notes and share out with the entire class. (September 22, 2012 Content Log)
Student presentations: Activities where students present on a particular topic	The students announced that they were planning to present on Environmental Racism today. (November 29, 2012 Content Log)

Table B4

*Postsecondary educator talk*

Code: Definition	Example
Lecture or Mini-Lecture: Spoke uninterrupted with a prepared lecture or an impromptu sharing of knowledge	Logan said, “The academic term for what we are doing is called intergroup dialogue.” For a few minutes, she shared that the history of intergroup dialogues began with the integration of schools and public domains in the 1930s/40s. (January 25, 2012 Content Log).
Known Answer Questions: Posed a question requiring a correct answer, students responded, and educators evaluated the quality of answers	Harris: What is the ultimate female representation in this article? Multiple students: The ship! The starship! Harris: You’re right. (Transcript based on October 25, 2011 Content Log)

<p>Open-ended Questions: Posed a question encouraging responses not based upon one “right” answer, students responded, and educators appraised the merit of answers</p>	<p>Quote from Harris: “How else would you interpret it? Is it positive? Is it negative? Are they saying multiculturalism is positive or crippling thing?” (September 6, 2011 Content Log)</p>
<p>Expand/Paraphrase: Extended upon or summarized students’ comments</p>	<p>Quote from Blomkvist (after Benally shared his story about Native Americans being forgotten): “The worst kind of oppression is being forgotten. That’s what we mean by marginalizing. Where it is this sort of thing, just like, and over there. But you don’t even name what’s over there. Native Americans are just marked as “other” and marginalization is, you know, part of the systemic relationship these different identities get put into by all of these interactions and these different things.” (Transcription from February 8, 2012 Content Log)</p>
<p>Solicit input: Encouraged more people to add to the conversation or asked to hear from people who had not yet spoken</p>	<p>Blomkvist asked if we could hear from somebody else who had not spoken up yet. (February 15, 2012 Content Log)</p>
<p>Make jokes: Told funny stories or “played the dozens” (trade insults) that made participants laugh</p>	<p>When I said that Asians are bad drivers, there was laughter around the room (the loudest from Harris, it seemed like). I confessed that I lived up to that stereotype, and Harris said, “Is it because you have a hard time seeing over the steering wheel?” There was silence for one second, and then huge amounts of laughter around the room, including “Oh, snap! Oh, snap!” (September 22, 2011 Content Log)</p>
<p>Tell personal stories: Shared narratives about their lives outside the context of the seminar</p>	<p>During our icebreaker, the facilitators asked us to talk about a time when one of our identities surprised or shocked us. Logan said that while in India last summer, she stayed at a university that enforced differential curfews for students (6:30pm for women and 10:30pm for men). However, she was not necessarily held to that because she was a “non-national”. (February 15, 2012 Content Log)</p>
<p>Serve as primary expert: Answered inquiries that participants asked or</p>	<p>Lilah asked what double discrimination is about, and Harris answered that you can</p>

<p>answered their own inquiries before waiting for participants to answer</p>	<p>get discriminated because you're Black and you're a woman; Patricia Collins called it Double Jeopardy. (November 3, 2011 Content Log)</p> <p>Quote from Harris: "Gays can't get married, that's obvious discrimination. Outside of that, that gays can't get married, name the most blatant discriminatory law. I know every single person in this room has talked about it. I know this. It was on your test, okay?" [Harris waited a beat. When nobody offered a response, he answered his own question.] It's called <i>affirmative action</i>. (November 3, 2011 Content Log)</p>
<p>Confer expert: Called out specific participants perceived to have knowledge in areas of interest</p>	<p>Harris then asked how many people thought this was a con-abortion ad. Three people raised their hands, including myself and another graduate student observing the class. Harris turned his gaze toward me and the other graduate student, then asked, "From the adults... why is this against abortion?" (October 20, 2011 Content Log)</p>

Table B5  
*Student talk*

Code: Definition	Example
<p>Me: Index of my verbal participation.</p>	<p>I admit to being very uncomfortable as I kept an internal tally of all of my privileges. Blomkvist asked why it made me feel uncomfortable. I answered that I like to believe in equality and issues of equity, and by virtue of my location, I am automatically getting certain benefits which is a very uncomfortable and unsettling feeling. (February 8, 2012 Content Log)</p>
<p>Student Laughter: When students laughed.</p>	<p>Sara asked, "What's the difference between a Black man and a bunk bed? A bunk bed will support your children." The room erupted in laughter, with a mixture of loud cackles and apologetic chuckles. (Excerpt from vignette based upon October 16, 2011 Content Log)</p>

<p>Student asks questions: When students made inquiries.</p>	<p>Lilah asked what double discrimination is about, and Harris answered that you can get discriminated because you're Black and you're a woman; Patricia Collins called it Double Jeopardy. (November 3, 2011 Content Log)</p>
<p>Student connects: When students continued a line of thought from other participants. Sometimes this can be as explicit as saying, "To piggy-back off of..." or can be implicit as using the same language as another participant.</p>	<p>Mario said, "Just like what Christina said, it makes me think of what resources we have at our fingertips". (February 22, 2012 Content Log).</p>
<p>Student Presentations: When students delivered a presentation.</p>	<p>Belinda told the class that their group presentation was about gays around the whole world. (December 6, 2011 Content Log)</p>
<p>Student Stories: When students shared narratives about their lives outside the context of the seminar</p>	<p>Marina said that her high school was, "more focused on the White kids than the Black kids. I once asked the counselors about Black scholarships. The counselor pointed out a little bulletin board that I had never ever noticed, but the bulletin board for other students was bigger and had more resources. I was also upset about not being told about the PSATs and you had to check off a box to get a Black scholarship. By the time I found out about it, it was too late even though I qualified for that scholarship." Later on during that same class period, Marina said, "The counselors will encourage Black students to take easier classes. Since I was in the Gifted and Talented group, people started directing me to other classes and some of the counselors thought I was really smart. So I was in Honors Physics my junior year, but then another counselor told me to be in Astronomy my senior year. A different counselor could not understand why I was in Astronomy, and I finally realized it was because that other counselor assumed I could not do Honors Physics." (Transcription based upon November 15, 2011 Content Log).</p>

## APPENDIX C

## INDEX FOR UNIVERSITY OF MORRILL STATE

The following tables document the frequency and location of each code for UMS content logs. For example, the code for *Video* is indexed 15 times in the 2011.09.27 content log (see Table C1).

Table C1

*UMS mediating artifacts*

Content Log	PowerPoint Presentations	Re-purposed Tools	Text	Video
2011.08.23			2	
2011.08.25	2	1	1	
2011.08.30				
2011.09.01		1	1	
2011.09.06	1		1	
2011.09.08				
2011.09.13				1
2011.09.20			2	
2011.09.22			1	
2011.09.27				15
2011.09.29				
2011.10.04			1	13
2011.10.16			6	
2011.10.18				
2011.10.20	4		5	
2011.10.25	1		3	
2011.10.27				
2011.11.01				
2011.11.03			1	
2011.11.08				
2011.11.10			3	
2011.11.15		2		
2011.11.29	16		1	2
2011.12.01	1			
2011.12.06	8			5
2011.12.08			1	
Totals	33	4	29	36

Table C2  
*UMS content*

	Affirmative action	Ethnocentrism	Social Justice/Taking Action	Offensive jokes	Worldview	Class logistics
2011.08.23						7
2011.08.25	1					3
2011.08.30		3		1		
2011.09.01				1		2
2011.09.06	1	1		1		2
2011.09.08						2
2011.09.13						20
2011.09.20		2				2
2011.09.22	1	2				1
2011.09.27						1
2011.09.29	1			1		
2011.10.04				1		5
2011.10.16		1	1	20		1
2011.10.18		1				4
2011.10.20				2		
2011.10.25						
2011.10.27						
2011.11.01				1		3
2011.11.03	1			1		1
2011.11.08						2
2011.11.10			1			1
2011.11.15				1		1
2011.11.29			3			1
2011.12.01						
2011.12.06						
2011.12.08						8
Totals	5	10	5	30		67

Table C3  
*UMS content (cont.)*

	Diversity	Gender	History	Identity	Pop culture	Power of language	Privilege/Power/Oppression
2011.08.23	2			1			
2011.08.25		3	10		16	5	1
2011.08.30	3	1	12		1		
2011.09.01		1	42		2		
2011.09.06		4	13		23		2
2011.09.08	1		27	5			3
2011.09.13		2			2		
2011.09.20	2		31	1	4		5
2011.09.22		2	2		5		1
2011.09.27	1	17			14		
2011.09.29	1	9	1	2	6		1
2011.10.04	1	6	2		18		3
2011.10.16		5	5	1	3	1	8
2011.10.18	5	1	1		14		
2011.10.20	1	4	7		19		
2011.10.25	3	7	6		22		
2011.10.27	2	1					
2011.11.01		17	1		12		
2011.11.03		8	3		9		
2011.11.08		5	5		6		1
2011.11.10	1	2			1		1
2011.11.15	1	1	13				
2011.11.29			1				2
2011.12.01			5				
2011.12.06	1				3		
2011.12.08							
Totals	25	96	187	10	180	6	28

Table C4  
*UMS content (cont.)*

Content Log	Sexual orientation	Stereotypes	System	University or community resources
2011.08.23	2	1		
2011.08.25	1	1		1
2011.08.30	2			1
2011.09.01	1		2	5
2011.09.06	3		1	
2011.09.08			5	3
2011.09.13	1			4
2011.09.20			6	1
2011.09.22	4	19		
2011.09.27				1
2011.09.29	2	1	4	
2011.10.04		4	1	
2011.10.16				
2011.10.18	4			3
2011.10.20		1		
2011.10.25	3		1	
2011.10.27				12
2011.11.01	1	1	3	1
2011.11.03	1	2		
2011.11.08	1		2	1
2011.11.10			2	1
2011.11.15			2	
2011.11.29			15	
2011.12.01				1
2011.12.06	17			1
2011.12.08	1			3
Totals	44	30	44	39



Table C5

*UMS student-centered activities*

Content Log	Everybody Shares	Small Group Discussions	Student Presentations
2011.08.23			
2011.08.25			
2011.08.30			
2011.09.01			
2011.09.06			
2011.09.08			
2011.09.13			
2011.09.20			
2011.09.22	13	16	
2011.09.27			
2011.09.29			
2011.10.04			
2011.10.16	15		
2011.10.18			
2011.10.20		1	
2011.10.25	5	6	
2011.10.27	1		
2011.11.01			
2011.11.03	9		
2011.11.08	9		
2011.11.10			
2011.11.15			25
2011.11.29			30
2011.12.01			12
2011.12.06			19
2011.12.08			
Totals	52	23	86

Table C6  
*UMS postsecondary educator talk*

	Lecture	Known Answer Question	Open-ended Question	Expand/ Paraphrase	Solicit input	Make jokes	Tell personal story	Serve as Primary Expert	Confer Expert
2011.08.23	1	4	1	3	2	5	8	6	6
2011.08.25	4	14		2	8	5	3	10	1
2011.08.30	4	12		4	12	4	4	12	1
2011.09.01	3	16		0	10		2	18	1
2011.09.06	1	11	7	2	5	2		5	4
2011.09.08	4	15		7	5	6	2	24	3
2011.09.13	7	1		0	6	1		8	4
2011.09.20	12	10	1	4	5	1	3	16	
2011.09.22	1	3	1	2	1	2		6	
2011.09.27				0				0	
2011.09.29	3	9		5	2	4	6	5	
2011.10.04	1			0	1	2	1	3	
2011.10.16	8	9		3	5	4	3	7	
2011.10.18	9	4		4	4	2	4	7	3
2011.10.20	3	2	6	6	3		1	3	2
2011.10.25	9	9	4	9	1	1	1	3	1
2011.10.27				0			1	0	
2011.11.01	7	11	1	7		1		6	
2011.11.03	6	2	1	1		2	1	5	
2011.11.08	3	2		2		1	2	2	1
2011.11.10	1	1	1	5	1	1	2	5	2
2011.11.15	2	1	4	4	1	1		4	
2011.11.29	3	3		1	3		1	2	
2011.12.01		1		0	3		1	0	1
2011.12.06	2			1	3	1	1	2	
2011.12.08	8	1		19		1		1	1
Totals	102	141	27	89	81	47	47	160	31

Table C7  
*UMS student talk*

	Me	Student Laughter	Students Connect	Student Asks Questions	Student Stories	Student Presentations
2011.08.23	4	6		4		
2011.08.25	1	13		10		
2011.08.30	2	8	2	11		
2011.09.01	1	1	3	15	1	
2011.09.06	3	2	4	5		
2011.09.08	2	4	1	18	2	
2011.09.13	4	2		8		
2011.09.20	1	3		13		
2011.09.22	4	7	5	8	4	
2011.09.27		5				
2011.09.29	1	7	4	4	7	
2011.10.04		7		3		
2011.10.16	1	14	6	5	2	
2011.10.18		10	5	7	2	
2011.10.20	1	1	1	3	1	
2011.10.25	2	4	1	1		
2011.10.27		2	1	3	3	
2011.11.01		4	1	5		
2011.11.03	1	2	4	6	1	
2011.11.08	1	4	7	1	3	
2011.11.10	1	2	3	5	4	
2011.11.15	1	4	12	9	4	11
2011.11.29		12	11	13	3	18
2011.12.01		2	3	6		7
2011.12.06			5	4	3	8
2011.12.08	1	2		1		
Totals	32	128	79	168	40	44

## APPENDIX D

### INDEX FOR GARLAND UNIVERSITY

The following tables document the frequency and location of each code for GU content logs. For example, the code for Text can be found 6 times in the 2012.02.01 content log (see table D1).

Table D1

*GU mediating artifacts*

	Text	Re-purposed tools	Video
2012.02.22	5		
2012.02.15			3
2012.02.08	2	1	
2012.02.01	6	3	
2012.01.25		1	
Totals	13	5	3

Table D2

*GU content*

	Social Justice/ Taking Action	Affirmative action	Ethnocentrism	Communication Styles	Ability or disability
2012.02.22	13				2
2012.02.15		13		1	
2012.02.08	1	3			
2012.02.01				1	2
2012.01.25			1	9	
Totals	14	16	1	11	4

Table D3

*GU content (cont.)*

	Worldview	Class logistics	Diversity	Gender	History	Identity	Offensive jokes
2012.02.22	4	1	3	2	1	2	3
2012.02.15	2		3	7	3	3	
2012.02.08		2		9	2	8	6
2012.02.01	4	3	4	4	1	18	2
2012.01.25	6	7	3	1	1	1	
Totals	16	13	13	23	8	32	11

Table D4  
*GU content (cont.)*

	Pop culture	Power of language	Privilege/Power /Oppression	Race/ethnicity or racism	Religion
2012.02.22	1	2	9	8	1
2012.02.15			5	9	4
2012.02.08	7		19	6	3
2012.02.01	1	2	1	8	5
2012.01.25		1	2	2	1
Totals	9	5	36	33	14

Table D5  
*GU content (cont.)*

	Sexual orientation	Stereotypes	System	University or community resources	SES
2012.02.22	4		7	2	1
2012.02.15	2		1		2
2012.02.08	2	5	9		2
2012.02.01	7	1			2
2012.01.25					
Totals	15	6	17	2	7

Table D6  
*GU student-centered activities*

	Everybody Shares	Scripted Facilitation	Small Group Discussions
2012.02.22	3		
2012.02.15	2	1	1
2012.02.08	3	2	
2012.02.01	1	3	
2012.01.25	2	3	2
Totals	11	9	3

Table D7  
*GU postsecondary educator talk*

	Lecture	Known Answer Question	Open-ended Question	Expand/ Paraphrase	Solicit Input	Tell Personal Stories	Serve as primary expert	Confer expert
2012.02.22	2	2	3	10	4	1		1
2012.02.15	2	1		5	13		1	
2012.02.08	5	3	3	17	8	1	1	
2012.02.01	8	5	5	13	8	3		

2012.01.25	8	6	5	17	2		3	
Totals	25	17	16	62	35	5	5	1

Table D8

*GU student talk*

	Me	Student Laughter	Student Connect	Student Asks Questions	Student Personal Story
2012.02.22	2	2	6		7
2012.02.15	2	4	8	1	2
2012.02.08	5	3	6	1	4
2012.02.01	5	2	10		3
2012.01.25	5	4	4	4	
Totals	19	15	34	6	16

## APPENDIX E

### SEMISTRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS WITH POSTSECONDARY EDUCATORS

#### *History*

- For the record, please state your name and your position.
- How long have you worked in higher education?
- How long have you worked in your current position?
- Tell me about what led you to this field.
- Tell me about your educational background.
- Tell me about the diversity initiative. When was it founded? How has it evolved over the last decade? What caused it to change (or, conversely, stay the same)?

#### *Interactions with colleagues*

- What are some of the challenges administrators like yourself face in your efforts to provide support for students?
- When you talk about issues of diversity, retention, and graduation with your colleagues, what kinds of things come up?
- Do you talk about issues of race with colleagues? When you talk about race, what kinds of things come up?

#### *Student support*

- What informs the way you organize programs for students? For example, do you draw on particular theories? Research? Conferences? Colleagues?
- What is your philosophy in supporting students?
- What are your goals for these program(s) and class(es) in which you are involved?
- How do you know the students in your program(s) and class(es) are learning?
- How has this work encouraged/constrained you from uncovering your own potential biases about people of different backgrounds?
- On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being most important, how do you rate race? Why did you give it this rating?

#### *Perspective regarding the university*

- Tell me about how well you think the university as a whole is doing with regard to diversity.
- If you had the opportunity, what would you do differently to strengthen your programs? What about other diversity programs in the university?

## APPENDIX F

### ANALYTIC MEMO #1

#### Content Logs from Morrill State University and Garland University

**CONTEXT:** I examine two case studies at one public (University of Morrill State) and one private university (Garland University) to understand how postsecondary educators organize opportunities for students to learn and make meaning about issues of diversity and race. These sites are similar since both universities are predominantly white institutions, coordinate relatively long-standing diversity initiatives (approximately eleven years old), and provide facile access for the conduct of my study. Additionally, both sites have diversity initiatives with exemplary practices: one institution is renowned for high retention and graduation rates, and the other university is prominent in its use of theory and research. Conversely, these universities differ in size, scope, and philosophies toward diversity. These sites were selected because the institutional similarities and differences offer interesting terrain for conducting a comparative case study. By attending these diversity initiative seminars in fall of 2011 and spring of 2012, I documented how students and postsecondary educators construct ideas about diversity and race from 31 audio/video records. (Note: The terms educators, instructors, and facilitators are used interchangeably).

**PURPOSE:** This analytic memo serves two purposes: first, a “throat-clearing” of inductive and deductive codes I will consider using; and second, burgeoning ideas about my different hunches. To get to this point, I used *Transana* to log approximately 36 usable hours of video records documenting postsecondary educator and student interactions in 31 content logs. Each content log is accompanied by a Social Organization of Learning protocol (Gutiérrez, Berlin, Crosland & Razfar, 1999). I then re-read each content log and protocol thoroughly to think about codes and address this research question: *How do postsecondary educators facilitate educational activities that expose students to issues of diversity and race?*

**THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:** As I write this memo, I am guided by Cultural-Historical Activity Theory’s (CHAT’s) principle of *cultural mediation*, which provides a lens through which I can analyze different types of artifacts used to facilitate diversity initiatives. From a sociocultural perspective, cultural mediation considers how interactions between people and their environment become shaped, honed, and transformed by *artifacts* that form connections between human beings and their world (Cole, 1996; Cole, 1998; Cole & Engeström, 1993; Cole & Engeström, 2007). Language, physical tools, and ideologies are artifacts that *mediate* how humans make meaning of their surroundings and create connections with their world. Smartphones, Facebook, and Twitter, for example, mediate how students communicate with each other. Different media outlets construct disparate understandings of the world, where watching Fox News mediates interpretations of events quite differently from the Daily Show. The decisions professors make to select certain texts and the ways they facilitate discussions mediate



how students relate to course content. In my study, the principle of cultural mediation highlights artifacts (theories, research, activities, and other tools) universities and postsecondary educators use to mediate student learning about diversity and race.

**PROCESS:** My original “bins” of codes consisted of mediating artifacts, mode of delivery, content, type of repair, and discourse pattern. However, I had difficulty separating codes for different categories. For example, pop culture can be an **artifact** to *mediate* how students learn about issues of diversity and race; at the same time, pop culture can be **content** that the instructor delivers in a lecture. After much rearranging, I finally identified the following codes that, at this point, denote the “clearest” categories. Definitions are provided where necessary.

Table F1

*Mediating artifacts*

Code: Definition	Inductive or Deductive
Expert: A person who has been positioned as having more knowledge, expertise, or experience.	Inductive
Personal stories: Firsthand narratives of experiences articulated by students and facilitators.	Deductive
Profanity: The use of expletive language.	Inductive
Text: Articles, books, blogs, websites, and other textual materials for students to read.	Deductive
Re-mediated tools: Concrete objects used as metaphors for intangible ideas.	Inductive
Contract: A signed agreement about expectations.	Inductive
Evaluations: Questions designed to solicit student feedback.	Inductive
Whiteboard: Physical tool on which to write concepts for the class.	Inductive
Video: Recordings from Youtube, library, and other sources for students to watch.	Deductive
PowerPoint presentation: Visual display of slides.	Inductive
Implicit/Explicit Theories about Students, Race, and Diversity: I intend to discuss this in a separate memo and will draw on interview data to elaborate on this code.	Inductive/Deductive

*Physical or ideological tools harnessed to organize student learning. I attempted to think more about this category as a set of **nouns** that can be brought to bear in the seminars.*

Table F2  
*Mediating activity*

Code: Definition	Inductive or Deductive
Co-construct Ground Rules: When instructor(s) and students collaborate to create guidelines about how to participate respectfully in the diversity seminars.	Inductive
I-R-E: When the facilitator <b>INQUIRES</b> , students <b>RESPOND</b> , and the facilitator <b>EVALUATES</b> the quality of the answers.	Deductive
Discuss: Moments where students participate in a dialogue.	Deductive
Share with Everybody: Moments where everybody is expected to speak.	Inductive
Make jokes: When bantering occurs (often, but not always, accompanied by laughter).	Inductive
Tell “Funky Facts”: When knowledge is shared that elicits shock or disbelief.	Inductive
Practice: An opportunity for people to role play or practice skills; for example, participants can <b>practice</b> active listening skills.	Inductive

*I think of these as actions that the instructors and/or students do as they construct meanings about the topics of interest. I approached this domain as a set of **verbs** or **behaviors** that participants actually carry out.*

Table F3  
*Content: Topics addressed in discussions*

Code	Inductive or Deductive
Class logistics	Inductive
University or community resources	Inductive
Race/ethnicity/racism	Deductive
Power of language	Inductive
Gender	Deductive
Sexual orientation	Deductive
Affirmative action	Deductive
Religion	Deductive
Stereotypes	Deductive
Pop culture	Inductive
Identity	Deductive
Diversity	Deductive
Privilege/Power/Oppression	Deductive
Intersectionality	Deductive
History	Inductive

Table F4  
*Educator participation*

Code: Definition	Inductive or Deductive
Solicit input: When educator asks questions.	Deductive
Solicit expansion: When educator asks for people to say more.	Deductive
Open to interpretation: When educator takes up student responses with acknowledgement there is no right or wrong answer.	Deductive
Re-voice: When educator paraphrases, repeats, or uses students' responses. The concept of "re-voicing" according to Cazden (p. 90) is rebroadcasting a student's contribution back to the group to give it a bigger voice.	Deductive
Shut down: When educator moves the discussion to a different topic or does not acknowledge student response.	Deductive
Acknowledge: When educator acknowledges student response.	Deductive
Lecture: When the educator delivers a lesson on a topic of interest.	Deductive
Facilitate Non-Lecture Activity: When the educator facilitates an activity that does <i>not</i> include lectures.	Inductive

*This category shows how educators interact with participants in the seminar.*

Table F5  
*Student participation*

Code: Definition	Inductive or Deductive
Ask questions: When students make inquiries.	Deductive
Answer questions: When students respond to questions.	Deductive
Connects: When students continue a line of thought from other participants. Sometimes this can be as explicit as saying, "To piggy-back off of..." or can be implicit as using the same language as another participant.	Deductive
Student Presentations: When students deliver a presentation.	Inductive
Evaluate: When students share their feelings about how the seminar is coming along.	Inductive

*This category shows how students interact with other participants in the seminar.*

While reflecting upon this new coding system, I found it helpful to identify ***WHO*** is doing ***WHAT***. While **mediating artifacts**, **mediating activities**, and **content** represent codes for which students and/or educators can be included, identifying separate codes for **educator participation** and **student participation** illustrates how often educators and students are verbally contributing to the seminar. According to Cazden, this may be a

way to identify when students get “to be legitimate speakers - during teacher-led group activities” (p. 82). By conducting a frequency count of educator participation and student participation, I can see who is taking more space as a speaker. My initial hunch is that educators are speaking more so than students, despite interviewees describing the seminars as opportunities for true dialogue. Even if this finding were confirmed, however, I am unsure whether more speaking time for educators is inherently constraining; I would like to explore this line of thinking by focusing on how students are interacting and participating in the seminar.

One of my hunches is that some (not all) students appear to articulate a greater willingness to discuss issues of diversity and race when postsecondary educators organize educational activities with unconventional mediating artifacts including, but not limited to, profanity, jokes, popular culture, lived experiences of participants, and physical objects that serve as metaphors for intangible ideas. For example, a woman named Michelle voiced her unease about the concept of privilege and believed that people have *choices* that create their circumstances, not *privilege*. Another participant named Erin shared her own personal story of battling with a medical condition and pointed out her lack of *choice* about the disease. In Erin’s world, people who have privilege are folks who do not have to deal with health issues. At the end of the seminar, Michelle publicly thanked Erin for helping her re-frame privilege in a new light. At another seminar, a woman named Lauren shared how other classes that discuss contentious issues seem to generate a lot of anger and misunderstanding, but the diversity seminar was the one place that seemed to create a mutual feeling of openness and understanding. From a participant-observer perspective, I recognize a *shift* in how some students discussed issues of diversity and race, moving from a deficit-oriented perspective to a more holistic perspective infused with ideas about history, systems, and institutions.

Based upon these examples, I wonder if it is safer to use safe topics as an entry point to understanding contentious issues like race and racism. When planning events for Racial Initiatives for Students and Educators (R.I.S.E.), my colleagues and I have discussed how talking about gender feels “safer” than talking about race. While some may feel that addressing gender first ignores the issue of race, I believe that the “safer” issue may represent a more facile entry point to the heavier issues. My hunch is that organizing student understanding about diversity and race in unconventional ways—re-mediated methods—gives us entry points into robust learning opportunities that would otherwise remain stagnant or unapproachable. If educators can saturate learning ecologies with many different mediating artifacts, including objects from students’ everyday lives, I believe we can better create connections to abstract ideas. Although this is my hunch, though, of course I will continue looking for examples that **affirm** and **contradict** my hunches. More specifically, I will look for moments when learning appears to be constrained.

One moment when learning **may have been constrained** is foreshadowed from the following Observer Comment (OC): “*I wonder if people actually really feel like there is a need to have change? Have we really covered enough information to agitate people*

*and want to create change? Some of it seems ceremonious and disingenuous. Perhaps something more to explore for the future.”*

This OC comes from a diversity seminar where we were supposed to practice our *dialogue* skills by discussing affirmative action, a topic that typically incites anger and strong opinions. But people were not combative at all. Participants seemed more interested in “playing nice” rather than digging deep and expressing genuine opinions. I felt frustrated and doubtful about the entire dialogue that day because we discussed affirmative action more at an abstract level, not at a personal level. I felt as if we had been socialized to “play nice”, and by doing so, perhaps missed great opportunities to truly practice how to dialogue.

Although this document appears to be a basic description rather than a critical analysis, I found this to be a particularly helpful exercise. Now I am armed with a set of initial codes based upon some sort of structure. My next step is to import these codes and content logs into *Dedoose*. As I begin this process, I also intend to document the similarities and differences I see between the diversity seminars at Morrill State University and Garland University. Let the coding begin! ☺

## APPENDIX G

### ANALYTIC MEMO #2

#### Shifts in Racial Attitudes Over Time

**CONTEXT:** In this memo, I describe how two students, Valerie and Lauren, construct meanings vis-à-vis issues of race and diversity throughout the course of their seminars. I chose these two students from a subset of participants who met the following criteria: first, completed pre- and post-tests of the Color-blind Racial Attitudes Surveys (CoBRAS); and second, contributed verbally to the seminars. Unfortunately, narrowing my focal group to these two neglects students who did not complete surveys and have quieter dispositions; I need to address this gap by including student interviews in future studies.

**PURPOSE:** I approach this analytic memo after having completed my fourth (!!!) iteration of coding where I tagged what specific students said. By doing this, I attempted to track the development of how focal participants expressed certain themes and narratives over time. By emphasizing focal students, unfortunately, I took comments or behaviors out of context *without* accounting for accompanying activities and artifacts. In my quest to construct and apply an organized coding structure, to my dismay, I sliced and diced my data into silos that neglected to make connections and relationships between participants, artifacts, and activities. Essentially, I re-created the very phenomenon I lamented: the notion that student learning is a function of the individual, not of a co-constructed environment, which then lends itself easily to deficit-oriented ideas about what the student lacks.

To address this, through this memo, I attempt to describe the immediate context in which student participation occurred, including postsecondary educator utterances, activities, and artifacts.

*Valerie: Case study from University of Morrill State.*

As a first-year student in the Fall 2011 seminar, Valerie expressed interest in pursuing a degree from the College of Natural Sciences. She was only one of two students from the class who declared a major that was not based in liberal arts. A petite woman with thick black hair and inquisitive dark eyes, Valerie occasionally wore a bright yellow *Pikachu* hat and diligently wrote in a spiral-bound notebook during lectures. Earlier in the semester, Valerie took up my offer to help the class write their papers. Throughout our time together, I found Valerie to be studious, thoughtful, and curious about college-going practices, particularly since she identified as a first-generation college student.

To better contextualize how Valerie constructed meanings of race within the seminar, I created an adaptation of the Visual Learning Pathways (Barron, 2009). My appropriation of Barron's model is available in a separate figure, where the x-axis represents time and the y-axis represents one of three prevalent activities in the seminar: lecture, student

presentations, or co-constructed discussion between students and educators. More specifically, when Valerie made verbal contributions to the seminar, I indexed her comments in a space that corresponds to the date (x-axis) and the type of activity (y-axis). Additionally, I documented the immediate context where her utterance occurred, whether Valerie responded to a question in an I-R-E sequence, connected her ideas to another student (without prompts or interruptions from Harris), or initiated her own ideas. Each comment is color-coded based upon content where, for example, the color red indexes those remarks about race. Finally, icons that accompany each comment symbolize mediating artifacts, including traditional classroom tools (books, worksheets, PowerPoint presentations), personal stories, re-purposed tools, pop culture, and history. Through this visual representation, I tried to illustrate how meanings students articulate are *co-constructed* by a constellation of mediating activities and artifacts.

At the beginning of the semester at UMS, Valerie rarely spoke. In the second class, Harris asked for examples of “pluralistic multiculturalism” or “when we borrow and share” language and ideas from other groups. Valerie spoke for the first time in class when she replied, “Mosquitoes,” a term with Spanish/Portuguese roots, amid other students who took turns throwing in their bids to answer the professor’s question. During the third class, Harris asked students to identify what offices they hoped to interview and compile for the classroom resource book. By asking students to contribute to this collective resource book, Harris wanted them to grow in awareness of the rich network of support available on campus. Unlike other students who wanted to explore offices with racial emphases, such as the Native American Cultural Center or the Black/African American Cultural Center, Valerie chose to interview an administrator from Academic Advancement Center, an office that serves students with high financial need and first-generation college backgrounds (9/01/2011 Content Log).

Valerie stayed silent throughout the next four classes until later in the semester. For the first time in the semester in the 9<sup>th</sup> class, she later expressed *verbal* curiosity about race/ethnicity (note: registering for the class suggests *implicit* curiosity about such issues) during a moment of student connection during the eighth seminar. On this particular day, Harris asked students to divide themselves into small groups and brainstorm stereotypes or media representations about different groups by race and sexual orientation. After a small group presented on different stereotypes of Asian Americans, Shannon raised her hand to point out that not all Asian Americans are alike, and noted some similarities and some differences across Asian Americans. Valerie expanded upon Shannon’s comment and asked, “There are more Chinese and Japanese students in college than Cambodians. Why is that?” (9/22/2011 Content Log). Harris took her question as an opportunity to lecture about history and the legacy of immigration: Harris said, ‘There is no such thing about a positive stereotype. Remember from the first week of class, where I said these studies have to do with time and a place? Well, the Chinese have a legacy of going to school, and because of that history, they have a higher income level and the higher that you have somebody in your family, the better possibility of you having a four-year degree. Consider the time of immigration and legacy that existed over time. Anybody know the difference between wealth and income? (Some students raised their hand, but Harris answered his own question.) Many may have income, but they don’t have wealth.

(OC: People seem really engaged, as evidenced by them leaning forward, some writing lots of notes, and most staring at Harris as he engaged in more information-sharing and story-telling activities).

According to Harris, many of the laws, words, technologies, and situations present in current times have been inherited from the past. Therefore, Harris explained, if we want to understand society today, we have to understand our past. More specifically, the historical conditions that impact immigration patterns can be brought to bear upon variations in contemporaneous college-going practices of Chinese and Cambodians. This relationship between past and current events consistently emerged in the UMS seminars, and some students, like Valerie, eventually appropriated these ideas about the role of history in shaping current phenomena.

In the next seminar, students watched a video about the racism and sexism embedded in Disney movies and merchandise. At the end of the film, the peer mentor solicited student reactions. Many students appreciated new insights, but they wanted the movie to give practical advice about how to eliminate negative stereotypes. In a moment of student initiation, Valerie asked whether she could still represent different types of groups if she wanted to make a movie, to which Harris replied that using accents and racial or ethnic representations was not wrong, but using these in negative and mean ways was not right (10/04/2011 Content Log).

To illustrate the context surrounding Valerie's next comment, the following vignette highlights a session where Harris asked students to come prepared to tell jokes. The types of jokes he asked us to share were not of the "knock-knock" variety, however, as evident in the following:

One crisp autumn morning, Harris asked students to arrange desks in a large circle, a marked shift from all previous lectures where we sat in straight rows. Amid increased volumes in conversations and the shuffling of desks, we re-organized our physical space so we could see each other. I was pleased to have the opportunity to see everybody's faces. After making announcements about the impending mid-term, Harris transitioned to the main event of class today: humor in racist jokes.

Harris held up a book titled *On the real side and African American humor: The best Black comedy from slavery to today*. Harris explained that slaves used to make fun of White people all the time, particularly since slaves thought Whites were timid and uptight when talking about sex. He then recited the following joke from slaves:

"White folks on the sofa,  
Black folks in the grass,  
White folks talking lowly,  
Black folks getting ass."

A handful of soft chuckles echoed around the room. Harris solicited people to share racist jokes they have heard, and several students waved their hands briskly in the air,



expressing excitement. Harris asked Lisa to tell the first joke, which she read from a piece of paper. “So, uhm, a Mexican and a nigger jumped off the top of a building. Who hits the ground first?” Lisa asked. Some students mumbled, “Who cares?” And Lisa replied, “Yeah, who cares. They’re both minorities. Okay, then, here’s another one. Why do Jews have big noses?” Wilson answered, “Because air is free.” There was a little bit of laughter, and Lisa said in an almost apologetic manner, “Okay, so maybe they are not that funny.”

After this first joke, other students jumped in to tell other jokes, and the level and volume of laughter increased in spikes, depending upon the joke. Harris asked, “What’s the most confusing day for Black children?” Bradford replied, “Father’s Day.” And Harris affirmed, “Yup. It’s Father’s Day.” The room erupted in laughter, with a mixture of loud cackles and apologetic chuckles. Some students threw their heads back with deep guffaws, others covered their mouths as if to indicate shock or embarrassment, and one student leaned forward, slapping his knee. Chong’s comment punctuated the laughter, “Oh, that’s bad, that’s bad, that’s messed up” – an apparent admission of contrition.

Afterwards, Romero raised his hand and asked, “Why do Mexicans only jump the border in pairs?” Chong said, “Why?” Romero replied, “Because there’s no **TRE**Spassing.” More students laughed, and some said, “Oooohhhhhhhh!” Romero said, “I got another one. Why does the Mexican only tie one shoelace?” Chong said, “Why?” Romero said, “Because the shoelace is made in Taiwan.” As he uttered the word Taiwan, he raised one finger.

Throughout the ten-minute period of telling racist jokes, students shared a variety of jokes about different racial and ethnic groups. Valerie contributed to the conversation by telling the following joke: “What do you do when you see a Mexican riding a bike? You shoot the Mexican because it might be your bike. What do you do when you see a Black riding a bike? You shoot the Black because he probably killed the Mexican.” Other students told jokes that mocked social structures, phenotypes, and cultural practices:

- What starts with N and ends with R that you never want to call a black person? Neighbor.
- How do you blindfold a Chinese guy? With dental floss.
- What do you call a Mexican getting baptized? Bean dip.
- Why do niggers wear wide-brimmed caps? So birds don’t shit on their lips.
- What do you call a whole bunch of White people running down the hill? An avalanche. What do you call Black people running down the hill? Mudslide. What do you call a bunch of Mexicans running down the hill? Jailbreak.
- What do you call niggers in a school bus? A rotten banana.
- What’s the difference between a black man and a bunk bed? A bunk bed will support your children.

As the jokes continued, the volume and frequency of laughter decreased substantially, replaced by silence or apparent feelings of contrition with comments such as, “That’s not right” or “Oh, daaannnngggg.”

Harris concluded the session with one last joke he read from a book written by comedian Chris Rock: “The country is in an uproar. Everybody's mad at each other. It's sad. Black people are mad, white people are mad, black people yell racism, white people yell reverse racism, Chinese people yell sideways racism.” At this point, nobody laughed. I sensed a dramatic shift in the ambience, and in a matter of minutes, the classroom transformed itself from roars of laughter to silence.

After this final joke, Harris facilitated a lecture about out-group humor, in-group humor, inequitable distribution of power, and history. Although Harris sprinkled his lecture with opportunities for students to participate, the remainder of the session revolved around his lecture. Toward the end of the session, Harris asked students to write a quote from Ralph Ellison: “Change the joke, and slip the yoke.” After asking for interpretations of this quote, Harris explained that the quote deals with out-group humor since the yoke represents “the yoke of oppression”; by joking about another group, he will no longer be the target of ridicule.

I used this vignette to exemplify how Harris saturated diversity initiative activities with images and messages from popular culture as one entry point into discussions about power and oppression. Despite her tendency to stay relatively quiet in class at the beginning of the semester, Valerie felt comfortable enough to participate in the discussion by telling a joke that reflected permissive violence against some communities of color. This is an interesting development, particularly since only half of the class actively told jokes and the other half remained silent, aside from laughter and chuckles. Arguably, Valerie’s verbal articulations of a taboo subject suggest increased willingness to discuss issues of race and a more positive racial attitude, a shift from times when she remained quiet in previous seminars.

Throughout the latter half of the semester, Valerie became increasingly vocal not only with regard to issues of race, but gender as well. In all of the discussions to follow, Harris used pop culture as the medium through which to facilitate these conversations. For example, Harris asked students what companies used different groups to sell products. Collectively, the students talked about how Taco Bell used Mexicans to sell their products because their commercials incorporated a chihuahua with a strong Mexican accent. In one Initiation-Response-Evaluation (I-R-E) sequence, Harris asked students why people might protest these ads. Valerie answered, “Because Latinos might be looked down upon – you look at them like they’re a dog”. Harris positively evaluated her response with a nod of his head and said, “That’s right.” In another seminar, she responded to a question posed by Harris to interpret how gender is portrayed in an alien leader from Star Trek, explaining that “she has short hair, so it’s like she has power like a man” (10/25/2011 Content Log). Though Harris asked specifically about gender here, Valerie independently brought issues of gender to the fore when she decided to write a paper about sexist representations of female politicians (11/01/2011 Content Log) and initiated a conversation about race and gender when talking about how Herman Cain was accused of sexual harassment (11/03/2011 Content Log).

Toward the end of the semester, Harris asked students to identify a piece from pop culture and interpret what types of messages the artifact says about race, gender, or other identities. Seminar participants brought sundry topics and mediums, ranging from news articles about White men who can't dunk basketballs, blogs that advise men about "Ten Ways to Tell her She is getting FAT", and gentrification patterns in a Seattle school district. During these share-outs, a discussion ensued about the concept of double standards, where some people can "get away" with making comments because of their demographic markers, but others cannot echo the same sentiments without a public vilification. In a moment of student initiation, Valerie expanded the conversation regarding double standards:

Valerie said, "I saw a commercial called Black Girls Rock. Black girls do it, and it's not racist, but if Whites do it, it is racist?" Harris answered her question by talking about award ceremonies that highlight particular racial groups. He asked, "So is that just as racist as the Caucasian Award Ceremony?" One student said that it's like Black Miss America, and another student said that a Caucasian Award Ceremony is racist because they already had their time before the Civil Rights Movement. Harris said, "Actually we do have a Caucasian Award Ceremony. It's called the Academy Awards." Akira said this is similar to when people ask why the university does not celebrate a White History Month or provide a White Cultural Center. The peer mentor admitted that when people ask that question, she tells them that every month that is not dedicated for a racial/ethnic group is White History Month. Harris added that the reason why we have these specially designated months is because those groups have been left out of institutional structures and history, so a separate month recognizes their contributions (11/03/2011 Content Log).

Valerie's question suggests that double standards do exist when organizations and recognitions for people of color are not racist, but organizations and recognitions explicitly for non- people of color are indeed racist. In their explanations of double standards, the peer mentor and Harris attempted to spotlight how the disenfranchisement and marginalization of certain communities warrant special recognition. Whether Valerie believed these explanations is inconclusive. However, toward the end of the semester, video records suggest that Valerie appropriated more complex understandings of other seminar content, such as the complicated relationship between history and educational outcomes.

In a group presentation about equal educational opportunity, Valerie facilitated an activity with classmates Marissa and Chong. Valerie passed pieces of Laffy Taffy to participants as they entered the classroom. Based upon the random selection of Laffy Taffy colors, some of the students received assignments to sit in a part of the classroom equipped with numerous newspapers and several teaching assistants; the other half of the students received instructions to sit in a smaller part of the classroom with only one newspaper and one teaching assistant. Chong prompted students to spend a few minutes locating an article about issues of race. The group with only one newspaper and one teaching assistant struggled to work collaboratively, while the other group carried out the

assignment more smoothly. After this activity, Valerie facilitated a conversation to explain that the Laffy Taffy represents “luck” and depending upon the color of the Laffy Taffy, students could be randomly assigned to the “lucky” group (with multiple resources) or the “unlucky” group (with only one newspaper) (11/15/2011 Content Log). Using this as an example, Valerie explained that educational opportunity is a matter of luck, race, and socioeconomic status.

Whites tend to be wealthier, Valerie said, which means they are able to go to college, get better jobs, and choose where to live. Making more money means paying more taxes, which means a better educational system. Valerie explained that there are other factors like Whites have wealth and they're able to go to college and get a better job and choose where to live. The more money you make, the more taxes you pay, the more resources communities have. Fewer taxes do not have a lot of money, so this is how much we can give you. Chong shared a personal example of when she used to live in an old neighborhood where she heard police sirens, fights, people arguing all the time, and it was hard to focus on studying and doing homework. When Chong's family moved to a new neighborhood, she said it was so quiet she could hear the clock ticking. Based upon those environments, already some people are lucky to live in certain areas that enable them to go to college. Harris corroborated this. Valerie shared her own personal story and said that she was looking for dentists and when you go to a poor neighborhood, it is filled with lots of street lights. When there is a neighborhood with a lot of street lights, there tends to be more crime and the pricing of the house is lower. Marissa added to the conversation and talked about how living back in Chicago, there was a train that shook her family's house, shootings, ambulances, and you have to know how to adapt to that situation so you can figure out how to focus. When Marissa moved to Michigan, it was the same thing, minus the train, and you had to adapt to that. In school, she realized that to focus, people started smoking pot and doing drugs. Then coming to Colorado Springs, there was nothing going on. Harris laughed and said it's all about comparison. Marissa says that it is a little bit too quiet, so she listens to music b/c she has to adapt to that.

Despite having conversations about these complex issues, Valerie believed that personal responsibility played a more prominent role in educational opportunity than race, wealth, environment, and history:

Two of my friends are African Americans, said Valerie. Both of their parents went to college. Shannon's parents were doctors, but she didn't go to school, she was lazy, and she went to a good high school. Rachel wanted to go to college. Both had the same opportunities, but one wanted to go to college, the other didn't. Rachel fell in with the wrong crowd and got into drugs. To help solve educational problems, people need to have individual responsibility and motivation (11/15/12 Content Log).

Despite articulating her understanding of factors that contribute to educational opportunities (or lack thereof), Valerie believed that personal responsibility played a more powerful role in influencing college-going practices than race and socioeconomic status. Her experiences taught her that “personal responsibility” constitutes the weightiest factor in determining whether her friends decided to pursue college. I share this example to emphasize the following: in no way do I assert that Valerie completely transformed in her racial attitudes. However, I do assert that by participating in the Morrill State University seminar, she gained exposure to additional factors to consider when painting the broader picture of complex interactions between race and educational opportunity. This seminar planted a seed that is beginning to take root and show evidence of some growth and willingness to engage with issues of race.

From this brief overview of Valerie’s verbal participations in the seminar, I make the following claims. Though Valerie was very quiet at the beginning of the seminar, she began making more bids for verbal participation, and these bids were grounded in issues of race. Although video records do not pinpoint the exact cause of these claims, 80% of her utterances corresponded to mediating artifacts of pop culture and history, suggesting the use of these topics as robust entry point for engaging students in otherwise unapproachable and distant ideas. Additionally, Valerie appropriated a more complex understanding of race and history, a callback to Omi and Winant’s critique of the ethnicity paradigm. More specifically, the ethnicity paradigm, the dominant theory of race in the United States throughout the Civil Rights Movement, posited that all groups assimilated to America in the same ways, regardless of country of origin. Although she verbalized these ideas and may not necessarily have embodied them fully, the ways Valerie participated in the seminar indicate an increased willingness to interact with these ideas. In summary, Valerie showed shifts in the following ways: increased verbal contributions over time and a more nuanced understanding of the important role history play in shaping current circumstances.

I now turn to Lauren, a student from Garland University, who exhibited shifts in her verbal conceptualizations of race over time.

*Lauren: Case study from Garland University.*

Similar to Valerie, Lauren was a first-year student whose verbal articulations indicated a growing inclination to talk about issues of race over time. With long, shiny hair, freckles, and dark almond-shaped eyes, her presence drew much eye contact from participants. Lauren spoke frequently, but contributed to the seminar in ways that facilitated connections to other participants and expanded upon other ideas without becoming domineering. On the first day of the seminar, though Lauren spoke on several different occasions, she brought up no issues specifically about race. First, she participated in an icebreaker where everybody in the seminar introduced himself or herself. Later, Lauren initiated questions about the effects of attendance on grades. Throughout the remainder of the first seminar, she talked about worldview, the main topic of conversation facilitated by the postsecondary educators. For example, in a scripted activity, Blomkvist asked people to close their eyes, listen carefully, and imagine what they see as he read the following excerpt:

“The man got out of the car, walked up to and through the gate. He walked up the long cold sidewalk to the house. He knocked on the door and waited until she answered.”

After asking everybody to open their eyes, Blomkvist and Logan solicited interpretations of what kind of car the man drove, the type of gate he entered, and the purpose of his visit. During this I-R-E session, Lauren said she saw “a man visit his girlfriend or wife with a suitcase.” For the remainder of the seminar, she continued to respond to I-R-E moments when attempting to come to shared understanding of what constitutes worldview. At the end of the seminar, postsecondary educators asked students to share anything that struck them or any questions they may have. Lauren shared that that she felt positive about this group and looked forward to getting to know everybody.

On the second day of the seminar, Lauren’s participation in the dialogue began by connecting to Subini, a student participant who thought worldview played a role in how people work on team projects. After Subini voiced this opinion, Lauren added that language was an example about how worldview shaped how people see their surroundings, like “even using a different term, like Cuties versus Clementines” (2/01/12 Content Log). The first time Lauren brought up issues of race surfaced when the postsecondary educators facilitated a discussion about stereotypes. Carissa, a transfer student participant, talked about the first one and a half years in college when she wanted to push back against stereotypes, so she drastically changed her identity everyday. Now, Carissa confessed, she did not know her true identity because she worked so hard not to reify stereotypes. Lauren connected to Carissa’s example by sharing her own personal story:

"It's obvious to me that I'm half-Chinese, but others don't get it and still make offensive Asian jokes around me. When I am with the Asian side of my family, they joke about Asian stereotypes, and it's okay. But being half-White and half-Chinese, when I am with friends who joke about Asians, they say they can do it around me because I am not really Asian. It's almost like two identities, and it feels like they should mix. Sometimes I feel like I have to have just one or the other." Blomkvist affirmed Lauren’s experiences by talking about how it is a perfect example of intersectionality, and how her Whiteness is more salient to her friends.

Following this discussion, Blomkvist and Logan facilitated a scripted activity that involved hula hoops to symbolize identities. Logan placed a hula-hoop on to her co-facilitator as she articulated her assumptions of his race/ethnicity, gender, nationality, religion, ableness, occupation, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic background. Blomkvist proceeded to take each hula-hoop off himself and articulate how he identifies for each social identity. Afterwards, the educators facilitated a discussion about the discomfort they feel when outsiders *assume* or *impose* identities upon us when we have already constructed our own identities. In an I-R-E session, when the postsecondary educators asked for reactions from the scripted activity, Lauren admitted to feeling discomfort from witnessing the hula hoops being imposed and taken off of people.

On the third day, Lauren brought up her second comment about race when Blomkvist asked for examples of positive stereotypes. Lauren said, “Asians are smart, but I’m not good at math.” Blomkvist nodded to indicate that he heard her and then used her comment as an entry point into a conversation regarding the difference between stereotypes and generalizations. Later in the same seminar, Lauren initiated a new thread of conversation when she raised her hand and expressed appreciation that in this seminar, unlike other classes, she likes it here because she feels responsibility, not guilt, when it comes to privilege:

Lauren talked about taking a communications course where they have discussed the concept of privilege. But classes about privilege have ended with people having mixed feelings and relentless arguing. Lauren felt frustrated because in the communications course, people felt pressure to not only recognize how their privilege oppresses other people, but to feel guilty. “I like it here because in the other classes, it seems like people had to apologize for their privilege. And it was frustrating because I don’t feel like I have to apologize for my privilege. But I do feel like I have a responsibility.” Lauren says that this is the first time she did not feel frustrated when talking about issues of privilege.

This excerpt from the content log highlights how two separate classes with different educators can facilitate learning environments around the same concept—such as privilege—yet yield different outcomes. While the communications class appeared to use guilt, the Frontiers dialogue seemed to leverage a sense of responsibility.

When postsecondary educators facilitated a dialogue about how student participants apply ideas from Frontiers dialogues to their real lives, Lauren talked about changes she was making in her life. During a co-constructed discussion about privilege and oppression, Erin asked why anybody would want to create change if they benefit from oppression. Lauren responded to Erin’s comment by saying that people do not always benefit from oppression; for example, she has created change in little ways by not buying certain products that might portray her in negative ways. At the end of the day, when the facilitators asked everybody to share their feelings about the day’s conversation, Lauren reiterated her appreciation for the structure of the dialogue regarding privilege, which facilitated an atmosphere where people did not argue and truly wanted to understand different issues.

At the beginning of the penultimate seminar, the postsecondary educators asked everybody to share, in the icebreaker, about a time when they could think of an even or situation when they felt uncomfortable, or surprised, about one of their identities. Lauren talked about making small talk with a waiter who asked where she was from. When she replied that she was in Colorado, he appeared quite shock that somebody who looked like her could be from Colorado.

Later in this same session, Logan and Blomkvist organized a mock Gallery Walk where students took approximately 7-10 minutes to walk around the room to silently review

factual and fictional statements associated with affirmative action. As students milled around the room, Blomkvist reminded participants that the goal of the Gallery Walk was to test students their ability to dialogue and “that just because there is a source next to the sign does not mean it is true” (February 15, 2012 Content Log). Some of the artwork featured in the Gallery Walk included statements such as “Affirmative action is a form of reverse discrimination” and “More white women have benefitted from affirmative action than any other group” (February 15, 2012 Content Log). Afterwards, students shared any immediate reactions, impressions, and lingering questions about the statements. Bethy talked about feeling “icky” from government tracking race, and Lauren expanded upon Bethy’s comment by talking about how sometimes she doesn’t check the “Asian” box on surveys and applications because she did not care about issues of race.

After Cori voiced her sadness regarding inequitable distribution of school resources, Lauren connected to Cori’s ideas by talking about two friends from different high schools: a person of color from a privileged high school and a White friend from a poorer high school. She wondered why affirmative action cannot help a “non-privileged, non-person of color”. By describing the characteristics of recipients who do *not* benefit from affirmative action—poor Whites—Lauren centered privileged people of color as the primary targets of affirmative action. Blomkvist affirmed that he heard Lauren’s contribution to the discussion, and then expanded upon this topic by asking participants what they thought about the Art Gallery statement where “White women are the biggest beneficiaries of affirmative action.” There was no response from the group, including Lauren. He went on to explain that the statement was authentic because White women have benefited the most from affirmative action, and in reality White men also benefit from affirmative action, too, depending upon whether they are under-represented in some fields, such as nursing or social work.

At the end of this seminar, Lauren re-affirmed her appreciation for the following: first, the comfort from the seminar cultivated a safe place for her to dialogue with other participants because she would normally say nothing when topics of this nature emerged in other classes; and second, the opportunity to learn more about affirmative action since she did not have any opinions about the policy since she really did not know anything about it. Although Lauren claimed to know very little about affirmative action, her previous comments suggest she assumed more than she admitted. More specifically, her question about whether affirmative action should help “non-privileged, non-person of color” hints at an unstated belief that affirmative action actually helps the unnamed populations: privileged people of color. A discrepancy exists between Lauren stating that she had no prior knowledge of affirmative action *and* Lauren commenting that affirmative action fails to support “non-privileged, non-person(s) of color”. In my cognitive ethnography, I wondered whether she may have held previously negative attitudes about affirmative action, but did not want to verbalize these in the Frontiers dialogue because of her desire to respond in socially acceptable ways, a concept I want to re-visit.

On the last day of the Frontiers dialogue, people talked about changes they wanted to make to help make the world a better place and challenge oppression. Lauren admitted to



always feeling like she had an open worldview, but after five weeks in the Frontiers Dialogue, she believed she may have possibly been in denial about being open-minded. Within a few short weeks, friends and family members noticed that Lauren has shifted, especially when people made derogatory jokes, and she pointed out the inappropriate nature of such jokes. Additionally, although postsecondary educators did not prompt specific conversations vis-à-vis race, Lauren talked about her Asian identity:

After facilitators prompted the group to share out what kinds of changes they would like to make knowing what they know now, Blomkvist said he wanted to find work in an organization centered on social justice. Subini said she wanted to take more classes to educate her about these issues of oppression and privilege. Logan shared that right before she came to the dialogue, she perused the career fair and visited different organizations there, like the Autistic Society, and look forward to hearing about volunteering opportunities. Blomkvist asked if others wanted to share out. Carissa said she wants to find out more about the governing board for the university. Lauren said she wanted to “join the Asian Club and acknowledge more of that identity because I have not always acknowledged that.” (February 22, 2012 Content Log).

This statement suggests that, for the first time in college, Lauren made a conscious choice to explore her Asian identity and heritage after participating in the seminar. She shifted from ignoring the Asian box on applications (i.e., color-blindness) to voicing interest in joining the Asian Club (i.e., race-consciousness), a shift in attitude that hints at a more explicit interest in engaging with issues of race.

In summary, I make the following claims about Lauren’s trajectory in the Frontiers dialogue. First, her verbal contributions to the course tend to reference issues of race *increasingly* over time, even when the postsecondary educators do not necessarily highlight that as the main topic. And, this occurred even after Valerie remained completely silent about race on the first day. Second, she acknowledged changes she has already made or will make, which included the following: prevent friends and family members from telling offensive jokes in her presence, boycott the purchase of products that may send negative connotations about her, and intent to join the Asian Club. Third, the emotion of feeling “comfort” appeared to be a ubiquitous artifact that mediated these shifts in Valerie – an aura that the facilitators were purposeful in creating. There were numerous moments when Lauren confided in feeling comfortable talking about controversial issues, like privilege, in this seminar, but felt uncomfortable in other seminars and “shut down” when classmates reacted with frustration and anger.

The Excel spreadsheets highlight potential relationships between the following: (1) how students shifted in their articulations of race over time; and (2) how postsecondary educators used mediating artifacts and activities to organize learning opportunities. In summary, throughout the course of the seminar, both Valerie and Lauren demonstrated willingness to engage with issues of race as evidenced by their contributions to seminar discussions that emerged concomitantly with artifacts and activities purposefully organized to facilitate learning. Additionally, their comments occurred independently of

postsecondary educators, where Valerie and Lauren brought up topics of race without the facilitators prompting specific comments from participants about race. Their remarks about race demonstrate some degree of alacrity toward engaging in these topics, particularly since other students remained silent about race.

The postsecondary educators in this study intentionally saturated their educational environments with a broad spectrum of artifacts and activities. At the University of Morrill State, the tools Harris used to mediate student learning included pop culture, history, profanity, and jokes. These artifacts were introduced through activities such as I-R-E, share-outs, small group discussions, and student presentations. At Garland University, Blomkvist and Logan used contracts and metaphors (e.g., hula hoops as identities) and activities such as icebreakers, I-R-E, share-outs, small group discussions, large group dialogues, and re-purposed activities (e.g., Affirmative Action Gallery) to organize student learning.

In addition to the previously mentioned artifacts that were unique to each institution, the University of Morrill State and Garland University shared common artifacts, too. Postsecondary educators at both universities used traditional tools, emotion, and personal stories to mediate learning. Harris, Blomkvist and Logan all facilitated their seminars with conventional classroom artifacts, such as articles, worksheets, and videos. Of significance, all three postsecondary educators whom I observed appropriated roles as the central mediating artifacts of their learning environments. In this way, the facilitators *themselves* anchored how and what students learned since Harris, Blomkvist, and Logan delivered lectures, determined conversational flow by soliciting contributions from participants or changing topics as they deemed fit, and evaluated the quality of student responses. Emotion played a strong role in both seminars as well. Through humor and varying degrees of dis/comfort, the postsecondary educators created opportunities for students to engage with issues of race. Finally, both seminars asked participants to share stories about their personal experiences. Telling stories about themselves positioned students as *experts* on their lives, opinions, and perspectives.

Examining students' verbal articulations is one way to understand how students construct meaning about issues of race over time. To complement this perspective and capture more fully the types of attitudes students may have towards issues of race and how these attitudes may shift over time, I will need to turn my attention to the pre- and post-surveys of CoBRAS.

**THOUGHTS FOR THE FUTURE:** Writing this memo narrowed my focus for my dissertation chapters because I realize that I do not have credible evidence to demonstrate that Valerie and Lauren shifted in their racial attitudes *in relation* to how postsecondary educators organized the course. This exercise has brought up more questions and confusion for me. How do we know students are learning? How can we identify the sources that propelled learning processes? For example, Lauren was involved in numerous diversity-centered courses and extracurricular activities across campus. She explicitly mentioned being involved elsewhere and gaining exposure to these topics in other settings. However, *Frontiers* is the first setting where she felt comfortable enough to

engage in these issues without feeling guilt, but with feeling a sense of responsibility. I cannot help but wonder that she may feel like she is ready to interact with the ideas more fully *as a result* of having gained initial exposure from other settings. It's like spreading seeds in a garden: you never know which one will take hold, but at some point, one of those many seeds may blossom into a plant. The seeds (metaphors for all of the diversity activities Lauren became involved in) may have created fertile ground for Frontiers dialogue to take hold and create an entry point for Lauren to participate more fully in issues of diversity and race. This makes me think about my experiences as a teaching assistant for the undergraduate course (EDUC 4411) on sociocultural theories of learning and development. Learning can be documented when, for example, novices are involved in expert activities with the guidance of more experienced peers, and a community of learners embodies an asymmetrical division of labor that's shifting over time. In this way, students are involved in more of the 'whole activity' of a task even before they are fully competent in the task – an example of a zone of proximal development. I wonder if it is possible to have a zone of proximal development tethered to one concept—such as the notion of White privilege—with multiple entry points across different physical spaces and times. While this is good food for thought to wrestle with right now, I realize this is probably not strong enough evidence to back up my claims that Lauren and Valerie shifted in relation to how their seminars were organized. I will still submit this to Michele to see what she thinks, but will likely focus the bulk of my findings on modeling each seminar as an activity system and to note any contradictions that emerge.

## APPENDIX H

### SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF LEARNING PROTOCOL (Gutiérrez, Berlin, Crosland & Razfar, 1999)

This protocol is used to document how learning is organized in two primary ways: first, by physical configuration (where actors are positioned and the direction of their discourse); and second, by task and participation (how speakers are designated, how people respond to one another, who initiates discourse, and who takes up what responsibilities). Though I did not use this protocol for my final analyses, I did use it as a tool to conceptualize codes.



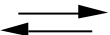
**Heading: Include topic of activity, length (in minutes), date, teacher, observer/coach, number of participants (including number of males and females).**

#### 1) Language used for this activity

#### 2) Physical Configuration

This category is used to indicate the nature of the physical configuration of Teacher and Students and the number of participants present during the designated activity. Four physical configurations have emerged from the data which describe the physical configuration (bodily alignment) and directionality of talk in the classroom. Descriptions of each configuration are listed below.

**Figure 1.** *Key to Symbols*

T	= Teacher
S	= Individual Students
	= Individual Desk
	= Group Table
	= Directionality of Talk

#### 3) Number of participants:

4) **Instructional Arrangement:** Indicate the nature of the instructional configuration used during the designated lesson activity. The possible categories used are: Individualized Work, Small Group, Whole Class or other. Indicate if the Instructional Configuration is teacher defined, student defined or negotiated.

5) **Opportunity to shift roles:** Indicate if the opportunity to shift roles exists in this class and will elaborate.

6) **Nature of participation.** Indicate whether the class activity is teacher centered, student centered, or community centered.

7) **Speaker designation** (indicates who is designating the next speaker)

Point (1) is used to indicate strict adherence to teacher/student selection of speakers (eg: students must raise their hands to bid for access to the floor and teacher selects).

Point (2) is used to indicate the predominance of teacher selection of speakers, but there are **occasional** instances of student self-selection (eg: students must raise their hands to bid for selection, but some students speak without bidding).

Point (3) is used to indicate speaker self-selection being primarily teacher designated, but there are **frequent** instances of student selection.

Point (4) is used to indicate self-selection (both Teacher and Students) being frequently **negotiated**, but the teacher occasionally reverts to designating the next speaker.

Point (5) is used to indicate the absence of speaker designation, but speaker selection is locally negotiated by the participants (eg: no hand raising, no choosing by designated leader, turn-taking without explicit/ marked designation).

8) **Teacher response** (indicates the manner in which the teacher responds to student contributions).

Point (1) is used to indicate no instances of Teacher acknowledging students' contributions.

Point (2) is used to indicate some instances of Teacher's acknowledgement of students' contributions by responding to the student.

Point (3) is used to indicate some instances of the Teacher's acknowledgement **and incorporation of** these utterances into the lesson discussion.

Point (4) is used to indicate regular instances of Teacher's incorporations of students' contributions. Teacher builds upon this type of student contribution for conducting the ongoing lesson discussion.

Point (5) is used to indicate routine instances of Teacher's acceptance and incorporation of students' contributions. Both Teacher **and other Students** respond to and build upon this type of student contribution.

9) **Generating sub-topics** (used to describe the manner in which sub-topics are generated in the course of a lesson activity).

Point (1) is used to indicate a high frequency of teacher generated sub-topics for discussion. Students are directed to engage in interaction only on these topics. Teacher strictly maintains discussion on these topics by sanctioning or ignoring students attempts to introduce sub-topics.

Point (2) is used to indicate some instances of teacher's acknowledgement of student generated sub-topics.

Point (3) is used to indicate not only some instances of teacher's acknowledgement of student generated sub-topics, but also some instances of teacher utilizing student generated sub-topics for discussion.

Point (4) is used to indicate some instances of teacher and students negotiating the ongoing sub-topics of discussion.

Point (5) is used to indicate regular instances of teacher and students co-constructing sub-topics for discussion throughout the course of the lesson activity.

10) **Discourse pattern** (describe the overall nature of the pattern of discourse).

Point (1) is used to indicate a strict teacher initiation, student response, and teacher evaluation discourse pattern. The nature of the student response is short (one word or one phrase) and no response elaboration is encouraged.

Point (2) is used to indicate a strict teacher initiation, student response, and teacher evaluation discourse pattern. The nature of the student response is short as in point 1, however, some student generated elaborations occur for purposes of clarification.

Point (3) is used to indicate the occurrence of a relaxed IRE discourse sequence with more student responses occurring in between the teacher initiation and evaluation. Student responses are characteristically longer and the teacher allows students to elaborate.

Point (4) is used to indicate the occurrence of relaxed IRE discourse sequence with more student responses occurring in between the teacher initiation and evaluation **and** student responses occasionally build on previous responses (chained) and contribute to the construction of shared knowledge.

Point (5) is used to indicate a discourse structure that is characterized by predominantly chained utterances and chained events. Students and teachers build on one another's responses in a manner that closer resembles a conversational discourse structure.

10a) **Script alignment with learning goal** (Does the script match the learning goal):

Point (1) is used to indicate that the script **never** matches the learning goal.

Point (2) is used to indicate that the script **rarely** matches the learning goal.

Point (3) is used to indicate that the script **sometimes** matches the learning goal.

Point (4) is used to indicate that the script **often** matches the learning goal.

Point (5) is used to indicate that the script **always** matches the learning goal.

11) **Preferred learning goal** (This category is used to describe the goal of the instructional activity as indicated by the discourse. This category specifically examines the preferred contribution to the discussion).

Point (1) is used to indicate that the implied goal is to contribute specific "right" answers to the teacher's questions. This goal is revealed through the predominance of a strict discourse structure in which the teacher/student initiates test-like questions for which there is only one correct answer.

Point (2) is used to indicate the implied goal as being correct student contributions with more opportunities to share correct information. This goal is revealed through a discourse structure in which the teacher initiates a combination of test-like questions and more open-ended questions for which there are several plausible answers.

Point (3) is used to indicate the implied goal as being a combination of contributions relaying correct information and shared knowledge. This goal is revealed through the predominance of a discourse structure in which the teacher/student initiates questions for which there are several correct answers.

Point (4) is used to indicate the implied goal as being the emphasis on shared knowledge, but still includes some desire for correct information. This goal is revealed through a discourse structure in which the teacher/student initiates questions for which there are no specific answers in combination with questions that are constructed based on previous student responses.

Point (5) is used to indicate the implied goal as being the arrival at an understanding or shared knowledge. This goal is revealed through a discourse structure in that is predominantly characterized by chained utterances and chained events. Questions initiated by either teacher/ student are constructed based on previous student responses.

12) **Frequency of repairs** (This category is used to describe the frequency of repairs in general): Point (1) is used to indicate that initiations for repair are being generated **solely** by the teacher to individual student's utterances. Point (2) is used to indicate rare instances of student initiations for repair. Point (3) is used to indicate some instances of student initiations for repair. Point (4) is used to indicate frequent instances of student initiations for repair. Point (5) is used to indicate regular instances of student initiations for repair.

13) **Direction of repair** (This category is used to describe the conditions under which initiations for repair occur in the flow of discourse within an activity.

Point (1) is used to indicate predominance of teacher self-repair.

Point (2) is used to indicate predominance of teacher repairing student discourse.

Point (3) is used to indicate predominance of student self-repair

Point (4) is used to indicate predominance of student repairing other students' discourse.

Point (5) is used to indicate predominance of bidirectional repairs.

14) **Expansion options** (This category is used to indicate the nature of expansion options which occur during Teacher/Student interaction within an activity).

Point (1) is used to indicate the absence of student-generated expansions of the lesson topic. Expansions which do occur are Teacher generated (i.e. Teacher expands on the current topic, includes teacher reformulations). No student-generated topic expansions are allowed.

Point (2) is used to indicate teacher elicitation of some student topic expansion.

Point (3) is used to indicate some instances of teacher's acknowledgement of students' topic expansions and student initiated topic expansion.

Point (4) is used to indicate not only some instances of the teacher's acknowledgement of students' topic expansions, but also some instances of Teacher and/or other students' incorporating this expansion into the ongoing lesson discussion.

Point (5) is used to indicate regular instances of Teacher and/or other students incorporations of student-generated topic expansions into the ongoing lesson discussion (i.e. multidirectional expansions).

15) **Extent of participation** (This category is used to describe the extent to which all members of the student body participate in the ongoing lesson discussion).

Point (1) is used to denote a relatively small number of core students who comprise the Teacher and Self designated respondent group throughout the lesson activity.

Point (2) is used to denote a slightly larger number of core respondents who interact with the Teacher throughout the lesson activity.

Point (3) is used to denote a respondent group which is comprised of about half of the student body present during lesson discussions.

Point (4) is used to denote a respondent group which is comprised of most of the student body present during lesson discussions.

Point (5) is used to denote a respondent group which is comprised of all of the student body present during lesson discussions.



Add up the total of points to determine type of script.

	No NAs	One NA	Two NAs	3 NAs	4 NAs
Recitation	1-20 pts	1-18 pts	1-16 pts	1-14 pts	1-12 pts
Responsive	21-30 pts	19-27 pts	17-24 pts	15-21 pts	13-18 pts
Responsive Collaborative	31-40 pts	28-36 pts	25-32 pts	22-28 pts	19-24 pts
Community of Learners	41-50 pts	37-45 pts	33-40 pts	29-35 pts	25-30 pts
TOTAL					

**Comments: (please indicate question number to which comments refer):**