Constructions at the borders of whiteness:

The discursive framing of contested white students

at a predominantly white institution of higher education

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
BY

Orkideh Mohajeri

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Rebecca Ropers-Huilman, Ph.D.

June 2018

Acknowledgements

So many people have helped me on this journey. I cannot adequately thank everyone who has accompanied me, but there are a few particular friends who have played a pivotal role in the dissertation process: Elisheva Cohen, Anna Kaiper, finn schneider, Fernando Rodriguez, Kate Diamond, Garrett Hoffman, Peter Campion, Daniel and Irina Woldeab, Adina Schneeweis, and Liz Greene – thank you all! Thank you to Dr. Rebecca Ropers-Huilman, who was an example of constancy, calm, guidance and receptivity. I have learned much from you, both during the time you were my Department Chair and the time that you've been my advisor, and I hope to emulate many of the qualities I observe in your leadership and scholarship. Thank you to Dr. Muhammad Khalifa, who befriended me, encouraged me, made time for my questions, connected me with great literature, and who brought joy and energy to this effort. Thank you to Dr. Roozbeh Shirazi, who provided critical thought, meaningful reflection, and incisive humor and appreciation for our shared culture. Thank you to Dr. Timothy Lensmire, whose work first encouraged me to flip the lens and consider studying whiteness, and who met with me towards the end of data collection and encouraged me to move forward with the structure that was already taking shape in my mind. Thank you to all the other staff, faculty and students – both undergraduate and graduate – who have enriched this effort in so many ways. I am deeply indebted to the lovely individuals who participated in this study, told me their stories, laughed with me, and shared their insights with me.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to the courage, love, and leadership demonstrated by Louis and

Louisa Gregory, Alain Locke, Richard W. Thomas and June Manning Thomas.

Abstract

This dissertation examines the discursive construction of race for contested whites, a population of U.S. undergraduate and graduate students with a liminal racial location. Contested whites inhabit an ambiguous racial positioning along the borders of whiteness. They do not fit neatly into current U.S. racial structures. Sometimes they can pass as white. Sometimes they have a white parent or grandparent, but are read as a person of color, and sometimes they are compelled to identify as white by current technologies of racial categorization even though their day-to-day experiences are ones where they are racialized as nonwhite. Their racial status is under question, either by themselves, others, institutions, or larger contexts. This study centers the stories and voices of 20 self-identified contested white undergraduate and graduate students attending a predominantly white institution of higher education. Critical narrative analysis and a feminist poststructural approach enable the identification of specific racial discourses, which work alone or in tight formation, to construct subjectivities for contested white students. Methods of data collection included individual qualitative interviews and participant observation of meetings of a multiracial student group. Higher education constitutes an important site for the study of racialization as it both promotes and sometimes challenges white supremacy. Additionally, the years typically spent in pursuit of higher education constitute a critical time of individual identity development. This research demonstrates that racial discourses are active and productive in U.S. higher education settings, and construct a series of subjectivities for contested white students. Overall, contested whites are subjugated as unwanted, incomprehensible, and marginalized entities. In addition to constructions meant to be inhabited by contested whites, racial discourses simultaneously construct habitations for uncontested whites, thus lending evidence to the assertion that

illogics of race produce distortion and affliction for both oppressor and oppressed. By centering the narratives of contested whites, this study helps displace normative whiteness and delineates some of the various and flexible ways in which racial discourses construct enactments of white supremacy.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction

There is a growing consensus among large segments of society that the United

States does, after all, still have "a race problem." Over the last five years, numerous

incidents of racially-motivated violence have been broadly reported in public broadcast

news and social media outlets and have captured the U.S. imagination. Specifically, an

ongoing array of egregious occurrences of police brutality across the nation (Ford &

Payne, 2015; Sanburn, 2015; Shoichet, Berlinger & Almasy, 2016; Smith, 2016), the

arrest of participants at protests calling for justice in the aftermath of such institutional

oppression (Mathis, 2015; Sawyer, 2016; Shapiro, 2015; Williams, 2013), and the

questionable deaths of individuals during incarceration by official agents of the state

(Ford & Payne, 2015) have been widely reported. In addition, political rhetoric against

Mexicans and Muslims has become a keynote in presidential political campaigns (Barrett,

2016; Curry, 2015; McManus, 2015; Phillips, 2016; Stein & Liebelson, 2016). Political

action in the form of Presidential executive orders and immigration policies have targeted

residents of Mexican descent and Muslims (Er, 2017; Flores, 2017; Kopan & Shoichet,

2017; Shamsi, 2017; Warren, 2017), and white supremacists have held rallies in Virginia

and other parts of the country. These events and the associated rhetoric make claims that

the United States has evolved into a post-racial society seem spurious at best. The

average citizen has been compelled to give at least passing attention to a consideration of

how much racism shapes and orders U.S. society and institutions.

Despite advances in the civil rights of minoritized groups in the United Sates over

the last half century, the idea of race as a real biological entity continues to organize

many aspects of North American institutions, politics, social interactions, individual psychology, and economic realities. Some scholars argue that race is a "master status" in the United States (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Omi & Winant, 2015; Renn, 2000, 2012), given that "racial considerations shade almost everything in America" (Bonilla-Silva, 2014, p. 2). Winant (2006) claims that "the concept persists, as idea, as practice, as identity, and as a social structure" (p. 986). In other words, race is amongst the most important aspects of individual identity and its power to shape lived experience and produce material effects for U.S. inhabitants and communities is primary.

The effects associated with this racial organization of society can be measured, and current statistics for different groups of racialized U.S. Americans across measures of educational attainment, employment, housing and other facets of daily life signal that glaring inequalities persist (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Pew Research Center, 2016; Smedley & Smedley, 2005). Although there are serious complications when attempting to categorize individuals into mutually exclusive racial categories such as "white," "black," "Hispanic,"[1] and more, the 2018 National Urban League Equality index, a quantitative tool for tracking Black-White and Hispanic-White racial equality, measures the "share of the pie" which various U.S. American racial groups have. This data is useful insofar as it is indicative of disparities between essentialized racial groups. The Equity Index's "pie" is composed of five larger categories, each weighted as follows, and then combined into

[1] This is the terminology used by the National Urban League Equality Index, which I subsequently use when referring to their data. I use the upper case format for all racial, national and ethnic categories except whites and whiteness. I do this to bring attention to what Leonardo (2009) refers to as the emptiness of whiteness (p. 105).

an overall pie at 100%: Economics (30%), health (25%), education (25%), social justice

(10%) and civic engagement (10%). For each of the five portions of the pie,

measurements for various racial groups are based on a wide range of factors.[2] For 2018,

the Equality Index reported that Black Americans rank at 72.5% of White America and

Hispanics at 79.3% (Morial, Lee, Candori, Logan, & Anyalebechi, 2018, p. 5). When

specifically examining economic measures, the National Urban League's Equality Index

claims that in 2018, Black Americans only have 58.2% of the economic pie, and

Hispanics come in at 64.9% of the pie (Morial et al., 2018, p.5).

The Pew Research Center asserts that the United States is composed of two quite

different societies, one Black and one white, with different economic realities. They

explain that federal data illustrate that:

> blacks on average are at least twice as likely as whites to be poor or to be
>
> unemployed. Households headed by a black person earn on average little more
>
> than half of what the average white households earns. And in terms of their
>
> median net worth, white households are about 13 times as wealthy as black
>
> households – a gap that has grown wider since the Great Recession. (Pew
>
> Research Center, 2016, para. 2)

---

[2] For example, the category of Health includes data on death rates, life expectancy, physical conditions, substance abuse, mental health, access to care, elderly healthcare, pregnancy issues, reproduction issues, delivery issues and children's health. The category of Economics includes data on median household income, median earnings by gender, population living below the poverty line, unemployment data, home ownership rates, mortgage and home improvement loan application data, information on the digital divide, car ownership rates, and other transportation data.

Data from the realms of educational achievement, residential segregation, social isolation and political engagement also point to a large-scale pattern of disadvantage and inequality for Black U.S. Americans and other racialized groups (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Morial et al., 2018). When it comes to education, the National Urban League's Equality Index places Black Americans at 78.5% of the total pie and Hispanics at 76.4% (Morial et al., 2018, p. 5).

Data on police brutality, arrest patterns, incarceration rates, and capital punishment for Black U.S. Americans versus white U.S. Americans are disconcerting. One in three Black men is expected to spend time in prison (Alexander, 2012; Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Boncszar, 2003). Bruce Drake (2013), a senior editor at the Pew Research Center, explained that "Black men were more than six times as likely as white men in 2010 to be incarcerated in federal and state prisons, and local jails" (p. 1). The American Civil Liberties Union (2013) reports:

> a Black person is 3.73 times more likely to be arrested for marijuana possession than a white person, even though Blacks and whites use marijuana at similar rates. Such racial disparities exist … in counties large and small, urban and rural, wealthy and poor, and with large and small Black populations. (p. 4)

Finally, when it comes to positions of formal leadership and power in the United States, racial disparities are dramatic. For example, in 2016, 82.4% of all Fortune 100 board members were white, and 85.6% of all Fortune 500 board members were white (Alliance for Board Diversity, 2016). In 2011, 87% of all college and university presidents were white (Cook, 2012), and as of 2009, 85% of all federal judges were white

(Belczyk, 2009). Despite the challenges of categorizing individuals into racial categories, these data clearly show large-scale differences in how whites, Blacks, Latinx, and other minoritized groups fare across a wide range of social and economic factors in our society. These measurements have meaning insofar as they signal glaring inequalities in the material experiences of various racial groups in our country. These disparities should not be ignored.

Race as a Site for Power Play

Scholars have argued that race is largely a socially constructed phenomenon, not a biological, naturally-occurring one. While past policy-makers and thought leaders argued that Blacks were at the bottom of the social and economic ladder due to innate biological factors such as smaller brain size (Morton, 1839) or genetically inherent low IQ (Hernstein & Murray, 1994), most current scholars reject these proclamations. Instead, contemporary scholars and scientists assert that "race" is biologically *unreal* (Graves, 2001; Omi & Winant, 2015; Renn, 2012; Smedley & Smedley, 2005; Winant, 2006). There are no physical or biological characteristics that consistently divide humanity into various distinct races. In fact, there is more diversity within so-called racial groups than between racial groups. Instead, "race" is largely a socially constructed concept (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Jones & Abes, 2013; Omi & Winant, 2015; Renn, 2012; Smedley & Smedley, 2005; Wijeyesinghe, 2012; Winant, 2006). In other words, the ideas of race and racial difference were created through human interaction as a primary way to make sense of and structure society. This initial idea of difference became a predominant mental model which is used to organize social reality and to distribute goods and resources.

Along with the recognition of the social construction of race has come an acknowledgement that the creation and maintenance of racial divisions produces real material effects and distributes power. Omi and Winant (1994, 2015) have asserted that race must be understood as a site for political contest. They define race as "an unstable and 'decentered' complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle" (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 55). In other words, locations of racial construction are sites where power and relationships are also constructed and negotiated. Omi and Winant (1994) write about *racial formation* – which they define as "the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed" (p. 55). In their noted work, *Racial Formation in the United States*, Omi and Winant (1994) explain that "society is suffused with racial projects, large and small, to which all are subjected" (p. 60). Omi and Winant (1994) describe *projects* as the willful exercise of power to represent and organize human bodies and social structures in ways that construct specific outcomes. Sometimes the language of projects is explicitly racial, for example when presidential contender Donald Trump repeatedly talked about keeping illegal Mexican immigrants outside of U.S. borders and characterized Mexican immigrants as criminals, rapists and drug runners (Lee, 2015). Other times, the language of racial projects avoids explicit racial rhetoric (Bush, 2004; Haney López, 2014), such as when Trump used the language of "making America great again." Social commentators have asked exactly when was America "great," and for whom was it great (Harrison, 2016; Suh, 2015)? Calling for a return to former "greatness" for the white, middle class U.S. American citizen is a racial project that multiple political campaigns, from both

liberal and conservative factions, have employed over time (Engel, 2017; Margolin, 2016). This racial project centers on white middle class prosperity, which has often been secured in part through the exploitation of minoritized groups (Ngai, 2004).

Racial projects, large and small, are undertaken in a wide range of settings and contexts by a wide range of actors (Omi & Winant, 1994, 2015). Over time, some racial projects become "common sense" through the operation of consensual hegemony (Omi & Winant, 1994). Hegemony, which is the domination of one group over others, is established and secured in any given society through a combination of coercion and consent (Gramsci (1948/1971). "[I]n order to consolidate their hegemony, ruling groups must elaborate and maintain a popular system of ideas and practices—through education, the media, religion, folk wisdom, etc." – in other words, what comes to be known as "common sense" (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 67). Thus, contemporary U.S. society's classification of certain people as "white" is regarded as "common sense" (Castagno, 2014; Devos & Banaji, 2005). For example, categorizing people of Italian, German, Irish, Swedish and other Nordic descent as white is "obvious" and "common sense." The classification of others (such as mixed Black-white individuals) as Black is also "common sense." At one time, however, many of the groups who are now white were not always considered so; they were considered to occupy locations that were racially marked as not-white and some, such as Irish immigrants, were even considered to be Black (Bush, 2004; Ignatiev, 1995; Roediger, 1991). In other words, common sense changes, and it can change quite drastically over time. Common sense changes in order to secure power for a portion of the population. Being common-sensically defined as "white"

provides the people who fall into that category with a set of privileges and advantages which people outside of that racial group are denied to varying degrees.

Universities and Colleges as Racial Projects

Institutions of higher education have long been positioned as promoters of the public good. At such institutions, knowledge is produced and truth is discovered, and both are propagated into larger society and applied for the greater good of the general populace in local, national and global contexts. Federal policies invoke this narrative, including legislation like the Morrill acts, the Hatch Act, and the GI Bill. Larger discourses of "success" also call upon this understanding, including discourses of meritocracy and the American Dream. Institutions of higher education themselves articulate their missions of knowledge creation and application for the common good through their marketing materials, their campaigns, and even their mission and vision statements.

Institutions of higher education have also been lauded for their liberatory potential. These institutions of higher education can educate the ignorant, remove the blinders from the eyes of the untrained mind, and train subjects in becoming citizen-scientists. Even beyond this, universities and colleges are sometimes narrated as sites for the fostering and initial rumblings of revolutionary calls for social justice, among which include the call for conscientization (Freire, 1968/1993) around oppression, and certainly around all forms of injustice – economic, sexual, racial, and more. Especially in the U.S., historical events seem to support the depiction of universities and colleges as breeding grounds for revolution against social injustice. Certainly, this was the case during the

Vietnam War, but also more recently around incidents of racial injustice such as police
brutality towards Rodney King in the 1990s and the more recent spate of police violence
against Black youth in the last half decade (Dickerson & Saul, 2016; Pearson, 2015;
Sahlins, 2017).

On the other hand, some scholars argue that institutions of higher education are
"not simply neutral arbiters" (Cabrera, 2011, p. 77). Rather, institutions of higher
education are raced in terms of their participation, practices and outcomes (Leonardo,
2013). This is made readily apparent through the perusal of the racial composition of
faculty and administrative leadership, of tenured and untenured faculty, of students
majoring in STEAM fields, and of retention and graduation rates among students.
Additionally, these institutions participate in the process of racialization as they define
"success," "achievement," and "the college experience" in racialized ways. For example,
living on campus away from family members or becoming a member of a fraternity is
seen as normal and a sign of "successful" student engagement on campus, but these are
practices with racial, gender, cultural and class implications for definitions of "success"
and "normal." Cabrera (2011) writes that "institutions of higher education within a white
supremacist structure … serve as a means of both reinforcing and sometimes challenging
systematic racism" (p. 77). Jodi Melamed (2014) explains:

> That the university—a site that has held so much promise for the transformation
> of society and our collective imaginations—has historically been a key institution
> within racialized and gendered capitalism; it has been a main locus for the social
> reproduction of racial, class, and gender inequalities and normative morality; and

now it has become center and transit for the ongoing neoliberal debt economy, controlling dissent, and perpetuating old and new forms of settler colonialism. (p. 290)

Furthermore, the years typically spent studying at institutions of higher education serve as a time of critical development along a number of fronts, including racial and ethnic identity development, and social development in general (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton & Renn, 2010; Renn, 2003, 2004). An argument can be made that students have some of their most prolonged, in-depth interactions around issues of race and diversity during their undergraduate and graduate years (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Cabrera, 2011, 2012, 2014a, 2014b; Cabrera, Franklin & Watson, 2016). As such, it is important to examine what institutions of higher education narrate as available subject positions, and how they do so. Which forms of diversity count and which do not? Admissions clearly seems to recognize and propagate a certain conceptualization of racial difference, while many others are overlooked or undervalued.

Who are Contested Whites?

An emergent body of literature in the social sciences focuses on the fluid and sometimes contested nature of racial identity (Ajrouch & Jamal, 2007; Burke & Kao, 2013; Campbell & Troyer, 2007; Doane, 1997; Doyle & Kao, 2007; Feliciano, 2016; Gans, 2012; Gullickson & Morning, 2011; Jamal & Naber, 2008; Kibria, 1996; Renn, 2000, 2003, 2004, 2012; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002; Saperstein & Penner, 2012, 2014; Tehranian, 2008, 2009; Vargas, 2014, 2015; Vargas & Kingsbury, 2016; Vargas & Stainback, 2016). Vargas, Saperstein and others argue that social scientific attempts to

measure and understand racial identity should be composed of not just personal racial

identification by individuals – which has been the traditional category of data collection

and analysis – but should also take into consideration reflected appraisals (Khanna, 2004)

of those individuals from others – that is how individuals are *perceived* by others in terms

of racial categorization. When these two factors – that is, personal identification and

reflected appraisals – do not line up, there is a sense of racial incongruence (Saperstein &

Penner, 2014; Vargas & Stainback, 2016). Typically, the population of U.S. Americans

with incongruent racial identification is estimated to be around 4%, but using the 2006

national PALS data – the first nationwide survey in which more nuanced questions about

racial identification were employed – Vargas and colleagues (Vargas & Kingsbury, 2016;

Vargas & Steinback, 2016) found that the percentage was much higher; approximately

14% of adults experienced racial contestation (Vargas & Stainback, 2016, p. 457). This

includes whites, Blacks, Latinx, Asians, and perhaps other adult U.S. inhabitants. In

addition, Vargas projects that racial contestation will increase over time.

Within this larger group of people with contested racial identities, Vargas (2014)

identifies *contested whites* as those who identify racially as white, but who are perceived

by others to be people of color. For my study, I expand the term beyond Vargas'

parameters. Here, contested whites include not only individuals who identify as white,

and who are appraised by others as being "of color," but also include individuals who are

appraised by others as white, but who identify as non-white, that is "of color." This can

include Latinx, Blacks, Asians, Middle Easterners, Native Americans and others. I argue

that it is important to expand this definition of contested whiteness in order to capture the

ambiguity and subtlety that lies in this additional, related group of racialized experiences

and conceptualizations at the margins of whiteness. Expanding conceptualizations of

contested whiteness will lead to more critical understandings of experiences and racial

projects at the borders of whiteness, and of the power and constructions of whiteness

itself.

  Contested whites are those who do not fit neatly into current U.S. racial

structures; they are ambiguously raced and not securely positioned. Their racial status is

under question, either by themselves, others, institutions, or larger contexts (Kibria, 1996;

Majaj, 2000; Tehranian, 2009; Vargas, 2014, 2015, 2016). Contested whites may

sometimes be categorized as white and sometimes not (Ajrouch & Kusow, 2007; Kibria,

1996; Tehranian, 2008, 2009, Vargas, 2015, 2016). Vargas (2014) explains that

"contested whites find themselves at the margins of whiteness, betwixt and between

categories of racial dominance and racial marginalization" (p. 2281). Some may spend

portions of their lives identifying as white and not feeling a need to trouble racial schema.

Others may be told that they are white, but in certain contexts they are not read that way

(Jamal & Naber, 2008; Vargas, 2015, 2016). There is a sense of "in-betweenness"

(Sarroub, 2002) to the lived experience of individuals who can be placed in this category.

They do not strictly belong to any one location within larger racial schema. Sometimes

this leads to a sense of being outside (Vargas, 2015, 2016), being incomprehensible, and

having to provide explanations and justifications. Contested white individuals can take up

multiple subject positions, and can choose to move back and forth between locations

(Lather, 1991; Jamal & Naber, 2008). These individuals' racial identities are sometimes

situated at the nexus of various paradoxes (Naber, 2002; Zine, 2001), and can have the advantage of being able to trouble or resist categorizations of race.

Many scholars also point to a sense of invisibility for contested whites (Naber, 2000; Tehranian, 2009), partly because official means of measuring racial demographics in the United States do not account for such ambiguously situated individuals and groups. Although these assessments have been adjusted in recent decades, they still often overlook contested whites or subsume them under other categories of difference (Vargas, 2016). The absence and disregard of contested whites in official state conceptualizations of difference, however, means that various support programs, such as employment opportunities, housing programs, academic scholarships, and other social goods, skip over these groups and render them invisible (Tehranian, 2009). In addition, larger society – including the arenas of law, media, and social discourse – tends to overlook this form of difference, thus rendering contested whites invisible and unheard.

Producing Contested Racial Subjects

Poststructural thought doubts the existence of a rational reality and of consistent truth. Instead, "language and discourses are dynamic sites for the construction of meaning. From a poststructural perspective, discourse not only reflects culture, but also actively produces it" (Allan, 2010, p. 13). In other words, discourse – which denotes not just language, but also architecture, bodies, images, and more – shapes meaning and being (Allan, 2010; Davies & Gannon, 2005). Ropers-Huilman (1998) writes that "meaning can be understood to be inscribed *on* given entities, rather than objectively described *about* them" (p. 6). Allan (2010) explains that "language is socially constituted

and shaped by the interplay between texts, readers, and larger cultural context, rather than carrying any kind of fixed or inherent meaning that can be 'discovered'" (p. 13).

Individuals do not exist outside of discourse (Weedon, 1997). Individuals do not each have an essential self which is expressed through language. Instead, discourse constructs identities, sense of self, and furthermore, it is a site of constant negotiation, contestation, and re-creation. Thus, one's sense of self is not permanent; there is no core self, no "fixity" of the individual (Weedon, 1997, p. 80). Instead, subjectivity is constantly being created, recreated, performed and read through discourse. Allan (2010) explains that "subjectivity constituted through discourse is also not fixed or stable. Rather, according to poststructuralism, each of us is continually engaged in a process of locating ourselves within discursive fields and drawing upon discourses to represent ourselves" (p. 15). Thus, the facticity of a unified individual subject and its current subject position must be troubled. Instead, individuals can be considered as "subject-in-process produced via discourse" (Allan, 2010, p. 16). Allan (2010) explains that "subjectivities are shaped through multiple discourses that mutually reinforce and/or compete with one another. In the process, subject positions are produced and subjectivity is continually revised and reconstituted as discourses are contested, disrupted, and/or coalesce" (p. 15). Thus, there is no such thing as a "real" racial actuality for any individual. There are performances of various racial locations, and this is informed to a large extent by racial discourses extant in society that individuals draw on, play with, or reject as they locate themselves within discursive fields. These discourses are historically-bound and represent a consensual, but continuously contested, arrangement

of larger society. Frankenberg (1993) highlights this when she claims that there are constant negotiations about who is white and who is not white.

Contested white subjectivities trouble the concept of a unified racial being. Since these subjects are sites of more obvious contestation and re-creation, they help draw our attention more directly to the ways in which racial discourses construct and shape individual subjectivities and the ways in which such individual subjects then take up, trouble, and play with racial discourses. I use the word "play" to call on Foucauldian notions of power/knowledge, namely that power is not necessarily amalgamated in hierarchies of dominance, but that it can be considered as operating through everyday interactions by everyday actors in everyday locations. "Play" denotes a sense of co-creation, shifting dynamics, and push back against the conceptualization of power as an immoveable, hardened set of social structures set in place for all time.

In this study, I focus attention on a population of contested white college and graduate students. I draw on poststructural concepts of discourse and subjectivity to interrogate the racial constructions that these individuals negotiate and enact.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

This study focuses on undergraduate and graduate students attending a predominantly white institution of higher education in the Midwest and who can be classified as contested whites. Participants include U.S. citizens of mixed black-white ancestry who are light-skinned and can "pass for white" and some who cannot pass for white, Latinx students who can "pass" for white and some who cannot pass for white, students who claim ancestry from Eastern European countries, and students who claim

ancestry from Middle Eastern countries. The study also includes students with ties to

South Asia, including countries such as India, but who either pass for white or are

sometimes classified as white or Caucasian.

The purpose of this study was to examine the subjectivities of contested white

students with the hope of learning more about current racial discourses active in both by

institutions of higher education in the United States, and also in schools, families,

organizations and other social spaces. The research questions that guided this study are:

1. What racial discourses inform the subjectivities of contested white students

   attending a predominantly white institution of higher education (PWI) in the

   upper Midwest?

2. How do contested white subjects take up and/or resist these discourses?

Contested whites do not fit neatly into current U.S. racial schema; they are

ambiguously raced and not securely positioned. Individuals do not exist outside of

discourse (Weedon, 1997). Thus, there is no such thing as a real, racial facticity for any

individual. Contested whites help us reject the concept of a unified racial being by their

very existence. Since these subjects are sites of contestation and re-creation, they help

draw our attention more directly to the ways in which subjects play with racial discourses

and the ways in which racial discourses construct subjectivities. Contested whites "may

help make visible the processes by which the stability of whiteness—as location of

privilege, as culturally normative space, and as standpoint—is secured and reproduced"

(Frankenberg, 1993, p. 242).

Significance of the Study

U.S. society appears to be standing in another moment of crisis and potential change around issues of race and racism. Particularly egregious cases of racially-linked violence and discrimination catch national attention with frequency, and social media allows for exploration of associated issues in a way that is immediate, and oftentimes anonymous. Concepts that used to be on the cutting edge of the study of race, and which were often only used in minoritized, academic, or activist circles – such as those of institutionalized racism, dog whistle language, white privilege, and code switching – have spread beyond smaller coteries and are now much more a part of larger discourse. In addition, current political discourse focused on Blacks, Native Americans, Latinx, and Middle Easterners racializes and others these populations with alacrity, and it seems that large segments of the U.S. population are responding with support for these contemporary racial projects.

Segments of these populations can be considered to be contested and ambiguously located in terms of racial schema (Fine, Weis, Pruitt & Burns, 2004). It is important to examine the racialization process for individuals who are ambiguously positioned. Failing to critically engage nuance around race and racism either silences, makes irrelevant, disengages, renders unreal, or oppresses individuals and populations who occupy other waypoints on spectra of difference. With the increased media and political attention on race, immigration, religion and gender, the present moment is a generative time to delve into and learn from the discursive framing of ambiguously situated subjectivities.

Contested whiteness constitutes an underexamined site to analyze the construction of racial subjectivities. The racial location of contested whites is ambiguous, under question, in-between, and paradoxical. While scholars often scrutinize data across so-called distinct racial categories, exploring the discourses shaping the subjectivities of a liminal population sheds new light on current racial schema and the exercise and purposes of power and difference in larger society. Examination of an often overlooked or ambiguous subject position provides important data on how subjectivity and difference are constituted. Interrogation of the discourses which construct ambiguously racialized subjects and the ways in which they alternatively take up or resist such discourses points to inadequacies of current schema of race and ethnicity (Graves, 2001; Shirazi, 2012) and helps dislodge conceptualizations of difference.

Scholars of higher education have long studied racial identity development among college students. They have also started to study concepts of systematic racism, whiteness as property, normative whiteness, critical whiteness studies, etc. (Cabrera, Franklin & Watson, 2016). Relatively little has been done to investigate contested racial positions. Research about contested whites troubles taken-for-granted categories of difference, pulls apart unquestioned hierarchies, and illuminates both the opportunities and limits of agency (Davies & Gannon, 2005).

Positionality

I have taken up various racial subject positions in my life in the United States. In public and private education settings, I have been repeatedly positioned as "abnormal," "foreign," and "other." Every time someone asks me where I am from, every time an

elderly white woman in the grocery aisle eyes her purse as I walk by her cart, my body is constituted as other. In some other contexts, such as when I am with a larger group of family and community members, I do not take up this subject position – instead I am "normal" and "understood" and "assumed." This alternative subjectivity is much more psychologically comfortable. Elsewhere, I take up the subject position of "world citizen" where I enact a sort of essentialized humanity. In this subject position, I draw upon generalized notions of "eastern cultures," "eastern values" and "communalism" to build small communities where difference is both "celebrated" and also minimized.

My daily mothering work also informs my approach to this study. I spend most of my days and nights parenting, learning alongside my children, and walking a path of meaning-making alongside them. I notice some of the enactments of discourse, knowledge/power, difference and subjectivity on us individually and as a family unit. I muse on our actions and reactions, the sites of contestation, the ever-changing systems of meaning and power that I instruct them in, that they instruct me in, and that we participate in together. I see how various discourses constitute our subjectivities over time and in differing contexts. The dynamics of discourse constituting meaning are more evident to me as I mother and parent than they would be if I were more distanced from this role.

In my professional work within the realm of higher education, I worry for students, faculty and staff who are discursively constituted as "other." I worry for the undergraduate student from Cameroon who stands up and initially introduces herself as being "from France" on the first day of class. I mark how discourse acts upon her body as

her initial description is apparently not accepted, and instead she is asked an "innocuous" question of "but where are you really from?" I note that she flinches and shrinks as she clarifies her immigration history to the classroom of 30 students. These everyday forms of racialization act on students, faculty and staff, and I note some of the more sinister ways that racial discourses play with hearts and subjectivities.

At this time when bodies are increasingly being racialized as Muslim locally and globally, I find myself also negotiating with new discourses of difference on a day-to-day basis. A resurging discourse of racial difference is at play again – that of Orientalism (Said, 1978) or "Muslim other" – and it is one that can be applied to my body. I am learning to guess the current shape of this discourse and its enactments. I can be read as Muslim and Middle Eastern and thus "different," "dangerous," and "foreign threat." At the same time, I am not Muslim and hail from a minority background. Of course, none of that diversity is read while I walk across campus with my "Muslim" face on display, or while I shop at a large discount grocer in the suburbs, or while I accompany my boys during their martial arts class in a largely white, second-ring suburb. I note the new stares, the startled glances, and the baited breath. I play with my hair, my unaccented English, my academic qualifications, and my dress, and attempt to announce a certain "safety" and "understandability." I have lived in this local context for decades as an ambiguously located racial subject, and yet the manufacturing of an anti-Muslim discourse is very much acting upon my body, my mothering, and my movement through space, just as I also act upon this discourse through my alternative embraces and rejections of it. In this process, I have also become more aware of how all U.S.

inhabitants, including myself, take up and enact whiteness in a variety of everyday actions, in order to secure outcomes. Certain structural changes in my individual life over the course of the last half decade, including changes in marital and class status, have palpably browned and othered me further. I notice, in turn, how and when I take up the forms of whiteness that I have access to in my attempts to negotiate and secure certain outcomes for myself and my children, such as schooling options for my boys, certain forms of parental involvement and recognition by school authorities, and a particular sense of decorum and respectability when I've had to represent myself and my children in the legal system. Realizing more about my ongoing role in systems of white supremacy and heteronormative patriarchy – regardless of my specific subject position – has been eye opening for me.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have introduced and described a population of students attending institutions of higher education that live and operate at the margins of whiteness: contested whites. I have discussed the construction of racial subjects, drawing on both poststructural thought and Omi and Winant's (1994) concept of racial projects. I have articulated two research questions, explored higher education institutions as the context for this study, and concluded by describing my own positionality in regards to this work.

Chapter 2: Racial Discourses

Discourse shapes society and subjectivities. It orders and induces bodies,

relationships, social and physical structures, perceptions and more. The creative power of

discourse functions at both micro and macro, in both moments and levels. At the same

time, discourse is continually contested, shaped and reshaped by individuals, groups,

other discourses, and social forces. Thus, in order to understand more clearly the

subjectivities of contested white students, I explore what racial discourses act on them

and their environments. What discourses shape the possibilities and experiences of

racialized bodies? What possibilities and subjectivities do these discourses construct?

In her 1993 book, Frankenberg finds that there is "a shared universe of discourses

on race" among her participants and in larger society (p. 18). Other scholars (Bonilla-

Silva, 2014; Briscoe & Khalifa, 2015; Feagin, 2014; Giroux, 2003, 2014; Leonardo,

2002) also identify racial discourses in society. This chapter seeks to articulate eight

racial discourses extant in U.S. society today. First, I introduce each discourse and

present some fundamental tenets. Subsequently, I explore power dynamics and material

effects produced by the discourse. I also weave critique of the discourse throughout and

discuss some of the implications of either retaining or changing these discourses.

A perusal of contemporary literature on race reveals that there are different ways

to organize racial discourses (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Feagin, 2014; Frankenberg, 1993). It is

difficult to know which organizational strategy is the most "accurate" one. I take away

two learnings from the effort: First, many scholars identify and describe similar

discourses and frames, regardless of how they position them in relation to one another.

This amalgamation of similar identification across a range of disciplines and by a variety

of scholars points to a certain validity for this set of discourses. Second, as Bonilla-Silva

(2014) eloquently points out, it is the stackable, reinforcing nature of these discourses, or

what he calls "frames," that allow them to be so effective in shaping subjectivities:

> Together these frames form an impregnable yet elastic wall … The trick is in the
>
> way the frames bundle with each other, that is, in the wall they form … But if the
>
> ideological wall … were not pliable, a few hard blows would suffice to bring it
>
> down. That is why the flexibility of the frames is so useful (pp. 95-96)

These discourses support one another and overlap to an extent. Some of them call on

related metaphors and enactments, and are tightly stacked behind each other. Some draw

on the articulations of former discourses or echo lines of reasoning or assumptions,

connecting to the main argument, and thus bolstering one another. Thus if one discourse

is questioned or under attack, it can "bounce back" by drawing on the images, arguments

and enactments of related discourses. This is what Bonilla Silva means when he explains

that the wall is pliable and able to withstand attacks. Zeeman, Poggenpoel, Myburgh and

Van der Linde (2002) also note that "[d]iscourses are not discreet entities, but are

intertwined with each other and constantly changing" (p. 100). This intertwining is

evident below in my depiction of eight discourses that I argue are most active and

productive in contemporary U.S. society.

The Discourse of Essentialist Anti-Black Racism

Essentialist anti-Black racism is the original belief in difference structured around

race (Frankenberg, 1993). This discourse is about 500 years old, and it is the original

division based on perceptions of biology and "emphasis on race difference understood in hierarchical terms of essential, biological inequality" (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 14). Various articulations of this discourse focused on brain size (Morton, 1839), intelligence as a biological property (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994), and other enunciations of biological difference (Linnaeus, 1758/2015) resulting in locating white bodies at the top of a hierarchy and positioning Black bodies at the bottom of the hierarchy. Frankenberg (1993) argues that all other racial discourses must refer back to and engage with this original, essentialist discourse.

The essentialist anti-Black discourse of race has been largely discounted, or at least it is not articulated in public spaces in U.S. society today (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). Biological ideas about the existence of race have been largely disproven by study of the human genome, and no single genetic marker is indicative of race or racial difference. Instead, current scholars across a range of disciplines agree that races are not generally biologically demonstrable entities (Omi & Winant, 1994, 2015; Smedley & Smedley, 2005). Instead, racial categories and locations are socially constructed categories of difference.

The Binary Discourse

Even though most agree that race as a biological category does not exist, the binary discourse represents the ominous shadow of essentialist anti-Black racism (Frankenberg, 1993; Márquez, 2012) and runs rampant throughout U.S. society. The binary discourse differentiates U.S. inhabitants into two broad racial categories: Black or white (Davis, 1991; Fordham, 2008; Hickman, 1997). To be "Black" within this binary

discourse means to be descended from the early African slave population of the United

States upon whose backs the economic success of the nation was built. There are a set of

physical characteristics that signal Blackness including skin tone, some facial features,

hair texture, and other attributes. Any person with a phenotype that belies a recognizable

fraction of these features is classified as "Black," and anyone without a trace of such

characteristics is "white." This discourse skips over and omits other racial locations

(Márquez, 2016). This discourse is commonly referred to as "the One Drop Rule," and

has been encoded and authenticated in U.S. law (Davis, 1991; Haney López, 1996;

Hickman, 1997). In the binary discourse, the primary being is the white body, and the

Other is the Black or African body.

Some of the day to day speech which reflects this discourse includes coded

expressions meant to signify Black people, such as "bad neighborhood," "urban," "proper

English," "articulate," and sometimes even "diversity" itself. Much more coded language

is used in a commonplace, day-to-day manner in both the realm of politics and media

(Haney López, 2014) and in educational institutions and systems (Castagno, 2008, 2014;

Watson, 2012).

Reinert and Serna (2014) point out that "society operates heavily within a binary

system (e.g., male or female, man or Woman, Black or White, heterosexual or

nonheterosexual)" (p. 90). In the United States, individuals tend to identify themselves

and others according to mutually exclusive categories of race and rarely acknowledge the

spaces in between. Kibria (1996) elaborates that in the United States, race is "viewed as

'pure,' and thus adequately defined by a limited and discrete set of categories" (p. 78). In

the binary discourse, the position of in-betweeness, multiplicity, or ambiguity is disallowed. Kibria (1996) explained that individuals face immense social and psychological pressure to place themselves within the binary system. The legal history of Syrian, Lebanese, Indian and other immigrants arguing the determination of their racial categorization in court is but one reflection of the pressure this discourse can exert on U.S. inhabitants to locate themselves within its boundaries (Davis, 1991; Haney López, 1996; Hickman, 1997).

The enactments of this prevalent discourse divide U.S. society into two disparate segments and attach value judgements to each segment, associating whites with normalcy (Cabrera, 2014a, 2014b; Castagno, 2014) and desirability, and associating Blacks with otherness, suspicion and criminality (McLaren, 1998). Among the other significant outcomes produced by the discourse are:

- The scapegoating of one segment of the population as the "problem" population (Márquez, 2012, 2014, 2016);

- The association of guilt and criminality based on phenotype (Alexander, 2012; American Civil Liberties Union, 2013; Drake, 2013; McLaren, 1998);

- The division of resources, including jobs, residential neighborhoods, and other goods, based on phenotype (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Massey, Gross & Shibuya, 1994; Rugh & Massey, 2010);

- A sense of normalcy for the division of society into a white upperclass and a Black underclass (Castagno, 2014);

- A heavy psychological burden for Black U.S. Americans (Murray, Brown, Brody, Cutrona & Simons, 2001; Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009; Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007; Smith, Yosso & Solórzano, 2011); and

- The veiling and/or disregard of other forms of racial and ethnic difference (Márquez, 2016; Perea, 1998).

These power relations limit resources and access for Blacks, while protecting and sheltering whites. The power relations associated with this discourse maintain white supremacy (Castagno, 2014; Márquez, 2016).

Whites hold a stake in the operation and existence of this discourse because it produces conditions in which they can feel elevated, normal, safe, unquestioned, and a sense of belonging (Castagno, 2014; Guinier & Torres, 2004; Sue, 2015). Immigrant groups who secure whiteness for themselves also hold a stake because this racial location brings tangible safety and protection, and elevation of social status (Feagin, 2010; Gualtieri, 2001; Majaj, 2000; Roediger, 1991, 2007). Politicians have a stake in existing language because it enables them to signal race and fear without using politically incorrect language (Haney López, 2014).

There are also pockets of resistance to the binary discourse. The contemporary usage and prevalence of the social identity term "biracial" constitutes a disruption of the binary discourse. Millennials seem particularly ready both to use this terminology and also to trouble binary thinking (Georgopulos, 2013; Hunsberger, 2015). Nash (2008) asserts that the field of Black feminism resists the binary discourse. In fact, the very concept of intersectionality itself constitutes a resistance to the discourse. The queer

community also works to train both itself and larger society to think beyond binaries (Butler, 1990; Cohen, 1997). On the other hand, some argue that the binary can be used to positive effect, for example, to foster unified black-Latino resistance movements (Márquez, 2014, 2016).

The Discourse of Normative Whiteness

The discourse of normative whiteness narrows in on the association of whiteness with a sense of normalcy. Normative whiteness equates whiteness with normality (Bonilla-Silva, 2012; Feagin, 2014; Hurd, 2008). It places the white body and a set of cultural, social and economic characteristics at the center of the U.S. social structure and defines these characteristics as "average," "normal," "correct, modern, or universal" (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 233). The discourse of normative whiteness instructs both newcomers to the U.S., as well as children and current inhabitants, to define the average "American" as equal to this bundle of traits (Devos & Banaji, 2005). Anything that does not fit into the bundle is suspect and questionable.

Hurd describes normative whiteness as "a set of social and institutional practices, identifiable but often unexamined, that serve to advantage or empower some groups … while disempowering or excluding others, particularly along lines of race, culture, and class" (Hurd, 2008, p. 294). In the United States, "success" is measured in white standards or "the social, cultural, linguistic, and economic practices historically affiliated with the hegemonic rule of Euro-Americans" (Fordham, 2008, p. 237). These practices are "what U.S. culture has historically defined as success and quintessentially American" (Fordham, 2008, p. 234). For example, a family of four, with a pet dog, owning a

McMansion out in the 3rd ring suburbs is "success" according to this discourse, whereas a larger family living in one dwelling with multiple generations is "squalor." Another particularly striking example, notably described by McIntosh (2004), notes that adhesive bandages come in "flesh" color, but that hue is actually the pigment of "white" flesh. This enactment of "normal" is not questioned by manufacturers, advertisers or most consumers. This lack of critique signals the fact that white flesh is indeed considered average and normal.

The dualisms at play in the discourse of normative whiteness are between normal and abnormal, average and odd, comprehensible and incomprehensible (Frankenberg, 1993). Some of the language that is used to signal this discourse includes the prevalent and constant use of words such as "American" (Devos & Banaji, 2005). This word is used in a day-to-day, commonplace manner to describe the typical U.S. citizen, but the word masks traits that remain unspoken. Further, "American" means an inhabitant of the United States – not a South American, not a Central American, not a Mexican, and not a Canadian. "American" means white person – not a Black person, not a person of Native descent, and not a mixed race person (Devos & Banaji, 2005). All others are assigned secondary status, or othered. The being with the lowest status is the Black woman, since she is located at the interlocked intersections of both the power formations of patriarchy and white supremacy (Crenshaw, 1993).

The power of the discourse of normative whiteness is enacted through many means, including media, law, educational institutions, government, other institutions and systems of organization throughout society, families, and everyday practices of

"everyday" people everywhere (Bush, 2011). For example, the daily news is most often

narrated by white newscasters (Kamalipour & Carilli, 1998), a phenomenon that equates

whiteness with intelligence, normalcy and trust. Another example can be found on

college campuses, business or organizational meetings, or other group settings where

individuals are introducing themselves to one another, and questions like "what are you?"

or "where are you from?" position the non-white recipient into an "alien" or "other"

category, thereby ascribing incomprehensibility on that body. Other words like "illegals"

also engage this discourse of normative whiteness. If larger discourse positions white,

U.S. citizens as "legal" and other inhabitants as "illegal," associations of safety/danger,

non-criminal/criminal, insider/outsider are enacted (Ngai, 2004; Reynolds, 2015).

There are outcomes produced by the discourse of normative whiteness. First, this

discourse creates a position of psychological well-being for its inhabitants. Those who

can locate themselves in this subject position enjoy normality, are everywhere

understood, and belong everywhere (Hurd, 2008; Fordham, 2008). The psychological and

emotional security enjoyed by those in this racial location is profound. Second, this

discourse produces an "unmarked" and "unnamed" subject location (Frankenberg, 1993,

p. 1). There is a sense of "structured invisibility" (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 6). If whites are

not called to define themselves and they are everywhere assumed, they are unmarked and

move through society as such. Third, this discourse particularly enables silence and

compliance with notions of the "commonsense" (Omi & Winant, 1994, 2015). Gramsci

(1948/1971) wrote that when hegemony has morphed from outright dominance into

commonplace consent, then oppression and injustice are shrouded behind a veil of

"commonsense." Fifth, a sense of powerblindness is produced by the discourse of normative whiteness (Castagno, 2014; Frankenberg, 1993; Kurzman et al., 2014). The aim of the discourse is to normalize and make unspeakable current power relations. Questioning current norms is seen as a social crime of sorts; "nice" people do not bring up difficult topics such as race and white supremacy (Castagno, 2014).

Finally, the discourse of normative whiteness creates a social hierarchy where those at the top, individuals who can inhabit a location of normative whiteness, benefit from programs and structures designed to work for them (Feagin, 2014; Hurd, 2008). Those at the top inhabit and maintain positions of privilege all while assuming that their successes are largely due to their individual strengths and abilities (Applebaum, 2005; Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Feagin, 2014). Those in the middle are distracted by the unrelenting individualistic drive for consumption (Giroux, 2003, 2014). Those at the bottom are focused on day-to-day survival (Giroux, 2014), although some – in alliance with others from other segments of society – organize into resistance movements (Feagin, 2014; Márquez, 2016). Those at all levels of this hierarchy hold a stake in changing this discourse. For whites, systematic advantage would be made visible and the mirage of individual accomplishment would be unveiled. For those at the lower end, deconstructing the discourse of normative whiteness unveils oppression and opens possibilities for radical change (Freire, 1968/1993).

There are substantial critiques of normative whiteness. First, historians and social scientists have noted that whiteness changes over time and depending on context. A quick perusal of U.S. history reveals how certain immigrant groups that were once considered

not-white engaged in a process of vying for inclusion in this racial category (Feagin,

2010; Gualtieri, 2001; Majaj, 2000; Roediger, 2007). It follows that if whiteness is not a

fixed, reliable property, then normality is likewise unveiled as malleable. In fact, others

have elucidated that whiteness is actually larger than race; whiteness is supremacy and

domination (Castagno, 2014; Fine, Weis, Pruitt & Burns, 2004; Frankenberg, 1993).

Castagno (2014) explains that "whiteness refers to structural arrangements and ideologies

of race dominance" (p. 5). In other words, since whiteness is malleable over time and

since it is primarily defined in reaction to other identities that it labels as "other"

(Frankenberg, 1993), there is no actual subject location of whiteness. Instead,

"'whiteness' signals the production and reproduction of dominance rather than

subordination, normativity rather than marginality, and privilege rather than

disadvantage" (Frankenberg, 1993, pp. 236-237). It is critical to note that if whiteness is a

system of domination, it is not just white people who engage in it. Castagno (2014)

significantly asserts that "whiteness is not just about White people. All of us engage

dominant ideologies; sometimes it is in our interests to do so, and at other times it is not"

(p. 7). In other words, at various times, all of us participate in creating, reinforcing and

re-creating whiteness, whether we are located in that racial location or not.

The Discourse of Meritocracy

Meritocracy is a long-cherished discourse in the United States. It is one of the

most commonly voiced and widespread narratives, both as a form of historical analysis

and as an alluring promise of contemporary possibility (Eitzen & Johnston, 2016;

Lawton, 2000; Liu, 2011; McNamee & Miller, 2009). It is a discourse that centers on

social class advancement, individual initiative, and achievement. The discourse of

meritocracy asserts that any member of the U.S. nation, including any new immigrant,

can reach the zenith of "success" as long as that individual exerts the commensurate

effort (Liu, 2011). Some argue that this discourse descends from the protestant work ethic

(Weber, 1905/2002).

Dualisms at play in the discourse of meritocracy include: achievement and

success versus failure, effort versus laziness, and glory and fame versus obscurity in "the

huddled masses.[3]" Various phrases and images signal this discourse, including "strong

work ethic," "the American dream" (McNamee & Miller, 2009), "the land of

opportunity" (McNamee & Miller, 2009), "pulling yourself up by your bootstraps,"

"from rags to riches," "dreamers," "welfare queens" (Feagin, 2014), "handouts" and

more. The primary being in the discourse of meritocracy is often the financially

successful, white, male business leader or entrepreneur; for example, Steve Jobs, Bill

Gates, George Soros, or Donald Trump fit this category. The Other in this discourse is the

Black single mother, the "welfare queen," who is often designated as lazy and shiftless

(Demby, 2013; Gilliam, 1999).

The discourse of meritocracy puts agency at the level of the individual (Bonilla-

Silva, 2014; Liu, 2011). It is the individual actor who must work hard, overcome barriers

by the exercise of will and perseverance, and achieve success. Thus this discourse

---

[3] This phrase is part of the sonnet written by Emma Lazarus, and appears as an inscription on the Statue of Liberty.

reinforces liberal humanist assumptions that the individual is rational and sovereign

(Giroux, 1999, 2014). If the individual actor is indeed rational and agentic, then

achieving success is an individual choice. Failure is blamed on laziness, pathological

culture, or other characteristics of individuals or groups (Feagin, 2014; Lawton, 2000).

Accordingly, narratives that attribute success to individual effort, determination, and

perseverance are readily validated, and those that lay bare systemic challenges are not

welcome (Feagin, 2014).

Some of the associated doctrines produced and amplified by the discourse of

meritocracy include the following:

- There is only so much to go around, and prosperity is a limited good;

- Competition is a natural law of the universe (Giroux, 1999, 2014);

- We, as members of larger society, are in competition with one another (Giroux, 2014);

- Each individual must be focused primarily on individual position and security (Giroux, 1999, 2003);

Power relations produced by the discourse of meritocracy veil the social and

cultural capital needed to achieve "success," and thus help maintain the status quo. There

exists a tight economic system that is locked down for generations, with little actual

mobility between strata of society (McNamee & Miller, 2009). However, the myth of

meritocracy is so frequently produced and distributed through media, texts,

"commonsense" knowledge, and political discourse – and not just within the United

States, but globally (Morley & Lugg, 2009) – that it is widely believed. Those at the top

use hidden knowledge and systems to gain advantage (McNamee & Miller, 2009), and then shame those who cannot gain access, ascribing a sort of natural deficiency to the underprivileged (Feagin, 2014). In other words, there are both structural and cultural barriers which maintain the current exercise of power. Without a realistic understanding of systemic barriers for individuals and families, and access to hidden knowledge and systems which support success (McNamee & Miller, 2009), individual ascent up the ladder of success is unlikely. Discrepancies between successful elites and the disadvantaged mass of the larger population are hidden.

The Discourse of Assimilation

The discourse of assimilation frames the history of the United States as one of immigration, inclusive of the earliest pilgrims, up to present-day refugees from Syria, and beyond (Alba & Foner, 2014). Invasion, colonization and decimation of indigenous nations are reframed as "discovery" and "civilizing" labor (Adas, 2004; Brayboy, 2005; Frankenberg, 1993). The discourse of assimilation asserts that immigrants who have arrived to the United States have made their own way in society, have often initially concentrated themselves in ethnic enclaves, but within several generations have assimilated into larger U.S. culture, blended and melted into the larger whole (Alba & Foner, 2014; Omi & Winant, 1994). Examples of such assimilation that is valued includes that of the Irish, Swedes, Germans, people of Norwegian descent, and Italians[4]

---

[4] Native Americans were also entered into a project of assimilation, through separation from parents and enrollment into boarding schools, along with other measures (Adams, 1995; Brayboy, 2005).

(Ignatiev, 1995; Roediger, 1991). Melting into larger "American" culture is framed as success by the discourse of assimilation.

The dualisms at play in the discourse of assimilation include: insider versus outsider, natural versus foreign, "American"[5] versus immigrant/refugee, civilized versus uncivilized, belonging versus not belonging, and high status versus low status. These dualisms closely echo those of the discourse of meritocracy. The primary being in the discourse of assimilation is the white U.S. American without any identifiable ethnic or racial markers (Devos & Banaji, 2005). Secondary status is ascribed to "the huddled masses" (Lazarus, 1889). There are implications of low socioeconomic status, lack of education, actual physical dirtiness and boorishness in the descriptions and images often associated with immigrants (Adas, 2004; Park, 2006). Sometimes, a sense of pity and charity is affiliated with accepting and supporting these newcomers (Park, 2006). Language extant in society which validates and extends the discourse of assimilation includes such words and phrases as: "rags to riches," "the American dream," "dreamer," "new American," and "success story" – again closely echoing and building off the language used by the discourse of meritocracy.

Critique of a simple assimilation model has been an area of productive scholarly inquiry for decades (Berry, 1974, 1986, 1990, 1997, 2003, 2005; Gleason, 1979; Gordon, 1964; LaFramboise, Coleman & Gerton, 1993; Ong, Fuller-Rowell & Phinney, 2010;

---

[5] I was taught to be critical of the commonplace, everyday usage of this word by South American friends and colleagues. The omnipresent usage of this term to signify inhabitants or citizens of not just North American, but specifically of the United States, can be astonishing. I try to trouble this usage in my own writing and speech.

Phinney, 2008; Phinney & Alipuria, 1996; Phinney, Chavira & Williamson, 1992;

Phinney & Ong, 2007), including the presentation and exploration of alternative models

of assimilation such as acculturation or rejection (Brubaker, 2001; Rivera, 2010;

Steinberg, 2014), as well as models that look at generational differences in assimilation

(Portes & Zhou, 1993; Zhou, 1997). In this inquiry, I am not particularly interested in

examining patterns of assimilation; I question the end goal of assimilation itself. Thus, to

what end is the process of assimilation directed? What are people assumed to be

assimilating to? A variety of arguments can be debated, but I find Frankenberg's (1993)

discussion of "white cultural practice" (p. 233) to be most incisive. Frankenberg (1993)

argues that U.S. discursive practices assume a dualistic system of culture with an

unmarked cultural location on one end – a normative, "empty space" that can be

described as white cultural practice – and, on the other end, bound spaces that can be

identified as ethnically and nationally distinct, such as Chinese culture or Russian culture,

etc. Frankenberg (1993) argues that "the ways in which specific cultures or identities

could be named and described is linked to the extent to which those cultures are viewed

as separate or different from normativeness… their nondominance or relative lack of

power" (p. 229). Frankenberg subsequently names the unnamed by her use of the phrase

"white cultural practice." Using Frankenberg's (1993) idea of white cultural practice as

an unmarked space, the goal of assimilation to "Americanness" can be understood, in

many cases, as acceptance of the system of white racial domination. Toni Morrison

(1993) echoes this when she writes that "the move into mainstream American always

means buying into the notion of American blacks as the real aliens … A hostile posture

toward resident blacks must be struck at the Americanizing door before it will open" (p. 57). This reinforces my argument that assimilation is, in large part, a racial discourse.

Culture of poverty thesis. Some scholarly and media inquiry related to the topic of assimilation asks, in effect, what is wrong with those who cannot successfully assimilate? In other words, why can most immigrant groups assimilate, including some Black African immigrants (Pierre, 2004), but it seems that the Black U.S. American population cannot assimilate successfully and move up the meritocratic ladder? Why does there seem to be a permanent Black underclass? The culture of poverty thesis, extant in society, attempts to answer this question. This idea gained ascendency in the 1960s, particularly through the written works of individuals such as anthropologist Oscar Lewis (Feagin, 2014; Harvey & Reed, 1996) and public policy reports such as *The Negro Family* by Daniel Patrick Moynihan (1965). This thesis argues that the seeming inability of Black U.S. Americans to "better their lot" is due to social pathologies such as "teenage pregnancies, out-of-wedlock births, single-parent families, poor educational achievement, chronic unemployment, welfare dependency, drug abuse, and crime" (Coughlin, 1988, para. 5), and to "a sense of resignation or fatalism, an inability to delay gratification and plan for the future, low educational motivation, low social and economic aspiration, a trend toward female-centered families (matrifocality), and an inadequate moral preparation for employment" (Pierre, 2004, p. 148). In other words, this discourse asserts certain deficient cultural traits are endemic to Black "culture" such that this segment of the U.S. population is unable to assimilate.

Feagin (2014) identifies this thesis as an old form of racism dressed anew today. Bonilla-Silva (2014) labels it as "cultural racism" and identifies it as one of the four frames of colorblind racism. I position it as a popular subset of the discourse of assimilation. No matter how it is categorized, however, it is important to acknowledge present-day articulations of this discourse. For example, Mexican families and Mexican culture are described as not valuing education as an implicit part of their culture (Lopez, 2009; Valencia & Black, 2002). The implication is that a cultural pathology bars Mexicans from valuing formal education as a vehicle for assimilation and meritocracy.

The Discourse of Colorblindness

Colorblindness constitutes a relatively newer discourse extant in North American society (Bonilla-Silva, 2014, Frankenberg, 1993; Pierce, 2012). Language such as "I don't see race" or "we're all just human" constitute enactments of the discourse of colorblindness. For example, in 2008 when Barack Obama was making a viable bid for election to the highest political office in the United States, and for the first year after his election, national U.S. media repeatedly proclaimed that the United States had entered a "post-racial" era (Clayton & Welch, 2016; Lum, 2009; Schorr, 2008). In other words, the election of a Black man[6] to the office of President of the United States proved that we, as a nation, were colorblind (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Cabrera, 2011; Feagin, 2014).

---

[6] Even the categorization of Obama as a "Black man" is an enactment of the binary discourse on a multiracial, multinational body.

The discourse of colorblindness is often invoked at the level of the individual, motivated in part from individual fears of being accused of being racist (Feagin, 2014; Frankenberg, 1993). In this discourse, the individual claims that they "do not see race." The implication is that phenotype does not matter and that the individual actor does not discriminate based on the race of the person/s they are interacting with. There is a sense of immunity from the vestiges of racism and an implication that true impartiality and fairness can be secured (Feagin, 2014; Frankenberg, 1993). In other words, since slavery no longer exists in the United States, and the gains of the Civil Rights era advanced the lot of Black U.S. Americans significantly, racism no longer exists on institutional or systems level; instead, racism is primarily reflected by the actions of extreme individuals (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Feagin, 2014; Hurd, 2008).

The dualisms at play in the discourse of colorblindness include: colored versus blank, marked versus unmarked (Frankenberg, 1993), peaceful versus angry and dramatic, and rational versus emotional. Language which invokes and validates this discourse includes "colorblind," "I don't see color," and "post-racial" (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Feagin, 2014). The primary being in this discourse is a peaceful, innocent white individual, and secondary status is ascribed to angry and unreasonable minoritized people. The Other in this discourse is any angry racial activist, such as student activists or those labeled as "professional protestors." Enactments of the discourse of colorblindness produce various outcomes including:

- An innocent subject position (Frankenberg, 1993);
- Social amnesia (Castagno, 2008, 2014);

- The silencing of dissent (Castagno, 2014; Feagin, 2014); and

- Powerblindness (Castagno, 2014; Frankenberg, 1993).

Each of these outcomes is described in further detail below.

The discourse of colorblindness produces an innocent subject position. If the individual taking up this discourse claims not to see race, they cannot be accused of racism; they are innocent. They evade "acknowledgement of individual complicity" (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 189). In fact, Frankenberg (1993) states that the evasion of white guilt may be at the heart of this discourse (p. 188). Individuals who take up this discourse can effectively shift blame away from themselves. Cabrera, Franklin and Watson (2016) explain that "regardless of information provided about the realities of contemporary racism, the evidence will always be interpreted in ways that find the root cause as anything but racism" (p. 20).

Another product of the discourse of colorblindness is a sort of collective amnesia when it comes to acknowledgement of privilege and advantage (Castagno, 2008; Feagin, 2014; McLaren, 1998). Frankenberg (1993) describes the evasion of "a much broader range of historical and contemporary processes through which the racial order is maintained" (p. 242). Feagin (2014) identifies this social amnesia as part of the white racial frame and explains that "elite whites, including media commentators and officials, have downplayed persisting racism and accented the image of a society where equality of opportunity and colorblindness are supposedly the reality" (p. 126). McLaren (1998) writes that:

Whiteness is also a refusal to acknowledge how white people are implicated in

certain social relations of privilege and relations of domination and subordination

… whiteness represents particular social and historical formations that are

reproduced through specific discursive and material processes and circuits of

desire and power (p. 66).

Castagno (2014) articulates how colorblindness is often used along with the idea

of niceness in order to silence conversation around race. In her study of two schools

districts in Utah, she explained how teachers would use notions of "niceness" and "nice

topics" to effectively shut down discussions of racism initiated by minoritized students.

The idea was that "nice" people do not talk about topics that bring up discomfort. In

communities where niceness and politeness are valued, nothing potentially difficult or

emotional is brought into the public sphere of discussion since differing opinions might

damage relationships. Silence becomes a form of niceness and proper social behavior.

The implication is that "if you had just not brought up this nasty topic, we would not have

to deal with it." Blame is thus effectively shifted from the topic at hand to the individual

who dared to raise it. This discourse effectively shifts blame and repositions those who

give voice to oppression as those who are, in fact, creating it. People who complain are

bitter, angry, and full of drama. Thus the accusations of oppression and lack of equality

are summarily dismissed as a personality flaw. Politeness and kindness are used to

silence real talk around race. Silence is used to stop discussion and to uphold white

supremacy.

Kurzman et al. (2014) define powerblindness as "disjunctures" or "instances when insights claimed by people with less power are ignored or rejected by the powerful" (p. 719). Enactments of colorblindness, such as those described above, bar critical examination of larger societal dynamics, or what Castagno (2014) calls "powerblindness" and Frankenberg (1993) calls "power evasion." These existing power relations allow the elite to silence dissent, distract from critical awareness, and continue to amass power and resources. This is accomplished in secret and without examination, to avoid any real questioning of skewed social dynamics and the amassing of wealth and power. Giroux (2003) writes:

> Racial hierarchies now collapse into power-evasive strategies such as blaming minorities of class and color for not working hard enough, or exercising individual initiative, or practicing reverse racism. Marketplace ideologies now work to erase the social from the language of public life so as to reduce all racial problems to private issues such as individual character. (p. 193)

Powerblindness as a form of colorblindness allows the evasion of "the naming of differences of power" (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 189).

Bonilla-Silva (2014) is a thought leader in the critique against colorblindness. He positions colorblind racism as the new racism, and he describes four frames, or well-worn paths of thinking and processing, along with a style – discursive mechanisms – that help entrench and defend this ideology. These frames include abstract liberalism, naturalization, cultural racism and minimization of racism. Abstract liberalism is the core of modernity, and it draws on the ideas of individualism, universalism, egalitarianism,

meliorism and meritocracy (Bonilla-Silva, 2014, p. 74). These are the main tenets of

political and economic liberalism, and they are often taken up by whites in abstract ways,

along with either blindness towards or denial of systematic racial inequalities, in order to

oppose racial fairness. Naturalization is the justification of racial differences as "natural"

or a reflection of "natural" preferences or tendencies. Cultural racism is the tendency to

blame deficiencies suffered by a racial group on some sort of social pathology that is

supposedly inherent to the culture of that group (see my discussion on culture of poverty

above). Minimization of racism is the denial or hushing of claims of racism into either

reflections of other social differences, such as class, or the claims of dramatic, outraged

individuals. These "subtle, institutional, and apparently non-racial" mechanisms combine

together to allow colorblind racism to operate (Bonilla-Silva, 2014, p. 3). Some of

Bonilla-Silva's four frames echo what I have pulled out and organized as distinct or

affiliated discourses in this chapter. Scholars write about colorblindness in different ways

(Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Cabrera et al., 2016; Feagin, 2014; Frankenberg, 1993; Giroux,

2003). Here I treat it as a discourse important enough to pull out and describe somewhat

independently of its interactions with other discourses.

The Discourse of Denial

    This discourse denies the continuing significance of race, racism and racial strife,

sometimes in a partial, tentative way and other times more comprehensively (Bonilla-

Silva, 2014; Feagin, 2014; Sue, 2015). In the same way that colorblind racism negates the

significance of racism in individual decisions, the discourse of denial seeks to negate the

significance of racism at the societal level. Through a variety of discursive means and

moves (Bonilla-Silva, 2014), those who take up the discourse of denial mute or disappear consideration of racism and its material effects. Feagin (2014) writes:

> One of the great tragedies today is the inability or unwillingness of most white Americans to see clearly and understand fully this racist reality. Among whites, including white elites, there is a commonplace denial of personal, family, and group histories of racism. Most do not see themselves or their families as seriously implicated in racial oppression, in the distant past or the present. Referring to themselves, most will fervently say, 'I am not racist.' Referring to ancestors, many will say something like, 'My family never owned slaves,' or 'My family never benefitted from segregation.' Assuming racial discrimination to be a thing of the past, many assert that African Americans are 'paranoid' about racism and often give them firm advice: forget the past and move on, because 'slavery happened hundreds of years ago.' (p. x)

Although Bonilla-Silva (2014) uses a different name for this discourse – the "minimization of racism" – he identifies it as one of his four frames of colorblind racism, and defines it as a pattern of thought and analysis that "suggests discrimination is no longer a central factor affecting minorities' life chances" (p. 77). Those who take up the discourse of denial co-opt the language of civil rights to claim that whites are now suffering more from discrimination and systematic barriers than Blacks (Cabrera, 2014a; Feagin, 2014; Norton & Sommers, 2011).

The dualisms set up by the discourse of denial include reality versus fiction, truth versus untruth, and rationality versus emotionality. Facts and statistics can be made

irrelevant by the discourse of denial. The discourse of denial is used to silence talk of oppression and calls for social justice. It does so quite effectively through simple statements such as "Oh, a long time has passed since slavery!" or "Are we complaining about that again?!" In this discourse of denial, emotion invalidates argumentation, and the unemotional is granted logic and legitimacy. Emotion instantaneously delegitimizes (Gee, 2014a).

Cabrera (2014a) explains that this discourse has a three-pronged method of enacting denial. Racism is denied by repositioning it as (1) an isolated incident, (2) a non-racial issue, or (3) a minoritized person being overly sensitive (Cabrera, 2014a, p. 769). Bonilla-Silva (2014) outlines the "style" or the semantic moves of this discourse in detail, including the use of indirect, coded language, discursive buffers such as "I am not prejudiced, but…", diminutives, projection, incoherent language and more.

The power relations set up by this discourse produce:

- An innocent, nice, subject who denies racism, is blameless and "racially blissful" (Cabrera et al., 2016, p. 21);

- The erasure of statistics and other measures of racial inequality and material effects; and

- The invalidation of critique that includes any display of emotion (Cabrera, 2014a; Gee, 2014a).

The Neoliberal Discourse

The neoliberal discourse is composed of the underlying set of contemporary beliefs, goals, and assumptions that structure both U.S. society and many other societies

globally. It is the dominant worldview that has been operating over at least the last four decades (Giroux, 2014; Melamed, 2011; Pierce, 2012). Among its primary tenets are:

- Unbridled individualism (Giroux, 2003);

- Competition as an organizing force of society and a universal value (Giroux, 2003);

- The unfettered reign of free-market capitalism (Giroux, 2003, 2014; Melamed, 2011; Pierce, 2012), almost regarding "the market" as a divine force that restores balance to all things, an infallible logic and judge;

- Consumerism (Giroux, 2003);

- Survival of the fittest, both in terms of economics and social value (Giroux, 2003, 2014; Briscoe & Khalifa, 2015);

- Privatization of goods, institutions and ideas (Giroux, 2003, 2014; Melamed, 2011); and

- The maintenance of order, prediction and control (Khalifa, Gil, Marshall & White, 2015)

Some of the dualisms extant in the neoliberal discourse include the individual good versus the communal good; competition versus collaboration; independence versus dependence; the free market versus regulation; and economic survival of the fittest versus equity and elimination of extremes of wealth and poverty. Words and phrases such as "winning," "masters of the universe," "freedom," "enterprising," and "you are not a victim!" signal enactments of this discourse.

In this discourse, the primary being is the wealthy male business leader, and secondary status is ascribed to the middle and lower classes who cannot be described as "elite." These are the masses whose mediocrity or poverty is blamed on themselves as a moral failing of the individual (Giroux, 2008). Thus, this discourse positions "welfare queens," poor single mothers, public school teachers and other public servants as the Other.

The power relations set up by this discourse produce:

- Criminalization and punishment of the poor, rather than poverty itself (Giroux, 2014, p. 22);

- Militarization (Giroux, 2014);

- The punishing state (Giroux, 2014, p. 22);

- Deregulation (Melamed, 2011);

- Consumption as the main activity of the individual and cast as a moral act (Giroux, 2014);

- Few elites with power (Giroux, 2014; Melamed, 2011);

- The mass of humanity distracted and caught up in fallacies about the nature of the individual, institutions and communities (Melamed, 2011).

A variety of actors across society validate and propagate this discourse. These include the media, economists, politicians, celebrities, owners of media outlets (Giroux, 2014), other thought leaders and figureheads. However, everyday actors also propagate and reinforce this discourse, including schools, teachers, and disciplinarians in educational systems (Briscoe & Khalifa, 2015), educational institutions themselves,

police officers, other institutions that mete out punishment and measurements of obedience and control, and ordinary citizens who operate based on the logic and values of this discourse. Giroux (2003, 2014) suggests that there are systematic campaigns to amass even more power at the elite levels, both in government and in economic and financial corners.

Some may argue that neoliberalism is not a racial discourse, but that it is, instead, the larger background against which various forms of contemporary racism emerge and operate. Others, however, assert that racism and neoliberalism are mutually constituted and co-creative (Byng, 2017; Goldberg, 2009; Melamed, 2015; Roberts & Mahtani, 2010). Melamed (2015) upholds that capitalism and racism have always been bound up in one another and are not separable. She explains that capitalism's efforts to divide humanity into dense but separate categories – what she terms "the production of social separateness" (p. 78) – is actually an effort to create inputs for the capitalist project. Writing about multiculturalism in particular, she explains its operations:

> [Multiculturalism] minoritizes, homogenizes, and constitutes groups as separate through single (or serial) axes of recognition (or oppression), repels accountability to ongoing settler colonialism, and uses identitarianism to obscure shifting differentials of power and unstable social relations (p. 79)

Building off work by Goldberg (2009), Giroux (2014), Melamed (2011) and others, Byng (2017) argues that neoliberalism is an economic, political and racial system. Economically, it values and promotes global entrepreneurialism, private ownership of property, free markets, and free trade. Politically, it limits government regulation,

promotes global capital investments, privatizes public goods, and delimits welfare and social protections. As a racial system, it is "muted White supremacy." In other words, analysis and examination of racial inequalities is moved by racial neoliberalism off from the level of systems and is instead only allowed at the level of individual responsibility and affect. This means that white supremacy and colonial dominance are dressed anew and continue their power operations, but cannot be identified or questioned because the neoliberal framework does not allow for an examination of systems. Byng (2017) writes:

> The neoliberal state rests on the reforms brought by the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, and the global anti-colonial movements, and the ideals of racial integration and multiculturalism. Racial neoliberalism effectively moves the measure of racial equality from resources to identities allowing integration to stand as the indicator of equality (p. 278).

In fact, Goldberg (2009) argues that in neoliberal times, the terms of reference for race and racism have been made taboo. Thus, Goldberg describes racial neoliberalism as a system of racisms without racism, where the terms of reference are obliterated, and institutionalized racism continues to operate in the private realm, where "racist discrimination and exclusion [are] matters of personal morality rather than public law" (p. 363). Byng (2017) asserts that racial neoliberalism promotes "the combined power of White race identity within the United States and globally" (p. 289). Based on the work by the scholars cited above, it is clear that the neoliberal discourse of race is closely bound up in, overlaps with, and relies on the discourses of colorblindness (where the terms of difference have been obliterated), denial (where there is no space for race talk), and

normative whiteness (where what is commonsense and normal is defined by neoliberal economic-political agendas).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented eight racial discourses extant in U.S. society today. These include the discourse of essentialist anti-Black racism, the binary discourse, the discourse of normative whiteness, the discourse of meritocracy, the discourse of assimilation, the discourse of colorblindness, the discourse of denial, and the neoliberal discourse. I believe these are the most prevalent and productive discourses shaping racial subjectivities in the U.S. today. These discourses have the power to mold thinking, inscribe meaning on bodies, create subjectivities and systems, and produce material effects. Scholars across various disciplines also identify these discourses as powerful shapers of lived experience, although they may be organized and prioritized differently than I have proposed above.

Many of these discourses are normalized and commonplace. In this study, I seek to examine and unpack the ways in which these "commonsense" racial discourses shape subjectivities for a population of multiracial students located at the borders of whiteness. Contested whites offer a specific vantage point from which to "make strange" (Gannon & Davies, 2007) taken-for-granted racial discourses and racial locations. Contested whites trouble the concept of a unified racial being. They draw attention more directly to the ways in which racial discourses construct subjectivities. In this study, I draw on poststructural concepts of discourse and subjectivity to interrogate the racial constructions that contested whites negotiate and enact, and explore the management of

these subject positions. Examining the discourses shaping the subjectivities of a liminal

population might shed new light on current racial schema and the exercise and purposes

of power and difference in larger society.

Chapter 3: Methodological Approach

In this chapter, I present and portray my methodological approach. I start by delineating some of the tenets of poststructural thought that are particularly relevant to my inquiry. I describe the study site, participant selection procedures, and how I addressed issues of consent and participant confidentiality during data collection. I then detail my data collection methods, and explain my use of critical discourse analysis and critical narrative analysis. I conclude with a discussion of trust and limitations of the study.

Poststructural Approaches to Research

This study will employ a poststructural approach. Poststructuralism refutes the idea of a single truth or of objective reality that is "out there" waiting for discovery and articulation. Instead, individuals, society, systems, knowledge, structures and more undergo a constant process of creation, recreation and co-construction. They push up against each other, shape one another, and sometimes work together. In poststructural approaches to research, the aim is not to gather data about an existing phenomenon and then describe the "truth" of that matter. The aim is to trouble, struggle and complicate (Davies & Gannon, 2005):

> The focus of poststructural thinking is on cultural life as the production and reading of texts and on the deconstruction of those texts. Its work is in marked contrast to the realist and naturalistic modes of thought in which the task was to "understand" or to make predictions about what was already there. (Gannon & Davies, 2007, p. 81)

Furthermore, whereas liberal humanism declares that language is a transparent tool employed to convey fixed truths about a phenomenon, poststructural perspectives contend that language creates, that it is a site of struggle over power (Allan, 2010; Weedon, 1997), that it is "deeply constitutive of reality, not simply a technical device for establishing meaning" (Riessman, 1993, p. 4). In other words, social life – the patterns, the commonsense, the assumptions and the meanings that individuals and communities ascribe to everyday action and speech – can be taken as "texts." Deconstruction of these texts reveals much about our values, contexts, and the exercise of power.

"The games we humans play"

Stories and talk are the texts of everyday life, just as much as architecture, movement, working, and eating are the texts of everyday life. Stories and talk are significant vehicles for conveying the everyday, taken-for-granted, and commonplace and, as such, are ripe terrain for the activity of making strange. Gee (2014a) points out that humans try to secure various social goods through talk and language. Gee writes:

> All forms of language … get their meaning from the games or practices that they are used to enact. These games or practices determine who is "acceptable" or "good" – who is a "winner" or "loser" – in the game or practice. "Winning" in these practices is often, for many people, a social good. Thus, in using language, social goods are always at stake, at least for some people… At a much deeper level it is about how to distribute social goods in a society: who gets what in terms of money, status, power, and acceptance on a variety of different terms, all social goods (pp. 7-8).

If language constitutes reality, texts reflect and reveal the construction and ordering of social life, including aspects such as power play, control, competition, and moral values. I have earlier alluded to some ways in which individuals and groups play with discourse and discourse plays with us. I have depicted how discourse shapes and reshapes subjectivities, and how power moves through and is played with through our use of discourse. Thus focusing on the analysis of race talk, or language-in-use (Gee, 2014a) around topics of race and subjectivity, is a method that aligns with my approach to this subject matter.

Taking up a poststructural perspective entails "making strange that which we take for granted" (Gannon & Davis, 2007, p. 81). As discussed above, much of what can be labeled or associated with race and race talk in the United States is conceived of as commonplace, everyday, and normative. I seek to contribute to the scholarly literature by "making strange" the racial commonplace through the locations inhabited by contested white subjects. My research questions are as follows:

1. What racial discourses inform the subjectivities of contested white students attending a PWI in the upper Midwest?

2. How do contested white subjects take up and/or resist these discourses?

Study Design

Site. The site for the study will be the campus of a PWI in a large metropolitan area in the upper Midwest. This institution is the flagship of the state's land-grant university system. The institution is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission, and as of Fall 2016, nearly 30,000 undergraduate and 16,000 graduate students were enrolled.

The PWI has a four-year graduation rate of 65.2%, and annual tuition for an

undergraduate student is cited at USD 14,000 for in-state residents and USD 26,000 for

out-of-state students, not including room and board and other expenses.

The mission of the institution is threefold and focuses on research, teaching, and

outreach. The main metropolitan campus is composed of more than a dozen colleges,

each of which have numerous departments, centers, and other units. For example, the

liberal arts unit is one of the largest colleges at the institution, enrolling some 13,000

undergraduate students and some 1,600 graduate students. At the undergraduate level, in

this college, 22.7% of the student body is classified as non-white and at the graduate

level, this number lies at 14.2%. At the metropolitan campus overall, the total percentage

of students of color is 18.8%. The PWI has an office dedicated to equity and diversity

work, and this office for equity and diversity offers a range of programming and events

intended to support students and faculty, and contribute to the success of the institution.

There are complications behind these statistics and descriptions, however. For

example, a report published by The Education Trust in March 2017 reported that

graduation rates for Black students at the PWI are among the worst in the nation[7], with a

23.8% completion gap between black/white students (Nichols & Evans-Bell, 2017, p.

11). In addition, sources report that there was an increase in bias-related incidents on

campus over the course of the Fall 2016 semester (Eischens, 2017).

---

[7] It is important to note that this study examined graduate rates for 676 traditional public and private
nonprofit colleges and universities that enroll nearly 60% of Black first-time, full-time students, and found
this PWI to be among the 21 lowest-performing institutions.

Some of the specific cultural and geographic features of the region are important to explore when considering the site of this study, especially since the vast majority of undergraduate students (at 66.5%) and graduate students come from either the metropolitan area or rural communities throughout the state. The state is known in some circles for being progressive (Eichenlaub, 2008) and "nice" (Kuang, 2016; Plaid, 2015; Veldof & Bonnema, 2014). This trait is commonly used to signify a peculiar combination of "niceness" and disingenuousness that marks larger patterns of social interaction. While some argue that this "niceness" has both positive and negative implications (Kuang, 2016), others implicate it in the regional brand of racism (Plaid, 2015). In fact, the operations of this dynamic can be regarded as a form of colorblindness, where systemic racism is made invisible under the veil of "good intentions," individual responsibility, and "niceness."

Another important feature of the region is the urban-rural divide. Significant portions of the undergraduate student population come from rural, very white backgrounds. The upper Midwest constitutes some of the whitest regions in the United States (ABC News, 2017), although there are differences between urban and rural areas, with this particular metropolitan region having nearly 19% people of color (Collins, 2016), and many rural areas being much whiter.

Participant selection. I used purposeful and snowball sampling (Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996) and also invited student participation using flyers. Since there is no single organization or grouping of those who can be classified as contested whites – no student organization, no cultural center, no single national, ethnic or religious background –

recruitment through purposeful and snowball sampling was necessary to allow me to reach students who meet the criteria for this study. I invited a handful of individual students, both at the graduate and undergraduate level, whom I knew personally to participate in the study. They also had contacts that they shared with me, and acquaintances whom they encouraged to reach out to me (see Appendix A and Appendix B). Traditional studies of racial identity development in higher education settings focus on undergraduate students, and the models generated by this research seem to imply that individuals will have reached a sense of integration and resolution about their racial identity by the end of the typical four-years of baccalaureate study. I do not entirely agree with this assessment that racial identity issues are resolved by the age of 21 or 22, and thus, in my study, I intentionally interviewed both undergraduate and graduate students.

Participant consent, confidentiality, and protection. Consent, confidentiality and participant protection are extremely important for the integrity of any research study and for the well-being of participants. I sought and obtained approval for this study through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to recruiting participants and collecting data. Before each interview, the participant and I spent time discussing consent, confidentiality and the voluntary nature of the study. I first presented the written consent form (see Appendix C), read it out loud, highlighting various aspects, and left time for discussion and questions before beginning the interview. In particular, participants and I discussed the risks of participation, confidentiality procedures, and the voluntary nature of the study. I collected one copy of the form for myself, and gave a copy of the consent form to the participant to keep as a reference.

Before beginning the interview, I asked each participant to complete a demographic information form (see Appendix D). I printed these out and each participant took several minutes to silently complete the form. All interviews were conducted in a private space. Almost all were conducted on campus, usually in a conference room after working hours. I recorded each interview using two small, personal recording devices. These files were submitted to an outside commercial service for transcription. All recorded audio files and all transcriptions were kept on my computer, which is protected by a password.

This study involved no significant risk to participants except the loss of time spent meeting with me and the potential of bringing up difficult memories or experiences. On the other hand, the benefit of processing and recounting experiences was evident, thus adequately offsetting the minimal risk. Participants were each given a resource contact sheet (see Appendix E). No participants contacted me after the interview asking for further support, but had anyone done so, I would have referred them to the individual counseling services, group counseling services, academic and career advisors, various University offices, student groups, and books and other written materials. Each participants received a 10 USD Starbucks gift card to thank them for their time.

Participation in the study was completely voluntary, and individuals had the option of declining to answer any questions if they felt at all uncomfortable. This was a point that I repeated several times when we read through the consent form together. I also explained that even after the interview was complete, students could choose to omit their

responses from analysis in write-up by either contacting me, my advisor, or the IRB, and I provided relevant contact information.

Identifying information for all participants was kept on a separate document from the demographic information forms in order to minimize a breach in confidentiality. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant in order to maintain confidentiality during write up and analysis. Data was stored on a secure server on a password protected computer.

Data collection methods. Open-ended, individual interviews constituted my primary data collection method. Semi-structured interviews with individual participants allowed for the building of rapport between interviewer and interviewee, and also provided room for in-the-moment deeper probing of topics (Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996). I shared a prepared list of questions with participants at the very beginning of the recorded interview (see Appendix F). I conducted a total of 20 individual interviews. The ability to ask follow-up questions during the course of the semi-structured interview was particularly important for my second research question, "How do contested white subjects take up and/or resist racial discourses?" Being able to dive deeper as participants described their thoughts, feelings and actions during the interview process was critical to the gathering of rich data on this topic. I conducted follow up interviews with six data-rich cases, in several instances more than once, and the information garnered from these participants was very valuable.

I also conducted two focus groups (Krueger & Casey, 2015) with participants with whom I had already completed individual interviews. The first focus group was held

in early December 2017 and the second focus group was held in late April 2018. Each focus group lasted between 1.5 to 2 hours in duration. At both of these discussions, I presented a range of findings to the participants, and we explored the data that I presented and discussed related topics of importance. These focus groups were recorded on my two, small, handheld recording devices, and transcribed by an external vendor.

It is important to acknowledge that there are ways in which I co-constructed data with my participants. I co-constructed through my questions – how they were phrased and ordered, how I emphasized or de-emphasized them, how I probed for further data; my dress; how I sat/talked; how I described and performed my own racial and other social identities; and whether I joked and connected more personally with participants. For example, if I shared some of my own small stories, this likely strengthened the bond between the participant and myself. If I nodded in vigorous agreement or if I was conversant with cultural markers that a given participant described, all of these dynamics contributed to the overall tenor of the conversation and probably influenced on how open and forthcoming participants were. Some of these interpersonal interactions and influences were reflected in the interview conversations and captured in the audio recordings.

Analytic memos. Gubrium and Holstein (2009) and Saldaña (2016) address the importance of not only writing analytic memos throughout data collection, coding and analysis, but also point out that these documents should also be coded and treated as sources of data. I wrote and analyzed analytic memos throughout the process of data collection and data analysis. These documents became important sources of information

to me, and served as references points for details that I might have overlooked or forgotten in later stages of analysis and writing.

Participant observation. Although this was not an ethnographic study, I attended meetings and activities hosted by both the multiracial student group and some individual student events, such as the Spring dance recital of two of my participants. During these activities, I observed much of the interaction, language, phrasing, emotions, and dynamics between various contested whites and others. I took notes during all of these meetings, often jotting down both exact phrases that students uttered as well as themes and topics that were repeated across the range of participants. I marked which topics and insights seemed to generate a sense of collective agreement. These data was critical in terms of giving me a sense of the importance of themes and various topics to a broad range of students attending this PWI. Later, both when I was constructing questions for my two focus group discussions, and also during the analysis, I reread my notes from these meetings. These notes helped reinforce and confirm many of the themes and insights I was analyzing from my interviews.

Data analysis. I used both critical discourse analysis and critical narrative analysis. Vavrus and Kwauk (2013) assert "the inseparability of two strands of discourse analysis – the linguistic and the discursive – and the socially productive nature of their interaction" (p. 351). Calling on this inseparability, I combined critical discourse analysis with critical narrative analysis.

Critical discourse analysis. Gee (2014a) identifies critical discourse analysis as the study of language-in-use. Language is used to obtain social goods, and the

distribution of social goods is an inherently political act. Discourse analysis focuses on how language is being used to position certain people as winners or losers of various social practices. Gee (2014a) believes that all discourse analysis needs to be critical "not because discourse analysts are or need to be political, but because language itself is ... political" (p. 9). Language "can illuminate issues about the distribution of social goods, who gets helped and who gets harmed" (Gee, 2014a, p. 10).

Gee argues that his approach to discourse analysis foregrounds identity, and he sees identity as a performance. This approach to data analysis might be particularly appropriate for my first research question which focuses on subjectivity and performance of identities. Gee (2014a) writes:

> To enact identities people have to talk the right talk, walk the right walk, behave as if they believe and value the right things, and wear the right things at the right time and right place. Identity is a performance. Like all performances it will not work unless at least some people recognize what you are and what you are doing in your performance (p. 24).

Gee (2014a) makes a distinction between what he calls "big D" and "little d" discourses. Big D discourses are "interactive identity-based communication using *both* language and everything else at human disposal" (p. 24, Gee's emphasis). This "everything else" can include bodies, context, other discourses, values, beliefs, and other "things" in the world. This definition of Discourses echoes the content and boundaries of "discourse" as I have defined it in Chapter 2. Little d discourses, on the other hand, are the linguistic and

textual details of language. Vavrus and Kwauk (2013) assert that the distinction between d/Discourses is useful, and argue that scholars need to pay attention to both.

There are no hard and fast methods for critical discourse analysis; there are only approaches. Gee (2014b) articulates a series of tools that can help the analyst ask some important questions about pieces of language, for example, "how is this piece of language being used to make certain things significant or not and in what ways" (Gee, 2005, p. 11). In her discursive analysis, Iverson (2012) asks herself "what are the predominant images produced by discourse?" (p. 155). She also examined the identity positions that emerged, and asked "*who* is produced?—meaning what subject positions are discursively constituted, or rather, what social identities can be taken up or inhabited by diverse individuals?" (p. 157). I used Gee's (2014a) concept of Discourses to identify and pay attention to forces that constructed subjectivities for contested whites. I did not use Gee's more specific tools in my analysis. Instead, I turned to critical narrative analysis.

Critical narrative analysis. Riessman (1989, 1993, 2008) and others (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009; Polkinghorne, 1997) proclaim that narration is a very natural human activity, and thus examining narrative texts that appear in research interviews is another fruitful form of analysis. Gubrium and Holstein argue for an approach to narrative analysis which they have entitled "narrative ethnography." They concern themselves with how stories operate in society. They look at not just the content of the stories, but also the context of the stories and the work that goes into narrative production and digestion:

> who produced particular kinds of stories, where are they likely to be encountered,
> what are their purposes and consequences, who are the listeners, under what

circumstances are particular narratives more or less accountable, how do they gain

acceptance, and how are they challenged? (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009 p. 23)

Gubrium and Holstein (2009) look at facets of narrative work such as activation, linkage,

composition, performance, collaboration, and control. When it comes to narrative

environments, they urge analysts to pay particular attention to relationships, local culture,

status, jobs, organizations, and intertextuality. They provide a handful of guidelines

throughout their text that can help organize and focus the narrative analyst. This seems to

parallel some of the Big D discourse work that is implicated in critical discourse analysis.

Much like critical discourse analysis, there is no one correct way of doing

narrative analysis. Riessman (1989, 1993) provides some concrete examples of how she

coded and interpreted three stories about divorce, and Saldaña (2016) also presents a

detailed review of narrative coding. It appears that Labov's framework (see Saldaña,

2016, p. 156) is a particularly widespread and productive coding scheme, and I used this

framework for three sets of stories that one of my participants narrated and linked

together (see Chapter 6). Riessman (1993) and Saldaña (2016) both claim that narrative

analysis is especially apt for examination of subjectivities, and Riessman (1993) also

contends that it is appropriate for the study of race.

Coding. It is important to include a discussion of specific coding techniques

because they are integral to analysis and interpretation of data. Saldaña (2016) argues that

"coding is analysis" and "coding is a heuristic" (p. 9). Coding has to do with the act of

delving into data, playing with it, and making sense of it. My initial ideas about what

types of coding I would use on my data were steered by the nature of the research

questions. For example, I considered using narrative coding and values coding (Saldaña, 2016) to answer my first research question centering on subjectivities produced by discourse. I also intended, at the outset, to code the data according to the larger racial Discourses described at length in Chapter 2.

When I had the data in hand, I ended up coding in several different ways, both inductive and deductive, both using software and coding by hand on the margins of printed interview transcripts. I tried to systematically complete each round of coding, but sometimes one strategy would bleed into another, and when this occurred in especially productive ways, I then chose to turn my attention to the newly revised approach. The rounds of coding built on one another in organic ways that I could not have predicted.

My first round of coding consisted of reading and re-reading printed transcripts and labeling paragraphs with key descriptive words that summarized content, for example, "major," "career plans," "siblings," "hometown," "classroom," "Mom," "dating," and so on. A second round of coding focused on identifying the eight racial discourses identified in my literature review in Chapter 2, as well as some of the traditional phases labelled in literature on stage-based racial identity development models, such as "naiveté," "immersion," and "integration." Mixed in with this process was some *in vivo* coding, with phrases, words, or concepts that seemed especially important or commonplace. All this immersion in the data also solidified certain stories in my mind. These were impactful stories that hung together very well, and remained with me long after I read and coded them. I completed at least two full rounds of coding all the data I collected using the strategies described above. By this point, larger categories had

emerged from the codes, and I was able to identify and map out key assertions (Ropers-Huilman, Winters & Enke, 2013; Saldaña, 2016). I soon organized these assertions into a sequence and logic for the overall argument, and I was able to name and outline the chapters of this volume.

I then engaged in a third round of coding that focused on chapter content. For example, I knew that Chapter 5 would focus on tipping point stories. I read through all of the transcripts again, coding key tipping point stories across all of the data. In preparation for Chapter 6, which conveyed the pivotal argument of this work, I spent two weeks coding half the transcripts through MaxQDA, and then ran into substantial software problems. I eventually stopped using this software because of its unreliability, and returned to hand coding all transcripts from the beginning. However, the process of coding word by word, and line by line through MaxQDA for at least half of the transcripts helped me solidify the outline for Chapter 6. I then was able to code for the various sections of the chapter, such as "technologies of racial contestation" or "shame." I consider all of this to constitute a third round of coding, and during this time, I also coded for specific subjectivities produced, such as "Hermit" or "Healer," etc.

Trust. At the level of social interactions with the participants of this study, I worked to build trust. I was polite and professional in my interactions, and explained my own interests in this work. Sometimes I shared relevant literature with participants after the completion of an interview, as a request for additional resources was often made to me during the course of conversation. A few times, I shared flyers or communications about campus events with individuals who had expressed a particularly strong interest in

a related topic. Although I could not necessarily secure complete trust with my participants, some of our interactions have begun to blossom into relationships and friendships over time. For example, one of my participants contacted me after the interview and asked me to share a couple of key concepts that we had discussed together. She and a second participant then created a dance piece based, in part, on these concepts. I was able to attend the performance of this piece and even debriefed with these two individuals later in the semester. I have shared literature with these two individuals, and we are considering possibilities for presenting and writing together.

Contextual factors. There are a handful of significant contextual factors that influence the data gathering and analysis of this study. First, the study was conducted in a specific geographical location and was influenced by the larger population and cultural contexts that operate in the region. Some of these local contexts influence the enactments of racial discourses in the region in which the study took place. I have alluded to some of these localized influences in the description of the site above. Second, the study took place at a specific type of institution of higher education, and thus institutional type must be taken into account when asking questions about the experiences of contested whites at other institutional types, or even other similarly positioned institutions in other locations. Finally, contemporary political climate in the United States – both in terms of governmental policies and political rhetoric around race and otherness of multiple forms – was influential, and shaped the current enactments of the racial discourses identified in this work.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed poststructural approaches to research and delineated some of the assumptions about truth, cultural life, texts, and power/knowledge. I described by study design, including site, selection, consent, and confidentiality. I detailed data collection and analysis methods, and I concluded the chapter with a brief discussion of trust and the limitations of the study.

Chapter 4: Who are Contested Whites?

In this chapter, I will describe the participants of the study, including a summary of demographic data and several anonymized, composite character descriptions. These descriptions illustrate the various types of individuals who fit within the contested white category. Included in these character descriptions are initial hints of the overwhelming pain and shame that many contested whites described to me. Chapter 6 will further describe and elaborate this emotional pain and shame, which was a major theme throughout this study. The second half of this chapter describes the contestation that these students experience and engage in. Participants' stories of contestation present moments of questioning, pushing, and policing of whiteness. In these descriptions, I problematize who is contested, why this contestation appears, and when it appears. I further describe some of the material effects enacted on contested white subjects by these daily, commonplace microaggressions.

Study Participants

One of the most remarkable aspects of this research project is the force of responsiveness to my rather limited calls for participants. The response from students who saw themselves as "contested whites" was swift and sustained. The individuals who reached out to me or who responded to my emails came from a wide range of racial and ethnic backgrounds, and the sheer diversity across the group of 20 respondents is striking. In addition, a multi-racial student group was forming just as I began my data collection efforts, and this sense of timeliness, urgency and depth of response was also evident in the activities of that group.

Demographic information. Below is a table showing some of the demographic characteristics of the 20 respondents. I have masked some of the identifying data in order to protect the identities and privacy of the individuals who so generously shared their stories and understandings with me.

Table 1

Demographic information of study participants

AGE	GENDER	CITIZENSHIP	YRS U.S.	MARITAL STATUS	RELIGION	SES	1ST ATTEND COLLEGE
22	Woman	U.S.	21	Single	Catholic	Middle	No
40	Female	U.S.	12	Married	Agnostic	High	No
27	Male	U.S.	27	LT relationship	Catholic	Middle	Yes
34	Woman	U.S. + Native tribe	34	Single	Catholic + indigenous	Low	Yes
21	Woman	U.S.	21	Single	Catholic, non-practicing	Middle	No
21	Female	U.S.	21	Single	None	Middle	No
27	Male	U.S.	26	LT relationship	Atheist	High	No
21	Female – she/her/hers	U.S.	21	Single	Catholic, non-practicing	High	No
35	Male	U.S.	35	Single	Christian/spiritual	Middle	No
30	Female	U.S.	30	Married	Christian	High	No
28	Male	U.S.	28	Married	Catholic, non-practicing	Low	No
21	Woman	U.S.	21	Single	Agnostic	Middle	No
20	Female	U.S.	20	Single	Catholic	Middle	No
20	Female	U.S.	20	Single	Catholic, non-practicing	Middle	No
21	Female	South American country + U.S.	17	Single	Catholic	High	No
25	Male	U.S.	25	Single	Agnostic	High	No
20	Female	U.S.	20	Single	Catholic	Middle	Yes
18	Female	U.S.	18	Single	Don't know	Middle	No

| 20 | Male | U.S. + Asian country | 14 | Single | Agnostic | Middle | Yes |
| 21 | Female | U.S. | 21 | Single | Christian | Middle | Yes |

My study participants included both men and women, and their ages ranged from 18 to 40 years. Participants were both undergraduate and graduate students, and five of the 17 identified as first-generation college students. They pursued a wide range of academic studies, from economics, statistics, dance, Spanish, and agriculture to history. Overall, these students were smart, focused on learning, and high achievers. They were engaged, thoughtful, critically reflective learners, and active members of the campus community.

In terms of their racial and ethnic backgrounds and identities, Black-white, Mexican-white, and Filipino-white were the most common mixes from the specific 20 individuals who participated in interviews and focus groups, but there was also much more diversity than this, including people with Native American, Middle Eastern, East Asian, South Asian, and European backgrounds. There were individuals who identified themselves as being 50:50 mixes of different racial/ethnic groups, 25:75 mixes, and other ratios and mixtures that were not just biracial in constitution; there were others who claimed 100% ancestry in one single racial/ethnic group, but who still actively experienced racial contestation at the borders of whiteness. According to my own visual assessment, about one third of the participants were easily white-passing, another third could pass with some concerted effort, such as purposeful clothing and makeup choices, and the final third were not white-passing.

All participants were U.S. citizens, and three held dual citizenship in other sovereign nations, including a Native American participant who held official citizenship in an indigenous nation. Four of the 20 participants were born outside of the United States, and four lived abroad for significant periods of time, including some long-term study abroad experiences.

About half of the participants were single, and the other half were either married or in a long-term relationship. The levels of socioeconomic status were split between lower class, middle class, and upper class. One striking note is that most of the participants were either raised Catholic or active Catholics at the time of data collection.

Student profiles. The concept of who fits into the category of contested whiteness can be unclear since they are not solely identifiable by phenotype alone. Below I present a handful of amalgamated participant descriptions with the intention of providing more detailed sketches of who fits into this space and I begin to describe some of the ways in which they experience racial contestation. The identifiable information has been generalized in some cases. In other cases, more than one individual with similar background and characteristics has been grouped together into a single sketch, again in order to protect anonymity of participants.

Damien. Damien was a cisgender, male and a full-time graduate student pursuing his doctoral degree in the social sciences. He explained that he loved research, and in particular, quantitative data analysis. He hoped to finish his degree in the next two years, and was actively considering whether to fully commit to a career in research or in

practice in his chosen field of study. Damien was in his late twenties, an only child, and in a committed, long-term relationship.

One of Damien's parents was white and the other was Black, although light-skinned. Damien himself was very light-skinned, and depending on what he was wearing, he could easily pass for white. For example, if he were wearing a baseball cap, covering up his hair, most passersby would automatically assume that he was white. When his hair was visible, there was some more ambiguity in his racial appearance, but even then, most individuals would assume that he was white. He identified himself racially as "mixed Black-White," and an "American" in terms of nationality. Damien explained that he had Eastern European and West African ethnic ancestry.

Damien identified as racially contested, and has struggled with these dynamics for years. Over certain periods of time in his youth, he tried to "dress and act Black" and date Black women. He studied abroad for significant periods of time, in several countries, and also explored his racial identity in that context. Damien also made racial ambiguity part of his research inquiry, although it was secondary to his primary area of scholarly interest.

Damien was engaged to a White woman from a rural area in the Midwest. He described her family's rather elementary understanding of race relations in the United States. At family gatherings, Damien found himself increasingly concerned with the racial understandings of the younger generation of children in his fiancé's family. He started to take it upon himself to create learning opportunities for both the adults and younger children in the family, for example by watching documentaries with the adults,

and by purchasing and sending children's books that focused on racial diversity and social justice to the younger children.

Lyra. Lyra was a cisgender woman, and a third-year undergraduate student, pursuing her bachelor's degree in the arts. She was 21 years old, bisexual, the third of four sisters, and she grew up in a small town on the outer fringes of a larger metropolitan area. Lyra had an open demeanor, and when asked questions, she took time to reflect and deliberate. She was thoughtful in her responses. She was considering further academic study in her current field, and would someday like to become a faculty member working in a higher education setting.

Lyra's hometown was predominantly white and Catholic, and she explained that families maintained bonds of association across generations through religious and other social practices in this town. Lyra's maternal grandfather immigrated to the United States in the 1960s from South Asia, and her paternal grandparents emigrated from Eastern Europe in the early 20th century. Lyra was the darkest in phenotype of the four girl children and two parents in her immediate family. She was closest to her youngest sister, who was phenotypically very white, blond and blue-eyed. The two sisters looked very different from one another when they stood side by side; whereas Lyra was the darkest, her youngest sister was the lightest in phenotype. Lyra described how, as she grew up, she found herself expressing a lot of physical affection to her youngest sibling – hugs and kisses on the cheek and forehead – especially in public spaces in her hometown, such as the school playground. Lyra later realized that she undertook these actions with the

intention of letting bystanders know that she and her light-hued sister were actually siblings and belonged together. Lyra identified as "multiracial."

Michael. Michael was a cisgender, male graduate student, finishing up his doctoral degree. He was a practitioner with many years of experience in his industry, and had pursued his graduate degree both because of academic curiosity and in order to raise his overall qualifications and expertise in his field of work. Michael worried about both his future earning potential and the significant student loans he had taken as part of the pursuit of this degree program.

Michael was a transracial adoptee. He was adopted from an orphanage at two weeks of age. His adoptive mother was white, and he was phenotypically very dark in skin tone, hair color, and eye color. Michael's adoptive mother was a somewhat well-known local figure, and raised both Michael, and another transracially adopted sibling, in a family and community that valued faith, service, and commitment to the greater good. Michael was well-educated and enjoyed the advantages of good schooling as a result of the efforts and network of his adoptive mother. Michael had never sought to reconnect with his orphanage, his family of origin, or even his birth country. Although his adoptive mother did initially try to attend cultural events associated with his birth country and culture, involvement in these activities diminished over time.

Kamilia. Kamilia was a cisgender woman graduate student in her second year of doctoral coursework. Before attending the University, Kamilia worked in the public and non-profit sectors for a significant period of time, serving families and children. She was

in her mid-30s, a first-generation college student, bisexual, and came from a lower social and economic status background.

Kamilia's mother was Native, and her father was white. She grew up in a "very indigenous-identified, and practicing, cultural family," and she lived on the reservation for significant periods of time. She considered the reservation to be "home." For portions of her childhood, Kamilia grew up as the oldest sibling in a single-parent household, headed by her mother, where she had significant responsibilities to help raise her four younger siblings. Other significant portions of her childhood were spent in her grandmother's household. Kamilia was a registered member of her indigenous nation. She was raised both with indigenous ceremony and tradition, and with Catholic practices as well. At the time of the interview, Kamilia lived several states away from her home reservation in an off-campus apartment that she shared with a sibling.

Kamilia was very light in phenotype, and she explained that 90% of the time, people assumed that she was White. On forms, she identified her race as both White and Native American. Kamilia had some Irish ancestry. Kamilia had a very cheerful demeanor, was quick to smile, and had a positive air about her. She explained how this approachability and cheerfulness at times worked with her light phenotype to construct the identification of her body as white.

Boutros. Boutros was a cisgender, male, graduate student in his late 20s, completing his master's degree. He also worked for the university as a full-time employee. He had strong interests in both academia and in for-profit industry, and had

spent his career shifting between the two fields, feeling a call to achieve and serve in both arenas.

Boutros was very dedicated to his family of origin. He was one of four boys from a tight-knit immigrant family. Boutros lived with his parents, and helped take care of an ailing parent who had developed significant physical needs over the last several years. At the same time, Boutros made significant financial contributions to the overall economic wellbeing of his family. Two of his siblings lived far away and were minimally involved in the care of his parents, while both Boutros and another brother contributed significant physical and financial resources.

Boutros' father and mother each immigrated separately to the United States from the Middle East in their youth, met in the midwestern United States, and married. The family was not Muslim, but hailed from one of the Middle East's religious minority groups, and this faith identification was strong and very important to both the 1st and 2nd generations of Boutros' family. Boutros prominently wore a large gold necklace with religious symbols that declared his faith.

Boutros had phenotypical characteristics that could be associated with Middle Eastern origin, including thick, dark hair and dark eyes. When the 9-11 attacks occurred, Boutros was a young boy and, subsequently, suffered years of bullying and verbal harassment from classmates in school. These attacks left a palpable mark on Boutros, and he could easily call up the pain from those years, although he tended to minimize it at the same time, saying "I'm over it." At the same time, Boutros identified as "American" and classified himself as white in race, as many Middle Easterners do.

Boutros was in a long-term relationship with a white U.S. American woman, and he recounted a story of being pulled over by a cop during a recent long-distance road trip together. Boutros immediately took up the usual self-defense tactics that men and women of color commonly employ in interactions with police, including deferential, polite language, keeping his hands in plain sight and on the steering wheel at all times, and alerting officers of impending physical movements before undertaking them. Boutros had numerous conversations with his partner after this incident about his racial identification and the mismatch with reflected appraisals that classify him as being a person of color.

Jenelle. Jenelle was a cisgender female and the youngest of three sisters in a single-family household, headed by her white mother. She grew up in a rural area, in a predominantly white community that was mostly Catholic and Lutheran. Jenelle's father was African American, and was not a part of the family by the time that Jenelle was a young child. As she grew up, Jenelle had spent increasing time with her father, and connected with his new family and her step-siblings. In their limited times together, the father attempted to share aspects of Black culture with his daughter.

Jenelle was a senior who was finishing her undergraduate degree in the social sciences. She used her time and degree requirements as a conveyance for the exploration and consolidation of her racial identity. For example, she took courses in African American studies, cultural and racial diversity, social justice, family studies, youth development, and psychology, and she pursued both research and social activities on campus that helped her explore related issues. Jenelle helped form a multiracial student group on campus, and planned to stay connected with the group even after graduation,

returning to lead workshops and offer mentoring for younger students who may be struggling with questions about racial identity and belonging. She also hoped that her future career would focus on issues related to community development and mental health, especially around issues of racial identity and social justice.

Growing up in a rural, mostly white community was not easy for Jenelle. She spent much of her youth confused about her identity. Jenelle recounted a variety of microaggressions from her childhood and youth, and described that her body physically felt the pain of each incident. Largely due to the breadth and depth of healing and educational labor that Jenelle has undertaken as part of her baccalaureate study, at the time of our several interview conversations, Jenelle had grown to identify as Black. This process was not easy. She recounted searching for permission from elders in various Black community spaces, and she received these "permissions" and acknowledgements at certain key moments in her development. Jenelle had become the most critically conscious member of her immediate family regarding issues of racism and racial identity, and she often played a role in educating her white mother and her sisters.

Roland. Roland was a cisgender male graduate student in the sciences. He hoped to complete his doctoral degree in a year, and reported having promising prospects for lucrative employment upon graduation. He went straight to graduate school from his undergraduate studies, and was a focused and academically successful student. Roland was in his mid-20s, single, heterosexual, and came from a well-educated, upper class family.

Roland described himself as introverted. He was hard on himself and had some tendencies towards higher levels of anxiety and worry. Roland generally identified as "a colored man" in terms of race. He could relate a long string of incidents where his racial identity was contested by others. More specifically, his mother was of Chinese descent as her grandparents immigrated to the United States. Roland's father was white, and his great-grandparents immigrated to the United States from Western Europe.

Roland explained that he had the darkest phenotype in his family of origin; both parents and his only sibling were lighter-hued. Over time, it had occurred to him that he may have been adopted. Even though Roland made this comment in a somewhat joking tone, the query itself speaks to the ambiguity and instability that he had experienced around issues of racial identification and incongruence. Roland described a particularly moving scene when he was a young child at the doctor's office, where one parent asked the physician about possible causes for his darker skin tone. Roland stated that "I always felt more comfortable around the darker skinned people than white people certainly," and that "the way people have treated me in my life is like I'm some unidentifiable minority." At the same time, Roland had not felt accepted by Asians either, and he recounted a time in college when "a group of Asian internationals came up to me in a cafeteria and asked me if I was Native American."

As Roland approached graduation, he was starting to think more about marriage and establishing his own family. It was clear that the racial contestation he experienced constrained his choices and possibilities when it came to dating and potential marriage

partners. Roland remarked, "I've always felt that it's harder for me – I basically [feel like I am] less desirable for white women."

Sofia. Sofia was a cisgender, young Latinx woman in her early 20s. She was completing her bachelor's degree and hoped to graduate within four-years. Sofia was white-passing, trendy and cosmopolitan in her dress and accoutrements, intelligent, and charming. She was lighter in phenotype than any other member of her immediate family, and her siblings and cousins had long teased her about this matter. She recounted that when she stood next to her eldest brother in public settings, people often assumed that they were married partners, not siblings. Sofia described the sexual harassment and fetishization she endured, and all the racially- and sexually-charged comments which white men often direct to her, such as calling her a "dirty white" or asking her, out of the blue, "What are you mixed with? You're cute!"

As a first-year student, coming to campus was culture shock for Sofia. She did not realize that her college campus would be so predominantly white, and much of her first few weeks on campus was spent making sense of the differences between her home environment and this new setting, comparing and contrasting one with the other. At the same time, college was the first environment in which Sofia was automatically placed in programs and spaces – as a first year student – intended for students of color. She was invited to a Fall gathering and celebration for multicultural students. This placement and identification by the institution seemed particularly significant to Sofia as she grappled with her racial identity in this new setting.

Now in her third year of study, Sofia explained that she often tried to prove to others that she was Mexican, even to her roommates who are other women of color. She did this by cooking ethnic foods, wearing large hoop earrings, and wearing makeup – dark black eyeliner, bright red lipstick – which she identified as a particularly Latina look. In fact, Sofia used Spanish words and phrases throughout her English diction, especially when she was around her roommates, even though she did not grow up speaking Spanish in her family of origin. As we talked more, she started to quietly weep, feeling shame for using these physical actions to demonstrate her racial identity to others.

Above are some amalgamated, somewhat fictionalized descriptions of a handful of respondents that participated in my study. Some of them met with me for multiple interviews over time. Some participated in a focus group discussion, forming new friendships and connections with one another. Some led or participated in the events of the multiracial student group on campus. All were thoughtful and open participants, and the discussions we had together were valuable, often unearthing the seeds of real emotional struggle that they all grappled with, most often alone and in isolation, with feelings of shame and guilt throughout. It was not necessarily a fact that older students had come to a greater sense of resolution on these topics than younger students.

The sheer diversity of individuals who identified themselves as being on the borders of whiteness and experiencing racial contestation was remarkable. These were students pursuing a wide range of areas of study, spanning a range of ages across their 20s, 30s, and early 40s, both male and female, both U.S. born and foreign-born, from both rural and urban backgrounds, and large and small families of origin. Many of them

struggled in isolation with feelings of shame and guilt, of ambiguity and ambivalence, and to some extent, they tried to protect themselves from spaces in which racial contestation was likely to be encountered.

Student group. In Fall 2017, just as I was starting to make my initial foray into reaching out to potential first participants, I heard about a new student group that was forming related to my topic of inquiry. I attended the first two meetings – each hours long – of the new multiracial student group. This group was formed by a handful of individual undergraduate and graduate students who identified themselves as multiracial in a variety of ways. Over time, I learned that one semester earlier, in Spring 2017, the idea for the formation this student group germinated at an initial gathering with a student affairs staff member who encouraged them to explore multi-racial identity and to turn to other students for support. Based on their initiative and collaboration, they formed a very dynamic group.

The first meeting that I attended was on a Wednesday night in late October, and the topic of the gathering was "Embracing multiplicity." At the outset of the event, it was explained that the meeting was focused on the experiences of being multiracial, bi-racial, multi-ethnic, mixed, transracially adopted, and other forms of multiplicity. The event was composed of large and small-group discussions facilitated by two women student leaders, who both identified as multiracial themselves. One was a Filipina-White undergraduate student, and the other was a Mexican-White undergraduate student. One was specifically representing another student group on campus which was focused on feminism, gender, and empowering female-identified students. The content of the presentation was

dynamic, and drew on theories of intersectionality, white privilege, investments in whiteness, identity, and performativity. About 30 undergraduate and graduate students attended from a wide range of racial and ethnic backgrounds. A handful of white allies were also in attendance, and while they were attentively listening, they did not participate verbally. The discussion was broad-ranging, and many individuals spoke up and shared their stories and their struggles. Topics discussed ranged from White mothers, political activism, intersectionality, sharing the pain of ambivalence and ambiguity, gender issues, especially around racially-charged sexual harassment, struggles and successes in collaborating with other student groups on campus, the interactive effects of heteropatriarchal masculinity, and more. These students were bright, open-minded, well-organized, thoughtful, humorous, and engaged members of the campus community. The sheer diversity of the participants, in terms of racial background, ethnic and national background, specific racial mixtures, and level of study was striking. The most "heated" part of the discussion focused on an exchange about whether or not, and to what extent, these individuals who were describing their own pain and suffering were obligated to "change the world," to educate others, and to effect a transformation in larger society around issues of race and racism.

The second gathering of the multiracial student group, the official kick-off potluck dinner, was scheduled for a few days later. This event was co-hosted by a nonprofit organization that had a presence on campus. About 15 students attended this event, some from the previous event, along with about half who were new participants. This potluck dinner lasted three hours, and again covered a wide range of issues. We sat

in a circle, ate food, and had a partially facilitated discussion on the experiences and issues of being multiracial or multiethnic. This night, the discussion was facilitated more informally, and some quieter individuals felt empowered to speak up and share their struggles.

Almost all of the students discussed the sense of ambivalence and illegitimacy that they lived with, of not belonging anywhere in particular, of "being out there in the stars," of "people telling you who you are." Stories of contestation and tokenization were recounted, and these included stories where the students themselves were the ones taking up tokenizing discourse about parts of their own racial and ethnic backgrounds. Other themes covered at this second gathering included a discussion of the family space versus college space, phenotype, politics, physical danger, racial battle fatigue, anger, the role of mentors, and more. At the end of the meeting, students made a list of topics for future meetings and activities, and one that stood out was that of exploring identity in community. Students also remarked that spending time together and talking about multiplicity, even across their differences, engendered a sense of "healing" and liberation. One participant commented that they left the meeting "feeling like we could fly!" Others remarked, "This is good for the soul!" In other words, naming and exploring the issues of contested whiteness and multiracial identity in a community felt deeply cathartic and healing for these students.

Pain and Shame

Across all the interviews, the focus group, and the student group meetings, the immense pain and deep shame that contested whites articulated was striking and

universal. This was an active pain for individuals who lie at the borders of whiteness. Despite their racial backgrounds, phenotypes, ages, family sizes, maturity, years of reading and writing about these issues, across the board, from first-year student to doctoral candidate who has published research on related topics, the pain and shame was constant and active. Some participants cried quietly as they recounted stories or expressed their feelings, others used humor or other rhetorical devices to minimize the "internal battle." Some described the experiences in a more detached, academic tone.

More specifically, they described their experience as evoking the following emotions: "shame," "uncomfortable," "embarrassed," "isolated and different," "ashamed," "pain and sadness," "ambivalence," and "guilt." Students explained that they waged an "internal battle" where they were "not fully accepted" anywhere, where they "feel invisible a lot of times." At other times, they described a sense of being a fraud or illegitimate, and explained that "I don't have a right to say what I feel." Contested white students described the amount of labor they feel obligated to undertake, having "to prove yourself" as belonging to certain category across a range of settings and social spaces. They also explained that the experience of contestation and the labor of proving belonging "rattles me up so much," resulting in significant emotional and mental health burdens.

Contestation and Policing

Scholars of race have started to articulate a bi-dimensional perspective to the assessment of racial belonging: One factor is an individual's own assessment of race and the other factor constitutes outsiders' assessments of an individual's race, or reflected

appraisals (Khanna, 2004). Various scholars use different terminology to refer to the situation when there is mismatch between internal assessment and reflected appraisals. In some instances, Vargas (2016a, 2016b) calls it racial "incongruence," and in other instances, he uses "contestation." Others use the word "fluidity" (Saperstein & Penner, 2012, 2014), "whitening" (Vargas, 2015), "matching" (Porter, Liebler & Noon, 2016), "mixed race" identity (Renn, 2000, 2003), biracial identity (Brunsma & Rockquemore, 2001, 2002; Renn, 2000), or multiracial identity (Brunsma, Delgado & Rockquemore, 2013; Burke & Kao, 2013; Malaney & Danowski, 2015; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2004). All of these terms are important, and will be used throughout this work, but I insist on the term "contested" to bring attention to the power dynamics at play and the policing of difference and belonging at the borders of whiteness. The word "contested" keeps in the forefront the power dynamics of white supremacy, and the racial formation that is active and that reflects the construction of subjectivities.

Stories of contestation. What does racial contestation look like? What does the policing and contestation of whiteness look like? Where does it appear, and how often? Who is doing the policing and how? Below are a handful of stories from the participants of this study, each describing an incident of racial contestation.

The three Rolands. Roland recounted an incident to me from his undergraduate years. He was attending a small, liberal arts college, and one evening, he went to a party. A new individual that he met for the first time asked him what his name was, and upon hearing the response, the new person said, "Oh, that's funny! We have three Rolands here – one Black one, and two white ones!" Immediately, a third, white individual standing

nearby held up his forearm right against Roland's forearm, in order to be able to easily compare shades of skin, and asked, "Oh, are we calling that 'white' now?!" The implication was that Roland's skin tone was not white enough. The implication was that Roland does not belong to the white group and must be recognized as Other and outsider. This was a painful microaggression, and a clear example of white people policing the borders of whiteness. This incident remained with Roland years later, and the pain remained active for him.

The Black man stealing from his own grandfather's garage. Nico was a cisgender male participant who grew up on the East coast in a primary white neighborhood. Nico was white, and of Italian-American decent. He was darker phenotypically than any other member of his family, including his parents and his two sisters. He described an incident when, as a middle-school aged youth, he was at his grandfather's house in the backyard, in the very same small town that he grew up in, helping out with a project. "I was at their house by myself doing something." The neighbors called either the police or Nico's grandfather directly, and reported that "there was a Black man stealing stuff out of their garage." Nico's minimally darker skin pigmentation was read as Black. In this incident, a white, middle school-aged boy in a predominantly white town that he had lived in all his life, was policed and identified by neighbors as a Black criminal body in the midst of committing crime. Nico explained that, once contacted, his grandfather "knew exactly that it was me" and, with a laugh, explained to the neighbor that his adolescent grandson was in the backyard. Nico explained that as these moments of policing and contestation continued in his

adolescence and youth, he was not necessarily able to make sense of these incidents in terms of race, "but being more like, what's going on? Why is this continuing to happen?" Over time, the repeated, regular policing and contestation of Nico's body became internalized, a question which he continues to try to make sense of, even to this day as a married adult in his early 30s.

Who's the mutt – me or my dog? Jenelle was a young child, and she was out walking her dog with her older sister in her rural hometown. An older white man started to cross paths with them, heading down the same sidewalk but in opposite directions. He was tall, thin, carrying a cane, and smoking a pipe. He made some comment under his breath, expressing disdain for "mutts." Jenelle felt odd, uncertain why the man would make a disparaging comment about their dog. She returned home and sought solace from her mother, trying to make sense of the interaction and the random stranger's hatred for their family pet. It wasn't until years later, in the middle of an activity on campus, that she realized that the comment was most likely racial in nature and the "mutts" in the story were her and her sister! Part of the dynamic here was the inability of the white mother to relate, process, or equip the child with critical analysis skills when she was young. Part of the dynamic entailed how bodies can carry these aggressions for years and sometimes recall and re-process experiences much later. Even the act of remembrance and the new analysis is somewhat retraumatizing for contested whites.

Contestation during data collection. Michael and I were having our interview discussion in the conference room at his workplace. It was after work hours, and we were about halfway through the interview conversation. Suddenly, his direct superior, a white

woman, opened the door to check in on the conference room; she was surprised that the light was on. Michael let her know that he was participating in a doctoral research interview, and within seconds, right in the middle of the interview conversation, the boss declared him to be white. Moments later, she apologized. Below is a transcription of the exchange:

> Michael: [addressing previous question] I didn't grow up as a by-product of systematic oppression, or I don't feel like I've been marginalized. Maybe I have and I just haven't realized it, but, I look at, you know, at myself, as kind of, you know, I'm in my 11th year of college, and I've pretty much been able to do, you know, I've gotten most jobs that I've wanted in life. You know, I don't feel like racism... [Knocking]. Hey, come on in. I am participating in a dissertation study. [Aside to me] My boss has a PhD from the University.
>
> Orkideh: Hi.
>
> Boss: Hi, how are you? No, uh, [I noticed] just people still in the building that weren't cleaning it, and I wondered…
>
> Michael: Oh no, I am participating in a dissertation study on, like, cultural identity.
>
> Boss: Your dissertation?
>
> Michael: Not mine, um…
>
> Boss: How is your dissertation?
>
> Michael: I've made progress. I took Monday and Tuesday off under, you know, your recommendation, and I really made a lot of progress. [Boss: Perfect!]. We're

learning about individuals who have an ambiguous racial location that lies in the margin of whiteness because I am not white, yet grew up culturally [interrupted].

Boss: [Interrupting] Oh, you're so white!

Michael: [awkwardly, a bit deflated] yes…

Boss: [Laughing].

Michael: Now what does that say? Is the white person telling me I'm white? Is she projecting herself and her values onto me? I don't know. [Aside] No, [Boss], I'm just kidd…

Orkideh: [Joking] I might need to make her sign a consent form!

Michael: [Joking] Yeah, she's in the study now too! [Explaining to Orkideh,] We've only worked together for a couple of months, but…

Boss: I'm sorry. I hope you didn't find that offensive.

Michael: No. We're just joking around [cross talk] So, we'll be out of here a little bit.

Boss: You take all the time you need. So, and, God bless you for helping anyone with their dissertation.

Michael: I've had a lot of help on my way too, so…

Boss: Yeah, you gotta do it, so… It's, um, it feels really good when it's done.

Michael: [To Orkideh,] Yeah, she keeps reminding me of that, so… Thanks [Boss]. [Door closes]. Anyway, so like, I mean even that right there, that was an example of me cracking a joke where I was like, how does this [stumbles a bit] – I think what I'm trying to say is I really don't know where I fit in.

In the scene above, Michael and I were engaged in the interview conversation. Michael was starting to explain to me that his racial identity has become more ambivalent, and a greater cause of stress and strain in his life as he has gotten older. As he explained to me whether or not he has been the victim of systemic racism, his current boss walked into the conference room. Michael was somewhat nervous, and began to explain to her why he was in the conference room after work hours and what he was doing. In his introduction of the boss to me, he praised her by mentioning her own Ph.D. qualification. Next, the boss and Michael engaged in a continuing conversation they had been having about Michael's dissertation writing. It is clear that the boss had been trying to encourage Michael in his efforts, and they both fell back into this conversation as a source of connection and relationship.

Michael again began to explain what he and I were doing in the conference room, and within seconds of him mentioning race and whiteness, the boss interrupted, with humor, and declared him to be "so white!" The interaction was somewhat awkward, but Michael also pushed back against his boss' comments, using me as audience and observer of the conversation. He began to analyze her comment, and even though he used humor to do so, he let her know that she was "projecting herself" and "her values" onto him. I attempted to add humor to the situation as well, by mentioning a topic that all three of us, as current or former doctoral students, would be aware of – that is consent forms. Michael riffed back with me, and by this point, the boss had digested more of Michael's push back, and apologized for her projection and labeling. She then drew attention to Michael's generosity in "helping anyone with their dissertation." She added a comment

of encouragement about completion, and ended the interaction on that note. This live instance of contestation actually helped our interview conversation move forward. Michael eventually acknowledged more directly than he did during the first half of the interview that he tended to minimize the enactments of racism, racial formation, racial ambivalence, and incongruence.

Conclusion

There are a group of students at the borders of whiteness who struggle with both external and internal contestation as they try to make sense of their subjectivities. The contestation has to do with power formations of white supremacy which seek to keep these individuals policed and outside the inner sanctum of whiteness. The shame and pain that contested white students experience are real and have material effects such as emotions of shame, illegitimacy, and isolation. Some students chose to study multiraciality and race dynamics; others, such as Jenelle and the other student leaders of the multiracial student group, chose to help others walk along a path of resolution. Some hid the pain and pushed it aside, at least in social interactions. Regardless of how they managed the material effects of contestation, these students butt up against the borders of whiteness on U.S. campuses and higher education institutions in ways that are powerful and formative.

Chapter 5: The Tipping Point

In this chapter, I describe how the binary discourse constructs the Protector subjectivity. The binary discourse is closely related to essentialist anti-Black racism, based on the one-drop rule, and quickly orders bodies into a dualistic Black-white racial divide. The binary discourse polices and orders the bodies and the lived experiences of contested whites. Here, I present and analyze three narratives that a key informant described and linked together in the course of our conversations. These narratives describe a journey from a state of naiveté to one of critical consciousness, moving from relative innocence to a positionality that entails both self-protection and the protection of loved ones. Deeper analysis of these narratives reveals that "the color line" exists both internally and externally for contested white subjects. Externally, the color line is enforced by white people, sometimes including family members. Internally, the enactments of the color line cause significant pain and trauma for contested whites. Both parties, that is contested whites and those who police them, end up taking on a protective stance in relation to one another, and thus this discourse produces two variants of the Protector subjectivity: Victim-Protectors and Perpetrator-Protectors.

Jenelle's Tipping Point(s)

At the second meeting of the multi-racial student group, Jenelle (who was introduced in Chapter 4 as a mixed-race Black-white, college-going woman) asked the other participants who were sitting around the large table if there was a moment that they could identify as a "tipping point" in their lived experiences with race and belonging. Was there was a point at which the world instructed them by tipping them from

ambiguity into a clear indication that they did not belong to whiteness? Many were able to provide tipping point examples, and the data that I collected through individual interviews is rife with tipping point stories as well. In her subsequent conversations with me, Jenelle linked three tipping point stories to one another, back to back. I present the full narrative of all three stories in the pages that follow, including some transcription of my own words. I apply Labov's six-point schema for narrative analysis as identified and described by Riessman (1993, 2008) and Patterson (2008). I articulate how these narratives illustrate the enactments and power of the binary discourse, a discourse that polices and orders bodies into either whiteness or Blackness. In the longer narrative, a four-level schema for engaging the binary discourse and tipping from ambiguity into Blackness is presented and described. Components of this schema are echoed in the two smaller narratives that are linked to the main narrative with remarkable clarity and consistency.

The inclusion of all three stories is important because they were intimately linked by the participant to one another in her act of narration. Furthermore, the stories work together to convey an important sense of evolution and progression in critical consciousness, and each story on its own would not convey this evolution with the same strength or clarity.

The initial narrative is shorter than the second narrative, and constitutes a brief retelling of how Jenelle's white boyfriend in middle school was pelted with rocks by other kids because she was his girlfriend – that is, specifically, because the white male youth had a mixed-race girlfriend. The second narrative focuses on Jenelle's

Christmastime visit back to her rural hometown, accompanied by her current mixed-race boyfriend. The final narrative, the shortest in length of all three, tells of the aftermath of family dynamics at her sister's summer wedding, which took place months after the Christmastime interaction.

First tipping point: Pelted with rocks. Jenelle described her middle school years as a time when she was trying to find her social group among her peers at school. There were various friendships that she attempted to form, but these never really came together, including friendships with the few other students of color that lived in her rural, predominantly white hometown. During one year, Jenelle was dating a white male from her middle school. At recess one day, the other kids teamed up, chased this youth, and threw rocks at his back. They communicated that the reason for this violence was the fact that he was dating a non-white girl.

Labov's framework. As I present the narratives below, I have attempted to identify the six parts of the narrative using Labov's framework (Patterson, 2008; Riessman, 1993; Saldaña, 2016). Below is a brief listing and description of each element in Labov's framework. (Please see Chapter 3 for a more detailed explanation of my narrative analysis).

Table 2		
Six elements in Labov's framework for narrative analysis		
Element	Definition	Abbreviation
Abstract	Summary of the substance of the narrative	A
Orientation	Time, place, situation, participants	O
Complicating action	Sequence of events	CA

	Significance and meaning of the action, attitude of the narrator; "Narrators say in evaluation clauses … how they want to be understood and what the point is" (Riessman, 1993, p. 20).	E
Evaluation		
Resolution	What finally happened?	R
Coda	Returns the perspective to the present (Riessman, 1993), or "a 'sign-off' of the narrative' (Patterson, 2008, p 25).	C

It is important to note that not all narratives have all six elements, but fully formed narratives do. Also, some of the middle elements may not necessarily appear in strict adherence to the order presented in the table above. For example, sometimes evaluation appears multiple times throughout the narratives below, and sometimes only once. Sometimes there is no coda. Sometimes there is only one or two brief complicating actions, and sometimes there are many.

Using Labov's framework helps identify Jenelle's evaluation across the range of all three narratives. There is significant consistency across all three narratives in terms of how Jenelle makes sense of the experiences that she describes. Using the framework also enables the tracing of the cumulative effect of these three tipping point stories. In other words, the structure of the framework helps elucidate that Jenelle's clarity of understanding and critical consciousness has built up over time and over a range of tipping point incidents.

1   **Jenelle:** I think, I will say one more question
2   that I think you could maybe ask on there,
3   would be like,
4   "What was the point…"
5   cuz they're all contested white people,
6   like "What was the point when you realized that you couldn't pa… [A]
7   that you couldn't be white, [A]
8   or the point when society was like, "No, [A]

9   you need to think of that!" [A]
10   Because, like, I remember that point vividly. [E]
11
12   **Orkideh:** Oh, you do? What was that?
13
14   **Jenelle:** That was the point when,
15   like, my boyfriend got thrown rocks at his back. [O, CA]
16   I was like, "Oh my God, [E]
17   like, this is what real world, [E]
18   this is what the real world is!" [E]
19   and like,
20   I may be able to, like, think that I'm okay [E]
21   and that I'm just sitting back here [E]
22   but, I'm not. [R]
23   Like people recognized that I'm not fully white. [CA]
24   They recognized that there is a whole 'nother thing that's going on, [CA]
25   and they don't necessarily always know what it is, [CA]
26   but they know that they don't like it. [CA]
27   And… that's the part that they'll go back to! [CA]
28   And I think that that was a big turning point [R, E]
29   in, like, my understanding of race, my mental health, and my identity development, [R,
30   E]
31   and who I associated with. [R, E]
32   And I think that, like, that was just like a really traumatic event for me. [R, E]
33
34   **Orkideh:** Even though you went on later to date another white guy?
35
36   **Jenelle:** Because I thought that he was more understanding than he was. [CA]
37   So I was still young and naive [E]
38   and I didn't have that going for me, [E]
39   um, where I could really discern between the two, [E]
40   because like I said, I didn't really know who, like, the evil people in this world, [E]
41   even my uncle, [E]
42   I didn't know he was evil until my sophomore year of college. [E]
43   Like, that's too late! [Laughs]. [E]

At the start of the transcribed account above, I had just asked Jenelle if there were

any other questions that I should be asking future interview respondents. Jenelle

identified this "tipping point" question and then proceeded to narrative her own tipping

point story. The orientation, or description of the main action, was brief, really limited to a single sentence: "my boyfriend got thrown rocks at his back" [1:15][8]. The complicating action was that "people recognized that I'm not fully white" [1:23], "they don't like it!" [1:26], and "that's the part that they'll go back to!" [1:27]. This last phrase, in particular, described the policing of whiteness, which Jenelle first noticed through the incident above, and – importantly – Jenelle recognized and pointed out that "people" [1:23] (meaning white people) will return to the policing of whiteness, and that this is an ongoing dynamic. Jenelle also conveyed a strong sense of ambiguity interwoven through this complicating action; the white people didn't know exactly what was happening [1:24-25], but they knew that something was unsettling and "they don't like it" [1:26].

In her evaluation, Jenelle explained that she was "naïve" before the tipping point incident [1:36]. She "didn't really know who … the evil people in this world" were. She explained that this ignorance and naiveté made her susceptible to danger, damage, "evil" [1:39] and "trauma" [1:31]. This was not a small challenge; this was about both physical and psychological safety – figuring out who was "good" and who was "evil," who was trustworthy and who was a threat.

During the interview conversation, I pushed back against her story [1:33], mentioning the fact that she later went on to date another white male. I questioned how

---

[8] This [Narrative #:Line #] citation style is used throughout this chapter. The first number, "1," refers to either the first, second, or third narrative presented. The second number identifies the specific line within the narrative, so that in this case, [1:15] refers the reader to line 15 within the very first narrative. Please note that throughout this chapter, I do not cite every single reference to an idea from the narratives, but attempt to do so when I believe the reader might want to return to the text for reference.

this story could constitute a "tipping point" if Jenelle continued the same behavior later. Jenelle explained that she was "still young and naïve" and that she was still in a process of developing her discernment. She could not "really discern between the two" [1:38], she explained. There was an implication that there are some levels of contestation and policing that are less "evil" [1:42] than others, but that contested whites, such as Jenelle, need to be able to discern between the two levels – one more dangerous and intentional, and one still hurtful but with less devious intent. This was a distinction that Janelle developed further in her second narrative below.

The result of this tipping point experience was a lot of pain and trauma in terms of mental health, identity development, and social isolation from peers. However, Jenelle also learned from this tipping point, and she grew in her critical awareness of racism and its enactments. She realized she is not "able to like, think that I'm okay" [1:20], "just sitting back here" [1:21]. Instead, "this is what the real world is" [1:18], one where individual whites are vulnerable to physical attack by classmates and community members if they cross the color line by dating a contested white person. Janelle ended her narrative with an evaluation that attaches urgency to developing discernment, or critical consciousness, before it is "too late."

Second tipping point: The Christmas visit home and the evil uncle. Towards the end of the first narrative, Jenelle briefly mentioned her uncle [1:40] and this lead naturally into her account of a second tipping point story. The second narrative was set during a Christmastime visit back to her rural hometown. Jenelle had brought her mixed-race boyfriend home with her and, as part of the Christmas festivities, her whole family –

her single mother, her two sisters, and she and her boyfriend – had dinner at her aunt and

uncle's home. Below, I present the longer narrative in full, again marking the six

components of Labov's framework.

1   **Orkideh:** And [when] was [your next tipping point], like around sophomore year of
2   college? [O]
3   Like, did you read stuff or take a book or what was it that…? [O]
4
5   **Jenelle:** It was bringing my boyfriend home and real… [O]
6   like… [Clears throat].
7   People…
8   I think that with, with minority people in this world, [E]
9   like, if you…
10   if you don't do too many things that remind them that you're not exactly 100% like them,
11   [E]
12   then you're okay. [E]
13   But if you do a couple more things, [E]
14   then they are like, "I'm not going to really hang out with them too much." [E]
15   If you do too many things [E]
16   then they're like, "No! I'm… you're blech, like… [E]
17   it's not good!" [Laughs] [E]
18   And then if you get, like, a really evil person [E]
19   and somebody who does too many things, [E]
20   that's when people get shot! [E]
21   And I think that bringing my boyfriend home, [O]
22   while he is light-skinned person, [O]
23   he grew up in [predominantly African-American, low-income, urban community] [O]
24   and he is too quote-unquote "Black" [R, E]
25   for my uncle and his family. [R, E]
26   And it was apparent that he was not really welcomed there. [R]
27
28   **Orkideh:** So they met? You went over there for dinner or something? [CA]
29
30   **Jenelle:** [Audibly exhales with some exasperation directed toward next sentence.]
31   My mom always wants us to go visit my aunt and uncle over Christmas. [O]
32   And [laughs] their kids were there, [O]
33   and they, like, live all over the U.S. [O]
34   And so, she likes us to go and visit [O]
35   and, like, hang out with them and stuff. [O]
36   And I happened to bring my boyfriend home last year [CA]
37   and so he had to come with us. [CA]

38   And I really didn't think it would be that bad, [E]
39   and so that was my naiv… naïve… [trying to pronounce.] [E]
40
41   **Orkideh:** Naiveté.
42
43   **Jenelle:** Yeah, you said it. I'm not going to try! [Chuckles, laughs].
44   So that was that.
45   And then once I got there, [CA]
46   it was, like, weird. [R]
47   Like, one of my cousins, he does weird spy stuff in the military, [CA]
48   and like now he works with, like, the government in D.C. and- [CA]
49
50   **Orkideh:** Homeland Security?
51
52   **Jenelle:** - does like literally like weird spy stuff. [CA]
53   His girlfriend is like an undercover spy or something like that. [CA]
54   Like *weird* spy stuff! [CA]
55   And my boyfriend has, like, severe paranoia, [CA]
56   and… so like,
57   which is rightfully with the stuff he's experienced. [E]
58   Um, but like, when we were there, [CA]
59   like sitting around the table, [CA]
60   and my uncle is just like, [CA]
61   sit[ting] back in his chair and, like, just stare at [my boyfriend]. [CA]
62   And then like, at one point, like, [CA]
63   [my uncle] and my cousin were like texting back and forth, [CA]
64   and like, my boyfriend said, like, [CA]
65   he could like see, like, that they were texting [CA]
66   and that, like, [what] it says, was bad!! [CA]
67   Like, "why are they texting?" [CA]
68   And I'm like, they never even have their phones out when we're there. [CA]
69   If they do, it's like to show us something. [CA]
70   Like my cousin's girlfriend has, like, a page for their cat, [CA]
71   and so, like, one time he took his phone out for that, [CA]
72   but like I remember the times when their phones are out, [CA]
73   or if they get a phone call, they step away. [CA]
74   They never have their phones out, [CA]
75   they never text each other. [CA]
76   And, like, [my cousin] kept talking about his job, [CA]
77   about how he's like an undercover spy and blah, blah, blah, [CA]
78   and like talking about the election [CA]
79   cuz it was right after the election. [O]
80

81   **Orkideh:** Oh my God.

82

83   **Jenelle:** And like, about President Trump [CA]
84   and how he's, he's like a better fit or something [CA]
85   because Hillary Clinton did some weird stuff with them, [CA]
86   I don't know, [E]
87   weird, weird stuff! And… [E]
88   but he was like talking really like, down low with my boyfriend. [CA]
89   And so, like, they were having their own separate conversation, [CA]
90   and I was, like, kind of oblivious to what they were talking about. [CA]
91   And [boyfriend] looked okay [CA]
92   because like he's very calm,
93   he doesn't want people to know that he's shaking or anything like that. [CA]
94   And he's like, "I'm not going back there, [CA]
95   like, your family-", [CA]
96   He's trying really hard to tell me that my family is racist without telling me, [CA]
97   without like just ripping off the Band-Aid [CA]
98   but he just like ended up like, "I don't know how else to tell you this, [CA]
99   but your family is racist." [R]
100 And I was like I was picking up on some stuff, [R, E]
101 but it was a lot worse than I expected, [R, E]
102 and just a lot of different things.
103 And then at the wedding, [O]
104 [my boyfriend] came to my sister's wedding this summer, [CA]
105 and they were there [CA]
106 and it was just weird. [R]

107

108 My uncle's just— [CA]
109 they happened to show up [CA]
110 at the same time of course, [CA]
111 and he's just like… [CA]
112 just the look on his face. [CA]
113 And my cousin's a spy, [CA]
114 like, you never know, what kind of weird stuff he can do, [CA]
115 he's like really high up in the military, like, [CA]
116 and all that stuff
117 and being at their house specifically too [R]
118 was just really uncomfortable for my boyfriend. [R]
119 Like, I don't know what they have. [CA]
120 And, so…
121 It was like, whenever I've been in those situations, [E]
122 where like you realized that you've, you've done too much in their eyes, [E]
123 then that's a point where you recognize that you're not really welcome there. [E]

124   And when you recognize that it's because of some part of you, [E]
125   and in my experience it's often been associated with my race, [E]
126   and those are times that I really remember [E]
127   and that have shaped who I am and my identity development. [E]
128
129   **Orkideh:** Yes, I can't imagine, that sounds horrible.
130   You're in it and you can't stop it.
131
132   **Jenelle:** Right, and my mom's completely oblivious, [E]
133   she probably still doesn't know until now. [E, C]
134   [My boyfriend is] not coming back for Christmas this year, [C]
135   so I'll have to have a conversation with [Mom] over Thanksgiving, [C]
136   but yeah,
137   she's always texting us like, "Oh, ha, ha, ha, your uncle's not your— [C]
138   well your aunt says, hi", and stuff like that. [C]
139   I'm like, yeah, you know, [E]
140   "He don't mess with us no more," [E]
141   like I brought a Black boy home, [R, E]
142   it's not okay anymore. [R, E]
143   It can't pass as being all right. So… [E]

In this second narrative, Jenelle visited her mother and sisters for Christmas, and brought her boyfriend along with her. Jenelle's boyfriend was also a mixed-race individual, with a white U.S. American mother and a Black father who was an immigrant from West Africa. During their visit home, Jenelle's mom insisted that they visit their aunt and uncle. Jenelle's mother and aunt were siblings, although not especially close; the two families did not interact much except for annual holiday visits and formal occasions. Jenelle did not feel close to her aunt, uncle and cousins, but felt obligated to honor her mother's desires, and so the whole family attended dinner at the aunt and uncle's home.

Jenelle provided a very brief orientation [2:4] for this narrative, and instead launched right into an extended evaluation [2:7-18]. In response to a clarifying question from me, Jenelle provided a long description of complicating actions that occurred during

the dinnertime interaction. The dinner was extremely awkward throughout, and Jenelle recounted various aspects of the "weird" [2:44] social dynamics that she observed throughout the night. The account was detailed, even including description of her cousin and uncle's typical usage of cell phone texting. There were brief evaluative statements sprinkled throughout the lengthier descriptions of complicating actions. It was clear that subsequent discussion and evaluation of the event have helped Jenelle evaluate components of the evening from a more critical perspective. There was a coda [2:131-136] which brought us back to the present day, through commentary on her mother's current understanding of the dynamic, and through a brief discussion of plans for this upcoming Christmas. The narrative ended with evaluation [2:119-125, 2:137-141]. This latter evaluation echoed the initial evaluation which Janelle provided at the beginning of the narrative [2:7-18], thus providing a matching apparatus with which to begin and end the account.

This second narrative was similar to the first narrative since both positioned Jenelle as moving from a position of naiveté to one of enhanced critical consciousness. Jenelle explained that when she was first considering attending dinner at her uncle's home, "I really didn't think it would be that bad" [2:36], and she identified this as her "naiveté" [2:37]. At the end of the narrative, Jenelle positioned herself as no longer "completely oblivious" – noting that her mother still occupied this position [2:130]. Instead, Jenelle described herself as "realizing" [2:120] and "recognizing" [2:121-122] some of the racist and damaging dynamics of the interactions with her extended family. In fact, Jenelle described having drawn some strong boundaries, exclaiming "he don't

mess with us no more" [2:138]. This phrase was actually a response that Jenelle directed to her mother's "completely oblivious" [2:130-131] perspective. One implication was that Mom failed to protect Jenelle from the racist abuse encountered at the dinner, and Jenelle now drew self-protective boundaries and articulated these back to her own mother – not in real time, but through the heuristic of narration.

Jenelle's four-level model of the enactments of the binary discourse. As mentioned, this second narrative commenced with a well-developed evaluation [2:7-18]. Jenelle articulated four levels of the enactments of the binary discourse at play in tipping point moments (see Table 2 below). Level one, which Jenelle described as "being okay" [2:10], in other words safe, entailed not doing "too many things that remind them that you're not exactly 100% like them" [2:9]. In other words, contested whites who monitored and managed their racial presentation, who masked and covered in order not to remind white people of their "coloredness" or race mixture, could live day-to-day life in a state of "okayness" or superficial acceptance. The second level, which Jenelle described as one of increased social isolation by whites [2:12], was triggered when a contested white "d[id] a couple more things" [2:11] that brought their difference and racial mixture to light. The third level, one that solicited outright disdain and disgust by white people – described by Janelle by the word "blech" [2:14] and "not good" [2:15] – occurred when a contested white "d[id] too many things" [2:13]. Thus far, in all three levels, the onus of action rested squarely on the shoulders of the contested white subject; white people were only reactive, responding to the few, "couple more," or "too many things" that contested whites carried out. Level four was described as fatal for the contested white subject. In

this level, there was a shift in responsibility. There were now two responsible parties: both the contested white person "who does too many things" [2:17] and the white offender who happened to be "really evil" [2:16]. This combination led inevitably to physical violence perpetrated by the white person against the contested white: "that's when people get shot!" [2:18]. This model is presented below in Table 2.

Table 3		
Jenelle's four-level model of the enactments of the binary discourse		
Level	Trigger	Reaction by whites
Level 1: "Being okay"	Not doing "too many things that remind them that you're not exactly 100% like them"	No reaction.
Level 2: Increased social isolation	"do a couple more things"	"I'm not going to really hang out with [contested whites] too much."
Level 3: Disdain and aversion	"you do too many things"	"No! I'm… you're blech, like… it's not good!"
Level 4: Violence	"really evil person" + "somebody who does too many things"	"[Contested white] people get shot!"

Immediately after presenting this four-level model, Jenelle explained that her own action of bringing her mixed-race boyfriend for Christmas dinner at her uncle's home was a Level 3 offense [2:19-23]. Outright disdain and aversion [2:24] was articulated towards her boyfriend by her white family members in a variety of ways: being stared down by her uncle [2:58-59]; appearing to have been the subject of secretive, negative text messages between uncle and cousin [2:60-73]; repeated proclamations of her white, male cousin's access to espionage and military power [2:74-75]; expressed support for a political campaign that was, in part, built on white supremacist rhetoric [2:76-77, 2:81-84]; and private conversations, expressed in hushed tones, that caused her boyfriend to "shake" [2:86-91]. As Jenelle described her Level 3 offense, she relabeled her "light-

skinned" boyfriend [2:20] as "too quote-unquote 'Black'" [2:22]. She was inherently aware that the binary discourse had tipped her boyfriend from the ambiguity inherent in light-skinned, mixed-race status into Blackness. In fact, Jenelle's audacious action in bringing him along with her for Christmas dinner tipped her own being from a liminal position of racial ambiguity into one of Blackness.

Jenelle's four-part model was concise and clear. The gradations of offense and responsibility were plainly laid out. The increasing consequences for contested whites were depicted. As mentioned earlier, it is important to note that the onus of responsibility for action was imputed to the contested white subject. Only at Level 4 was partial responsibility ascribed to the white aggressor.

Jenelle's Christmastime narrative opened and ended with two matching evaluative segments. The first has just been described and illustrated as a model above. The second evaluative segment [2:119-125, 2:137-141] echoed her initial model closely. In fact, Jenelle described Level 3 again in this concluding segment of her narrative. She described that when "you've done too much in their eyes" [2:120], the outcome was aversion and disdain: "you're not really welcome there" [2:121]. In this latter evaluation, Jenelle used words and phrases that repeatedly emphasized the responsibility of the contested white individual, including "you realized" [2:120], "you've done too much" [2:120], and "you recognize" [2:122]. Jenelle also made clear that sometimes it is your actions which tip you into Blackness, and sometimes it is more ambiguous – "some part of you" [2:122] – that you may or may not be managing, although "in my experience it's often been associated with my race" [2:123], she pointed out. In other words, some part

of the contested white individual, some tension between action and being, triggers increasingly stronger enactments of the binary discourse as one move through the levels of Jenelle's model. Here, it is the victim's personal fault for reminding white people of the offending coloredness. It is the victim's responsibility to keeping the enactments of the binary discourse at bay.

Not only is the consistency in articulation of this model notable when the beginning and ending portions of this second tipping point story are compared to one another, there are also remarkably consistent echoes of Jenelle's model between the two tipping point accounts. In that first tipping point narrative, Jenelle's white, middle school boyfriend had rocks hurled at him because he was dating a non-white person. Jenelle thought she was at Level 1, "think[ing] that I'm okay," [1:20], "just sitting back here" [1:21], but her fellow, middle school classmates were at least at Level 3, "recogniz[ing] that there is a whole 'nother thing that's going on" [1:24] and displayed aversion and disdain [1:26-27]. This escalated to Level 4, where physical violence was perpetrated against Jenelle's boyfriend.

Jenelle's model focused on analysis at the individual level, and did not constitute an analysis of societal-level dynamics. Jenelle did not engage in a discussion of how one can change the larger dynamics, or modify or topple racist societal structures. Her model pointed to the "already, always there" nature of the binary discourse, especially as she explained that she was previously naïve and unaware, and that it is important for people of color to wake up before it's too late. Jenelle's model is almost a survival guide for the

contested white subject. It is presented from a perspective that seeks to minimize and manage the white gaze and its tendency towards violence.

Jenelle ended this narrative by taking on a stance of protection – protection of self and of those she cares about. She exclaimed, "he don't mess with us no more!" [2:138], using a kind of informal expression to add emphasis to the position of protection that she came to occupy. Jenelle has moved from a position of naiveté to one of self-protection and boundary-setting.

Third tipping point: The summer wedding. Later in our discussion together, Jenelle returned briefly to a portion of the narrative above, and again recounted the interaction at her sister's summer wedding. In other words, after the awkward and hurtful Christmas dinner, the next time that she and her boyfriend interacted with her uncle's family was the following summer, at her older sister's wedding ceremony, back in her hometown. That brief narrative is presented below, and the six components of Labov's framework are labeled.

1	**Jenelle:** Well, my aunt and uncle were there at Thanksgiving. [O]
2	I don't know.
3	I don't really try that hard to interact and everything. [CA]
4	I haven't really had the best relationship with them growing up. [O]
5	Then seeing more about who they are, [CA]
6	the way that they see the world, [E]
7	is just kind of like,
8	I don't really go out of my way anymore. [R]
9	My sisters, they've kind of given up a little bit too. [R]
10	
11	**Orkideh :** On the uncle and that family?
12	
13	**Jenelle:** Yes.
14	My mom was really the only one that was talking with them a whole lot. [CA]
15	It was more just awkward for them I think, [CA]

16 because my uncle kept saying stuff like, [CA]
17 "You must be really tired. I'm the only one talking." [CA]
18 I'm like, "I'm wide awake. [CA]
19 I'm cool. [CA]
20 [Laughs].
21 It's just we don't feel like talking to you." [R, E]
22 He was talking a lot. [CA]
23 My aunt was just like, "This is kind of weird." [CA]

At the summer wedding, Jenelle's extended family, including her aunt and uncle, were in attendance. Jenelle explained that there was not much interaction between her side of the family and her uncle's nuclear family unit. Instead, there was "awkward silence" to such as extent that the uncle startled articulating his discomfort out loud, saying that "I'm the only one talking" [3:17]. This was met with continued silence, especially by Janelle and her siblings. The uncle's response was to talk even more. The aunt also articulated her discomfort with the dynamic, exclaiming, "This is kind of weird" [3:23]. Jenelle responded internally, in her head only, "I'm wide awake. I'm cool" [3:18-19].

There was no abstract to this third account. The orientation was provided in two brief phrases [3:1, 3:4]. Jenelle had already mentioned the summer wedding previously, so a couple of brief phrases were sufficient to describe the setting and characters. Complicating action constituted the bulk of the account, with significant description of results and evaluation throughout.

At the end of this third account, Jenelle positioned herself as now understanding the racial dynamics within her extended family more clearly, and neither she, nor her siblings, "go out of [their] way" [3:8-9] to connect with her uncle. Instead, Janelle

described herself as being "wide awake" [3:18] and emotionally detached by her use of the phrasing, "I'm cool" [3:19], uttered with a particular intonation that is meant to convey detachment. Linking the three narratives together, as Jenelle herself did during our interview conversation, it is clear that Jenelle had moved from a position of naiveté and not knowing to one where she considered character and worldview, where she had learned to identify who is "evil." She no longer felt a need to respond or manage her extended family's social anxieties. Instead, she maintained her cool, detached composure from a distance, making sure that she was critically conscious, in other words, "wide awake" [3:18]. At the end of the account, Jenelle inhabited a position of protection insofar as being protective entails a certain amount of avoidance, suspicion, and wariness. Even the silence that marked the interactions at the wedding was a component of a protective stance, since silence allows for observation, conveys suspicion in this case, and allows for critical evaluation of circumstances. The aunt provided the perfect evaluation of the interaction when she stated, "This is kind of weird" [3:23]. The social dynamic was uncomfortable and awkward. Critical consciousness is not comfortable. It involves wariness, observation, and critical evaluation. Being critically conscious is being "wide awake" and it is protective in nature.

Jenelle claimed that tipping point stories play a particular important role in identity formation and self-understanding for contested whites. She presented three stories in quick succession and structurally linked the stories together. All three tipping point stories had to do with dating and romantic relationships. In the first story, the physical violence was not directed at Janelle, but at her white boyfriend. In the second

story, threats of violence, along with extreme displays of disdain and aversion, were directed towards her present-day, mixed-race boyfriend. The second story was especially traumatic because it took place within her family unit, and thus amplified the policing and contestation that was carried out against her by those who should actually protect her the most. The third narrative constituted a follow-up account, and although it contained action, it served overall to depict the new, alert state of self-protection that Janelle came to inhabit. When taken together, these three tipping point narratives show that Janelle was doomed to strain and contestation both if she dated a white man, and if she dated a "quote unquote 'Black'" man [2:22]. Since her family would not protect her, and since they sometimes seemed to be the aggressors and perpetrators, Janelle protected herself and her loved ones.

Who is produced by the binary discourse?

Chapter 2 explored the creative power of discourse, and emphasized that it is a site of constant negotiation, contestation, and re-creation of identities and sense of self. These tipping point moments constitute a particularly generative site of negotiation and contestation, one which clearly illustrates the enactments of the binary discourse.

Besides the individuals who were present in these stories in varying ways, there was another actor present: The white gaze. In his 2008 phenomenological work, philosopher George Yancy explains that the white gaze "is an important site of power and control, a site that is structured by white epistemic orders and that perpetuates such orders in turn" (p. xviii). More specifically, the white gaze "objectif[ies] the Black body as an entity that is to be feared, disciplined, and relegated to those marginalized, imprisoned,

and segregated spaces that restrict Black bodies from 'disturbing' the tranquility of white life" (Yancy, 2008, p. xvi). In my analysis of the narratives above, I make visible this hidden actor. In the first story, the white gaze constituted Jenelle as offensive, not white, and a cause of concern. Thus the white boyfriend was regarded as a race traitor because of his association with Jenelle, and he was accordingly punished for his betrayal by his fellow white classmates. In the second story, the white gaze tipped the current boyfriend from mixed-race status into Blackness, and he was surveilled and policed accordingly[9]. Janelle was further instructed in the power of the white gaze, as it reached even into the safe, sacred space of Christmastime family dinners. The white gaze is a powerful catalyst that activates the binary discourse.

Janelle's narratives and evaluations illustrated two particular ways in which the contested white subject was made (Ong, et al., 1996) by tipping point enactments of the white gaze acting through the binary discourse. First, the contested white subject was made Black. Both Janelle and her mixed race boyfriend were tipped from ambiguity, or mixture, into Blackness. Second, the contested white subject was made alert, awake and protective. The binary discourse moved the contested white from a location of naiveté to

---

[9] Yancy (2008) philosophically explores an incident in an elevator where a white woman clutches her purse upon seeing his Black body enter that space. At one point in his treatment, Yancy imagines a white-passing person of mixed racial background entering the same elevator. He discusses instances in which that body might be read by the white woman as initially white and therefore non-threatening, but because of outside circumstances – say a recent report that she saw on the news identifying this same individual as a Black criminal – she might come to recognize that the white-passing individual is "actually Black." This immediately engages her racist habits. Yancy writes: "The point here is that the white gaze as a racist socio-epistemic aperture will 'see' a threatening Black body in white … her physical eyes may see white skin, but her gaze eventually overrides what is visual. Made accessible through those myths and tropes that constitute the socio-epistemic aperture of the white gaze, she comes to 'see' a Black in whiteface, she discerns the 'stained' Black body in white" (p.14).

one of self-protection. I argue that the binary discourse constructed a Protector subjectivity, which Jenelle inhabited.

If Jenelle, her mixed-race boyfriend, and her mixed-race siblings, were being made Black bodies these interactions, then what was the other side of this dynamic? What were the chasing and rock-throwing children, the uncle, and the cousin making themselves into? In other words, drawing off Lensmire (2008, 2017) and Miller and Lensmire's (under review) work, I ask how the whites in these narratives used the policing of Black bodies to make themselves? How were the uncle and cousin using their actions and dispositions to "make" themselves in these racialized interactions?

I argue that they, too, made themselves protectors and inhabited the Protector subjectivity. During dinner, as they sat around the table, the white uncle eyed the suspect Black man, eyes unflinching, letting the boyfriend know that he was under suspicion, under surveillance, being watched and monitored. The white cousin continually touted his secret spy-related might and access, aligning himself with both military and political dominance. Both father and son were grandstanding and trying to convince others that they inhabited positions of power. It could be argued that they enacted a protective orientation toward their family members. Their actions let the boyfriend and Jenelle know that they were keeping watch, sharing secret information via text, and had the wherewithal and spy power to take action, should they need to do so. Here, the uncle and cousin took up a Perpetrator-Protector subjectivity, and Janelle took up a Victim-Protector subjectivity. It is deeply interesting that both victim and oppressor were being made/making themselves into subjects who protect their loved ones. Jenelle did it

through critical consciousness and distance; the uncle and cousin did it through threatening articulations of the white gaze and the power of white supremacy.

The Perpetrator-Protectors walked away relatively unharmed from tipping point incidents, only having to face the occasional awkward social interaction at future family gatherings. White supremacy grants the power to gaze, threaten and posture, and react to their own self-deceptive, ill-informed readings of contested white bodies. White supremacy grants the authority to police and surveil. On the other hand, what Janelle, her sisters, and her boyfriend experienced was deeply disturbing and traumatic [1:28-31, 2:125]. These experiences not only caused pain, harm, disconnection with family members, mental health struggles [1:29], challenges in identity development [1:29, 2:125], but also made the contested white body alien from itself through a distinct and damaging sense of displacement (Ngo, 2017; Yancy, 2008). Although both whites and contested whites inhabited a Protector subjectivity, contested whites suffered through a displacement wherein the binary discourse constituted them as non-white bodies, and tipped them over into Blackness, thus rendering the body alien to itself. The contested white body was placed in front of itself as an object with inherently offending sensibilities that need to be managed and covered (Ngo, 2017; Yancy, 2008).

Conclusion

Tipping point narratives constitute a heuristic that enables the clear identification of enactments of the binary discourse. In this chapter, I examined three accounts that a key participant, Jenelle, narrated. In those accounts, Janelle presented a four-level matrix outlining increasingly dangerous enactments of the binary discourse. She pointed to the

self-shaming, self-blaming nature of this construct, wherein the vast majority of responsibility for maintaining peace is attributed to the contested white subject. This internalized sense of responsibility ties into the themes of shame, internalized pain, and illegitimacy that I will explore in Chapter 6. Furthermore, these accounts illustrate that the binary discourse makes certain bodies Black and also renders both contested white victims and white perpetrators as Protectors. For whites, this protective subjectivity is largely informed by white supremacist enactments of the white gaze. For contested whites, the Protector subjectivity entails the pain of displacement from self, trauma, withdrawal, observation, and embracing critical consciousness.

Chapter 6: Yearning for Solidity

This chapter delves into student narratives across the entire range of participants, and explores how the binary discourse and the discourse of normative whiteness work together to co-construct two primary subjectivities: the Ambivalent, Illegitimate subjectivity and the Hermit. The Ambivalent, Illegitimate subjectivity is inhabited by most contested whites on an ongoing, day-to-day basis. This subjectivity is fraught with confusion, uncertainty, questioning of self, and attempts to provide oneself and others with proof, certainty, and validation. Participants used words and phrases such as "internal anxiety," "confusion," "imposter," "fraud" and "illegitimate" – among many others – to describe the internal state associated with this subjectivity. The Hermit is a second subjectivity that is articulated in this chapter. The Hermit withdraws from social interaction and holds itself back from settings in which its racial identity might be contested and questioned. The Hermit can be man or woman, undergraduate or graduate student, introverted or extroverted in personality, and is not limited to any specific cultural or racial background.

This chapter explores the construction of these two subjectivities through the presentation and analysis of four main themes related to the topic of racial identification: (1) technologies of racial categorization, (2) the compulsion for proof, (3) feelings of shame and fraud, and (4) the yearning for solidity. The first theme concerns commonplace technologies of racial classification, such as the Census and everyday racial microaggressions, and presents participants' descriptions of the ways in which these technologies construct displacement and confusion. The second theme explores the

urgent compulsion for offering proof of racial belonging that many contested whites identified. The third theme explores how deep-seated feelings of shame and illegitimacy are engendered in contested whites. This shame and deep pain is one of the primary motifs running through this entire study. The final theme, yearning for solidity, centers on contested whites' desire for a greater sense of solidity of racial being and belonging.

Throughout the presentation of these four themes, I point to the operations and productions of the binary discourse and the discourse of normative whiteness. Although hints of other discourses, particularly those of essentialist anti-Black racism and discourses of assimilation are also active, the binary discourse and the discourse of normative whiteness take much more prominent and productive positions. Specifically, I argue that the binary discourse extends this time beyond strict Black-white categorizations to a nonwhite-white schema, and works together with the discourse of normative whiteness to produce the Ambivalent, Illegitimate subjectivity and the Hermit. In this chapter, unlike Chapter 5, I do not use a Labovian narrative analysis because I do not delve into the structure and organization of specific narrative components. Rather, I look across accounts and stories articulated by the range of contested white participants to identify overarching dynamics of racial displacement and confusion, shame and ambivalence, and yearning for solidity and validation.

Technologies of Racial Categorization

Contested whites are taught to monitor themselves and their racial belonging through commonplace technologies of racial classification such as the Census, birth certificates, driver's license applications, college admissions forms, and scholarship

application forms. These technologies have power to construct the subjectivities of contested whites as incongruous, ambivalent beings. Many participants described being accompanied by family members when they first encountered such technologies and, in many cases, they were prompted by family to select "white" as their racial classification. One respondent remembered, "maybe when I was around high school," her sister told her that "we were considered white." From that time forward, the respondent started selecting "white" as her racial classification on forms. The participant elaborated, "I always feel really reluctant to put down white, but I do now, anyway." Another participant, who has a multiracial mother and a white father, was told by those parents to select white: "They'd just say, 'Oh, it's white. You're white.'" Another participant, who was both Asian and white, noted that her father still tells her to classify herself as white:

I actually remember going home. Feels like last spring break… and I mentioned that I put down "Other" on a form. My dad was like, "But you're white," and I was like, "No, I'm not, you know I'm not white. Obviously, your wife isn't white." So, stuff like that will still happen sometimes.

Many contested whites described Census categories as inaccurate, incomplete, simplistic, or painful. Mona exclaimed, "Quite frankly, I don't think we're classifying ourselves appropriately." Mona explained that when classification technologies allow, she would select both white and Asian, "to make a point that I was something else than white … because I didn't want that [Asian part of me] to get lost."

Michael, a transracial adoptee who was raised in white culture, described a continuous sense of confusion generated by these technologies:

> Where do I really fit in? I'm Asian Indian here, I'm Asian here … or over here I'm Indian, but then also I could identify with having the origins of any people of Europe, like my Mom is, my family's European, and I culturally then could be identified with that … This is where the confusion for me happens.

Michael's question of where he belongs ran throughout the course of our conversation, and reflects the confusion and questioning that these technologies beget.

For some participants, the sense of "boxes that I cannot check" belies a deeper sense of inadequacy. Jenelle, who is Black and white, exclaimed, "I knew I was Black but I wasn't… I didn't check all the boxes and I didn't feel like I could claim it necessarily." When pressed to describe this sentiment further, Jenelle clarified that she cannot "check the boxes that society has put into being Black," such as "my skin color."

> I should be darker, I should talk different, I should have grown up struggling [economically] really hard … even saying [these things] now, I'm like, "They're stupid boxes! Not every Black person in the world goes through these types of things." Because society puts that on us, and the media puts that on us, then it's like, if I don't fit those boxes, then it doesn't work. …Having to navigate between that where sometimes I can check the box and sometimes I can't.

Here, Jenelle used the sentiment of "checking boxes" generated by technologies of state surveillance, such as the Census, to describe a deeper dynamic, one where she could sometimes claim Black racial identity and, sometimes, she feared that she could not make such a claim. Jenelle's narrative hints at dynamics of navigation and negotiation, and is interlaced with deep feelings of shame and inadequacy.

Some participants described selecting "white" as their racial classification because they were tired of the pain of being othered. Lena, a woman of Eastern European and Middle Eastern backgrounds, voiced that she checks white: "I check, on this, 'White' because what else can I realistically check? I don't want to be othered. I had enough of the othering."

Many contested whites questioned the purpose of racial classification technologies. Lena was appalled when she was first introduced to such devices, and she rejected "putting people into boxes." Even though she studied rationales of resource distribution and political engagement, "my inclination [is that] this is bullshit. I don't want to be putting people in boxes." Kamilia, a white and Native American woman, agreed: "I would probably really tear that up. Do something different."

It is clear that the Census and other technologies of racial categorization constitute a powerful enactment of the binary discourse as reflected by the fact that the earliest versions divided U.S. inhabitants into free whites or slaves (United States Census Bureau, n.d.). From that initial conceptualization of free white versus Black slave, these technologies have "evolved" to list a wider, detailed range of non-white categories, but "white" remains untroubled and uncomplicated (see specific wording of Question 9 in 2010 U.S. Census in Appendix G). These technologies operate from a binary perspective, and position white as "normal" and "American" and in need of no further detailing or definition. This is evident not only from the fact that "white" appears as the first option in a list of choices, but also from the fact that there are no additional descriptors of "white" – whereas everyone else is called to detail and delineate. Here, the binary and normative

discourses co-construct non-whites as Other, just as Lena pointed out in her narrative when she explained that she chose white because she was tired of being othered.

Across these several accounts and narratives, the feelings, actions and phrases that were voiced by contested whites include incongruity, ambivalence, reluctance, inappropriate, incorrect, loss, confusion, "where do I fit?," inadequacy, shame, navigation, exhaustion, frustration, and a call for change. These feelings and desires constitute a foundation for the Ambivalent, Illegitimate subjectivity. It is important to note that responsibility for these feelings and conceptualizations are mostly laid at the feet of the individual contested white subject. For example, the contested white is responsible for accounting for any lost identities or for "figuring out" any complexity that these technologies fail to capture. In addition, this sense of lost identities, or "boxes I cannot check," seeps down into the subjectivities of contested whites and becomes an analogy for a general sense of racial inadequacy. Although Jenelle did identify both society and the media as holding some responsibility, she also made clear that she was the actor who must "navigate" the enactments of these discourses. The narratives in this section contribute to an emerging sense of the Ambivalent, Illegitimate subjectivity.

Racial microaggressions teach ambivalence. Racial microaggressions from a variety of sources and related to a variety of topics such as exclusion or isolation, exoticization and objectification, assumption of monoracial or mistaken identity, denial of multiracial identity, and pathologizing of identity and experiences (Johnston & Nadal, 2010) constitute another technology, or commonplace apparatus, that constructs ambivalence for contested whites. In this study, one common set of microaggressions

center on contesting race by asking "Where are you from?" or "What are you?"

Contested whites undergo these microaggressive attacks daily, from moment to moment.

Lena explained that, as a result, there were times that she did not want to go out in public:

> I didn't even want to go anywhere because it was exhausting to take this on. You
>
> go and people-- I also exaggerated it in my mind, when I first moved here, that
>
> everyone wants to ask me these questions. I just want to buy damn coffee. Why
>
> do I have to tell you my whole life story? I was just so angry at people. But then,
>
> it was like, "Well, they are not used to it" so I tried to understand their
>
> perspective. Like I said, either I adjusted to the point where it's not bothering me
>
> as much, or it's not happening as often.
>
> …me and my husband. We'd go to the theater, or to the movies, or go get
>
> a coffee. It seemed to me – and maybe this was my internal anxiety – it seemed to
>
> me that it happened to me all the time. I remember we went to the liquor store, to
>
> get wine, and the person who was there just wanted to know my whole life
>
> history. [As if speaking to that sales clerk,] "I don't know you! I understand that
>
> you're curious, but why?"

These microaggressive assaults are the enactments of the binary discourse,

combined with the discourse of normative whiteness, which instigate policing of bodies

that are not quite white or that are racially ambiguous. These discourses work together to

construct policing, questioning, and investigation of the appearance, lineage, production,

and migration histories of such bodies as "innocent curiosity," as well-intentioned "just

wondering!" Lena's narrative above, excerpted at length, presents an interesting mix of

minimization and articulation. Lena described a dynamic of constant, everyday

questioning of racial categorization, and yet her words conveyed a lingering sense of

doubt and ambivalence about these verbal assaults. Lena, like other contested whites

before her, was quick to take personal responsibility for the discomfort and pain produced

by these racial microaggressions. She minimized by blaming herself as "exaggerate[ing]

it in my mind" and by having "internal anxiety." At the same time, she noted that it was

happening "all the time," to the point where it was "exhausting" and she "didn't even

want to go anywhere." Lena described herself as beginning to turn Hermit, to hold herself

back from social spaces, to prefer to stay at home, safe, where "everyone" will not "ask

me this question."

Lyra detailed a similar racial microaggression when she described a scene where

someone of Scandinavian or German background asked her, "What's your background?"

In response, she posed the same question back, and they answered, "'I'm just plain old

white, I'm boring." Lyra thought to herself, "Well, I want to be boring too then!" Here,

discourses of normative whiteness again position a U.S. citizen of Scandinavian or

German descent as "plain," "just," comprehensible, commonplace, or "boring." Lyra

expressed her desire for racial belonging when she exclaimed, in partial jest, that she

wanted to be boring as well. She wanted to be part of the majority. She wanted to belong,

be easily comprehended, and classified as "normal" and "average."

Name-related microaggressions also teach ambivalence to the contested white

subject. Numerous participants described how having a so-called "white" name would be

policed and questioned by others. Participants would find themselves in embarrassing and

uncomfortable scenarios where they felt compelled to expound long immigration histories or to delineate marriage and divorce details, all to provide an account of why a colored body had a white name. Roland exclaimed, "people have asked me about my last name and stuff like that, because I don't look like a [Scandinavian surname]." Discourses of assimilation and normative whiteness work together to position certain surnames as "normal" and "American," and align these with white phenotype. Subjects with surnames that are out of alignment are questioned, and these name-based microaggressions produce a sense of not belonging and of being incomprehensible.

Family members also enact racial microaggressions, and thus contribute to the construction of a deep ambivalence in the hearts of some of their own members. In the longer narrative below, Nico, a white, Italian-American man who can easily be read as Middle Eastern, Latinx, or other, linked several racial microaggressions together. One incident entailed being mistaken by neighbors as a Black, male thief in his own grandfather's backyard, and the second described a microaggressive "joke" often voiced by his own grandfather:

> …my grandfather would always refer to me as his little *moulinyam*[10], his little
>
> Black boy, and I would work… help with things around the summers and the
>
> weekends. [One day] I was at their house by myself, doing something, and their

---

[10] Slang Italian word for eggplant, meant to denote a Black-skinned person. Some sources identify this as more than a term of affection, and a racial slur.

neighbors called [the police and/or my grandfather directly] and said that there was a Black man stealing stuff out of their garage, and it was me.

Right, and here was my grandfather, he knew exactly that it was me. [H]e just laughed and said to his neighbor, "Was he wearing this? What does he look like? That's my grandson!" but of course, that was a big joke. Some of those moments I would [not necessarily think] much about race, but being more like, "What's going on? Why is this continuing to happen?"

[One phrase I often heard was] "Your mother had an affair with the [mail] man" … [First name] was our mailman and he was Black, and everyone just always joked that my mother had an affair with him, and that's where I came from. [I heard this growing up] constantly.

I just -- I didn't think much of it. It just raised issues that were not talked about. All these little pieces, I just acknowledged them and just continued. I didn't, it wasn't something I would go up to my Mom or my Dad and say, "Hey, this happened today." It was more like my grandfather told my Mom in a joking way "Hey, [Neighbor] called, he thought there was a Black guy in the garage today." And that was it.

This account reveals several interesting dynamics. Nico experienced a long history of being contested, literally policed, questioned and surveilled, because of his darker phenotype. The first microaggression is woven into the fabric of the first story; that is the nickname that his grandfather affectionately called him, a name that highlighted his skin color as being darker and blacker than the rest of his family. The

second microaggression consisted of being accused of crime simply because of his phenotype, as he worked in his own grandfather's backyard, helping him with a project on a summer day. The final microaggression involved constant questioning of his birth lineage and an implication that he was a mixed-race child conceived out of wedlock, again as a way to bring attention and "joke" about his darker phenotype. Back then, as a child, these incidents were noted by Nico, and they caused a general sense of confusion. He wondered, "Why is this continuing to happen?" Nico did not have the skills and support to analyze these racial assaults any further, so the generalized sense of confusion and awkwardness stayed with him. These clashes left him with a deep, aching sense of displacement and illegitimacy.

Overall, across this range of microaggressions, contested whites are constituted by both the binary discourse and the discourse of normative whiteness as outsiders, suspects, incomprehensible, or illegal subjects in need of explanation, worthy of surveillance, and positioned as potential criminals. In the first narrative, Lena chooses a Hermit subjectivity because she did not want to go out to run errands for fear of the constancy of microaggressive assaults. The other narratives explore various instances where the seeds of self-doubt, ambivalence, and lack of belonging are sewn deep in the psyches of contested whites. It is important to note that minimization seems to be a major tactic employed by contested whites. Lena and Nico both minimized the pain inflicted by racial microaggressions by either just putting the assaults aside and not analyzing them, or by reframing them as manifestations of internal anxiety.

The Compulsion for Proof

The second theme I present in this chapter is the compulsion for proof that contested whites feel on an everyday, moment-to-moment basis. To examine this, I look at two specific narratives provided by Damien and Sofia. Damien recounted a pivotal interaction with college friends who argued with him and demanded substantiation of his Black racial identity. Damien explained:

I've gotten very tired of the reactions, and like the disbelief… the arguments with people, because my dad is lighter skin Black … I've got in these ridiculous arguments where it's just like, you know, I don't know what percent [Black] he is, maybe 70-ish or something. I don't know what I am, 35? So, you put 35% chocolate milk, and then you put the rest white milk, what do you have? My friends are like, [aggressively] "That's white milk! That's white milk! That's white milk!" [Laughter]. "That's normal milk," and I got in these massive arguments, and they're like, "Damien, you're not Black! You think you're Blacker than you are! You act way too Black." … [Later that night, I was] out [with friends,] I'm like, "Do I act too Black?" I was like talking to my Black friends, I was like, "Do I act too Black to you?" and they were like, "No! What?" and I was like, "Yeah, [friend] says I act way too Black," and then it came out later, he was drunk and he was like, "I guess I'm just jealous, I wish I was something besides white" or something.

…he used to be a really good friend of mine, so that day, I was just pissed the whole day. And then I'm just like, no, maybe I should just start claiming white now, nobody will contest me if I say I'm white.

This encounter remained with Damien years after it occurred. In the interaction, white friends tried to discount his racially mixed heritage and background. Due to experiences like this, which are marked by an urgent compulsion for proof of racial belonging, Damien carried his phone with him at all times, in order to have visible proof of his mixed racial background, namely family photos that included his parents. He also armed himself with logical argumentation, hoping that it would be immune to debate and debunking. Damien also chose not to attend social gatherings or enter certain social spaces because he knew that contestation and compulsion for proof were omnipresent. Damien continued:

It's just annoying having to have an argument with points and evidence, it's exhausting. Every time I identify as mixed, then I know there's going to be shock, and there's going to be further questioning and further invalidating who I am. [It happens with] any person who I meet who is new and I talk to… [I don't want to] even bring it up because it's just so invalidating, because people just refuse to accept it and believe it, and they want you to show them proof. "Let me, let me see some pictures here."

Damien described an overwhelming series of emotions including tiredness and exhaustion. He also depicted a very strong refusal to accept "who I am" by anyone and everyone, even individuals that he met for the very first time. Instead, his mixed race

identity was greeted with "questioning," "massive arguments," "contest," and plain refusal.

The responsibility for resolving these difficulties is positioned as belonging to Damien, and in the encounter, he immediately starts to take action, gathering data from friends and acquaintances on whether he acts "too Black." Damien also reported considering passing for white in various circumstances since that leads to less contestation and no compulsion for the production of proof. Here, Damien starts to inhabit a related, but somewhat different, aspects of the Hermit subjectivity: Retreating into white phenotype. Not only does Damien avoid social spaces in order to escape microaggressions and contestation, but he often chooses to pass for white in order to avoid further invalidation. Damien spent the night angry and gathering evaluations from his peers. Interestingly, the friend's conduct was somewhat excused as drunken behavior and jealousy.

Later in our discussion, Damien explained that he also holds himself back from entering Black spaces, such as Black student groups at the various institutions of higher education that he has attended over time. Damien explained:

Honestly that's why I still, I want to get connected more to Black groups on campus and stuff like that. But again my fear is not being accepted there, "You're not one of us." [During my undergraduate studies,] I was too insecure for that and too afraid of rejection to do that in high school and then in college. [I fear] rejection and that they won't really get my experience… My experience is unique to theirs because I get white privilege, but that's not how I identify, and that's not,

you know, my ancestry, and that's not my dad's experience, and that's not all these

other things, and so I feel different from them too.

Damien's difficult experiences with contestation and the compulsion to provide

irrefutable proof position him as a Hermit not just from white spaces, but also from Black

spaces. This can be considered yet another subtle stance within the Hermit subjectivity:

Retreat from monoracial spaces occupied by people of color. Damien's fear of

"questioning" and "invalidating" keeps him removed and remote from others.

The binary discourse reads Damien's body as white, and there is no room for

ambiguity and in-betweenness. Instead, when faced with ambiguity, the call for

resolution and for categorization on either side of the binary is so immediate and

immense that it leads to "massive arguments," denial and refusal of liminality. As a

result, Damien retreats into being read as white and passing as "normal" – it is much

more pleasant to work under the power of the discourse of normative whiteness than to

be unquestioned, uncontested, and this is often the tactic that he chooses with which to

navigate daily life.

Sofia also shared a story of being asked for proof in invasive ways by complete

strangers. This account hints at the ways in which racial ambiguity interacts with gender

differences and heteronormative masculinity to fetishize some ambiguously-raced female

bodies. Sofia stated:

I feel the weirdness I usually get is from white, random white people, because

when they [learn I am more than just white,] they say like "Oh, what?" They're

like, [incredulously,] "No, you're not!" or they say like, "Oh my God, I had no

idea! That's so hot! That's so cool!" And guys at bars, "Oh, that's really hot," "That's cool"… It's weird things like that. **…**Typically their reaction's either shock or like saying something weird about it that doesn't need to be said.

Sofia goes on to explain that she is often asked for proof and analysis of her surname in these scenarios. This entails a lengthy and rather awkward explanation.

That's typically the reaction I get. That's usually from white people because they're confused about my last name, "But your last name is [German surname], that's not Mexican!" and I'm like, "Well, I don't know why I'd have to explain to you, but my Dad – our family last name is [Spanish surname], but his mom remarried because [her husband] was abusive, and married a couple of times, remarried a guy that was German, randomly, and his last name is [German surname], so she took his last name, so that's why it's [German surname]. I don't want to have explained that to you, I don't have to prove it"… Always questions on having to prove it or explain it, I guess. …I would never ask it of a stranger, to prove something to me, but people feel that entitlement.

In this account, Sofia described several instances of meeting new individuals for the first time, and their questioning and contestation of her possible racial difference. Her mixed race nature was either fetishized by white men as "hot" and "cool," or she felt compelled to provide a long explanation of her paternal grandmother's marital choices. Sofia stated that she doesn't "want to" and doesn't "have to prove it" and yet, she did so anyway. This speaks to the sheer power of the compulsion for proof. "I don't know why I'd have to explain to you," Sofia exclaimed, but contested whites find themselves offering proof,

logical argumentation, photographic evidence, discussion of lineage, genealogy, and immigration history regardless.

In both Damien's and Sofia's narratives, the binary discourse originally reads and categorizes their bodies as white. At this point, discourses of normative whiteness step in to order these white bodies as normal and the unnamed, taken-for-granted center. If there is any slight hint – such as a surname, or a tan in the summer, or some whisper of racial difference – the binary discourse redoubles its efforts with force and demands immediate explanation and explication. In both narratives, the "entitlement" of the white proof-seekers is remarkable, and the onus to respond to the compulsion for proof is on the contested white individual. The amount of emotional and logical labor involved in proving themselves non-white is substantial. In reaction to this pressure, contested whites feel both deep discomfort and illegitimacy, and are constructed as frauds. Some contested whites carry this ambivalence with them, and some retreat, to a marked degree, from social interaction and inhabit more of a Hermit subjectivity.

Feelings of Shame and Fraud

Across all participants, all mixtures of race, ethnicity and nationality, across gender and age, what has emerged as one of the main findings of this study is that contested whites carry a burden of shame. Both in individual interview conversations, and in the meetings of the multiracial student union, this deep sense of shame and illegitimacy was voiced and discussed, or demonstrated through tears and body language. In this section, I focus first on Gloria, a participant who was especially able to describe the deep sense of shame that she felt, and to depict the expression of this shame in several

different contexts. I then move on to an analysis of what participants identified as "fly on the wall" moments, which have been particularly productive in terms of constructing a profound shame.

In our interview, Gloria delivered her initial statement about the shame she feels through tears:

> I think, even now, sometimes I still feel a little ashamed and embarrassed when speaking about race because I feel I've always been told that I'm white. It makes me feel that I don't really know what I'm talking about, or that I don't have a right to say what I feel, even though I see myself as a person of color and Mexican … I always think, if I talk to someone about race, I'm like, "Well, what are they thinking based off the color of my skin? Do they think that I shouldn't be part of the conversation?"

Gloria used the words "ashamed" and "embarrassed" to describe her emotional state. She identified other people's judgements about her racial classification as a source of incongruence that fostered embarrassment and shame. She considered herself to be a person of color, yet whenever the topic of race came up, she was afraid of being read by others as white, and therefore wondered if she would be seen as an illegitimate source of knowledge. It is important to note that responsibility for the incongruence and erroneous perception was taken up by Gloria and tentatively internalized as ignorance – "I don't really know what I'm talking about" – and as illegitimacy – "I don't have a right to say what I feel" and "Do they think that I shouldn't be part of the conversation?" Gloria

carried these questions about ignorance and illegitimacy with her throughout the day, across both white, Mexican, and mixed-race settings.

Gloria recounted an episode with a past boyfriend, and wept softly to herself as she described the following:

> There was a time where I was dating a guy who… he was Latino, but he also told me that he understood why he liked me… "I understand why I like you. It's because you're whiter than me." It's always in my head that that's what people think.

In this vignette, white supremacy seeped into the realm of romance and intimate relationships, and clearly declared that white phenotype increased Gloria's value as a romantic partner. Gloria described that she was dating another Latinx individual, and she recounted his analysis of his attraction to her as well. This attraction was based in her phenotype instead of other qualities that might be related to her personality, moral code, or achievements. Being valued for her whiteness not only caused a sense of bodily displacement – that is, she was loved for her skin color, not for her inner self – but also amplified Gloria's fear of being an illegitimate person of color.

Gloria wept quietly as she explained how she sometimes used food, and other physical accoutrements of Mexican culture, to reinforce her positionality as a person of color to friends and acquaintances:

> It's really weird, but I always like to emphasize that I do like certain foods and music and shows and stuff like that. Because I feel it's almost a way of me signaling to people like, "You're probably defining me as this way, but I don't

> want you to." It's really embarrassing, but I've done that a lot … I feel bad, because I feel I'm giving into ethnic stereotypes and stuff like that. …I just hate that I feel I have to do it. [And I do it] with … close friends, even my significant other, people that aren't my family.

Gloria used ethnic foods, music, and entertainment choices as markers of her Mexican heritage, to offset the white phenotype she inhabited. Gloria guessed the shape of others' reflected appraisals of her racial classification, and preemptively adorned her being with signals that point to at least a non-white heritage. Gloria felt "I have to do it," and she both felt "bad" and "hate[d]" this deep desire. She identified this dynamic as a "need," especially when she was feeling insecure about her racial identity or sense of belonging. She made discursive moves to project a particular subject position with a non-white, Latinx personhood. Echoes of the compulsion for proof are also apparent in this narrative. Accounts from other contested white respondents supported this dynamic; those accounts also illustrated that shame over racial incongruence ordered contested white bodies and the physical accoutrements with which individuals decorate and punctuate their lives, from clothing and jewelry, to language and food.

Gloria continued to explain that in the classroom, or in other public spaces, she does not speak up, mostly out of a fear of being called out as an illegitimate subject. She described working at an internship program for students of color:

> I remember during one of our meetings with the cohorts … someone said that she didn't think that there were going to be white people also in the program. I thought that she was referring to me, and that made me feel just really sad. I think

because of that I never really spoke up as much during the cohort meetings. Also because that's something that I have felt for a while … It really, also, scared me away from speaking out, even in a group of people of color that's supposed to be safe, like a safe space for us. Even now, in classrooms too, in just classes, now in my grad program especially … I feel it's always holding me back.

In the account above, Gloria recounted a moment in a student development setting where she may have been read as white by other people of color. Gloria immediately felt sad, but this grief over racial illegitimacy was translated into silence across a variety of settings. Gloria described how her fear and sadness kept her silent in spaces designed for students of color, in classrooms, and even in her graduate program. This sense of impending racial illegitimacy was "something that I have felt for a while" and "it's a big part of me."

The responsibility for silence and shame is distributed slightly differently in this account. At the end of her narrative, Gloria mentioned that "it's always holding me back" and with the next sentence, she described her own choice of not speaking up in her current classes. In general, in this second account, Gloria depicted being made illegitimate as a dynamic initially generated by others. This contestation then produced a fear of illegitimacy that disciplined her body into silence across a variety of settings. Gloria inhabited both the Ambivalent, Illegitimate subjectivity and the Hermit subjectivity. Gloria's perception of being read as racially illegitimate disciplined her into a quiet graduate student who did not have the right to speak or contribute, a fraudulent knower who did not know, or an ignorant white body.

Over the course of interviews, and then again in focus group discussions, several participants from a wide range of backgrounds identified instances which were described as "fly on the wall" experiences. These instances occurred both for contested white individuals who pass as white and for those who do not pass for white. The deep sense of incongruity and shame that these particular experiences engender is significant. I share two such instances below.

Kamilia explained that "once very couple weeks," this "fly on the wall thing" occurs. Kamilia described it as follows:

> People think you're white, and so they say shit that is really-- I feel like they let their real self out … my experience has been a lot of people will say things like … "People … of color get so much more advantage than we do." This happened to me this week, I think on Monday. People talking about our fellowship competition in our department, and it's like a big, big pool of fellowships. Everyone can apply. Obviously, it's a merit-based thing. You have to get good grades, you have to have a whole bunch of different qualifications to be competitive… many, many, many occasions people say, "Well, it's only the people of color [who] are going to get that. Don't even bother applying!"

In the account above, Kamilia described a "fly on the wall" situation that occurred quite often, as she pursued her doctoral degree in an institution of higher education. In these instances, she explained, people assumed that they were in a "white space" and they appraised her as white based on her phenotype. These people then opened up, "let their real self out," and expressed opinions that they would not have expressed in racially

mixed spaces, such as a belief that scholarships, publications, and conference acceptances are reserved only for students of color. Other times, these people expressed opinions such as, "All the Somali immigrants here are on welfare." In these situations, Kamilia was the fly on the wall insofar as the speakers did not read her as a mixed-race person; they did not see the person of color in their midst. Instead, they believed they were in an all-white environment, and they did not understand that Kamilia's white phenotype masked a more diverse background.

Not only did Kamilia experience a level of disembodiment when she was being assumed to be white, but a second layer of dislocation was also present because she was one of these scholarship recipients herself.

> To me, they think I'm white. They're trying to [say], "Don't waste your time" type of thing. [But] I'm here on a fellowship! …I know I'm really fortunate, but I also worked really hard for it. [In these situations] I [get] really, really silent. I just don't know what to say, so I don't say anything. …I feel really awkward about finances because I grew up poor and I'm really lucky to be here and have funding. …I just feel like I can't say anything. I just don't want them to know that I have a fellowship and that I don't want them to think, "Why does she get that?"

Kamilia was one of these students of color who was on fellowship, but she was often read as a white person and it was assumed that she was not a fellowship recipient. In these fly on the wall moments, Kamilia is flooded with emotion. She experienced several layers of dislocation or disembodiment simultaneously. She got "really, really silent," "awkward," "worried," and even "paralyzed." She acknowledged that she is fortunate to have a

fellowship. She also felt conflicted about her own lower socioeconomic class background, and she "never sa[id] because I just don't want to say." Kamilia clearly took a self-protective stance as she was suddenly divorced from her own body and her own experiences, and instead was assumed and appraised as a white, middle class doctoral student. She did not want her colleagues to know that she has a fellowship, and she did not want them to wonder "why" she received that financial support. She protected her deep, inner self, and inhabited the subject position of Protector by masking her multiracial and low-income identities (see Chapter 5 for discussion of the Protector).

Later, in her narrative, Kamilia discussed comments directed against Somalis in further detail, adding:

What they are assuming is a white space. I'm sitting there like, [laughs], "That's so racist!" In those situations, where it's not my group, I always feel like I could say something. I'm always like, "Well, first of all, that's not true," and also, like, "Do you know what they've been through to get here, refugee folks, and how much instability they've experienced?" I feel a lot more able and ready to talk about other groups. If people are assuming we're in a white space and they start saying racist shit like that, I always felt I can say something.

When it comes to her own racial and social class identities – which Kamilia previously identified as intersected – Kamilia's ambivalence kept her silent.

When it's about money and stuff like that … I don't know what to say, and I feel really paralyzed, and I just don't know what to do. I'm just trying to figure that out. …Class identity comes in, impostor syndrome comes in, all of it comes in,

where you're like, "I don't want them to now realize I was never supposed to be here."

Kamilia explained that she was much more ready to debunk racist claims made concerning other groups, such as Somali immigrants, even when she was in what was assumed to be an all-white space. However, when it came to issues more closely tied to her own experiences of difference, around race, whiteness, and economic struggle, these intersections of identity were much more fraught. She felt paralyzed. She felt like an "impostor." She expressed a lot of confusion and lack of clarity about what action she should take. She wanted to hide her background and struggle from examination and discussion, which echoes some of the reasons why Damien inhabits the Hermit subjectivity. While Kamilia was quick to defend other people of color, she was deeply ambivalent and afraid when it came to her own contested identity. Here, discourses of normative whiteness (assuming a white space) and essentialist anti-Black racism (all Blacks are on welfare) work to co-create a space of direct racist talk, which then constructed Kamilia as both a Hermit (taking shelter from an assault, hiding identity) and a Protector (defending people of color and immigrants from racist attacks).

Nico also shared a "fly on the wall" moment, but in this narrative, Nico was appraised as being a person of color when he actually identified as "white." Phenotypically, he did not pass for white, but he was raised in white culture, perceived himself as a white individual, from a white family, with white birth parents. Shame and ambivalence played a leading role in Nico's fly on the wall experiences. Nico explained:

This was last spring, and I had classes with this person in the fall … I just assumed that this person in particular knew that I identify as white. Then I was in a small group and it was me, they're African American, and then another person of color … But, he said something like, we were talking about race, and something like, "I'm happy that we're in this group, we're all together, because I'm really uncomfortable talking about some of this with white people."

Then I'm sitting there and it's like -- and I didn't say anything because I was like, how do I navigate that now? But, then I felt like this imposter... Then, after that, in multiple other classes that I've had with this person, or just in general, if we're doing work around positionality, I try to always be very explicit that I identify myself as a white male.

…I've been identified as a person of color before, but to this -- in that intimate of a space … to come into this space where I'm being treated as if I'm a student of color and … not sharing those same experiences, but again just feeling really down about how do I move away from… How do I get out of this little small group that I was in? Or not get out of it, but like be real and honest and authentic, but also still … maintain that bond with that person?

Nico's account parallels some of the dynamics present in Kamilia's narrative. It is notable that Nico used the same word, "imposter," that Kamilia used in her analysis. Nico engaged in a pattern of self-questioning, repeatedly asking himself, "How do I navigate" this experience, "how do I get out of this?" Kamilia and Nico experienced fly on the wall dynamics quite regularly, and both wanted to strike a tone of "racial authenticity," but

were confounded by what steps to take and how to move forward. Again, these most intimate, powerful moments of racial incongruence are often not voiced, but processed internally by the contested white subject. There is a sense of having been caught as a fraud, of being deeply ambivalent and incongruent, and there is much confusion about how to move forward.

Contested whites have an overwhelming tendency to ascribe responsibility to themselves. In these "fly on the wall" accounts presented above, there are reflections of this dynamic. The incongruence, shame, and ambivalence produced were kept within the innermost sanctum of individual meaning-making. Kamilia and Nico felt ashamed, like imposters and frauds. They did not push back out loud against the assumptions and erroneous readings of their bodies and racial classifications. They kept silent, repeatedly asking themselves what they can do, how they can move forward, what actions they can take. The responsibility for addressing the incongruence sits mainly with the contested white individual, while the shame and ambivalence produced by the combined forces of the binary discourse and the discourse of normative whiteness constructs both the Ambivalent, Illegitimate subjectivity and the Hermit subjectivity.

Yearning for Solidity

Contested whites yearned for solidity of their racial identity and validation of a sense of racial belonging. Sometimes, they yearned for whiteness. Sometimes, they yearned for belonging as a person of color or a specific racial or ethnic group. Sometimes, they desired recognition as mixed and multiracial. Regardless of which category they craved to belong to, the yearning for solidity was constant. Scholars of

queer theory in higher education call on researchers to consider desire as a critical aperture (Johnson & Quaye, 2017) for scrutinizing values and assumptions that drive action and gird societal structures and organization. Drawing on this focus on desire, in this section, I first present several narratives that depict these various desires for solidity and belonging. I explore a handful of instances where this desire for solidity was pursued through various tactics, including assimilation, genome testing, validation from mentors, and racial embodiment. I also outline how the desire for solidity was often pursued within spaces devoted to higher education.

Roland was a contested white who revealed his desire for solidity through discussion of phenotypic differences among his family members. He asserted that he did not wonder if he was adopted, and yet, he had considered having genetic testing in order to reveal additional data about why he was phenotypically so much darker than his parents and his sibling. He said, "I don't have anything against me having dark skin. It's just that looking at my parents doesn't really seem to add up." Clearly, Roland wanted more data as he grappled with the racial contestation that he managed in his daily life.

Michael, on the other hand, explained that both he and his brother, another transracial adoptee, wanted to assimilate into whiteness as they were growing up. He provided a long list of factors that he and his sibling managed as they pursued assimilation, including geographic residence, language mastery, accent, recreational activities and patterns of family life, religious affiliation and patterns of religious life, traditions, culture, and family members. Even now as an adult, Michael described a list of

accoutrements of whiteness with which he adorned himself as he pursued partnership and marriage.

As part of this deep desire for solidity, contested whites identified instances where they were validated as having a mixed racial composition. These validation experiences held deep emotional resonance for participants and were extremely important. Sofia recounted a conversation with her friend, who was also multiracial.

> There was an event, a summer barbecue that was a community safe space for people of color. A lot of my friends were going to it and I was like, "I don't know if I can go to this." I don't know if I am able to identify myself and present myself as this because I'm so white passing. [My friend said] "Sofia, you are a person of color. This is your culture. This is who you are. You shouldn't be afraid to be who you are!" That was when I was like, "You're right." I need to embrace this as much as I can and try and fight inside myself, for myself, and that acknowledgement.

In this vignette, Sofia's multiracial friend recognized and affirmed her as a person of color, despite her very white phenotypical characteristics. The several declarative statements were a healing balm for Sofia's sense of self. After hearing this, Sofia counselled herself to "fight" for her identity as a person of color. It is interesting to note that the battlefield for this fight was both "inside myself" and outside herself in the form of "acknowledgement" by others. This narrative illustrates how the binary discourse constituted Sofia as a white body, and how she withheld herself from public spaces where her racial identity might be contested. The workings of the binary discourse made the

Hermit subjectivity particularly attractive, and Sofia decided to "fight" this positionality both internally and externally.

For Lyra, even a passing comment by a professor, wherein she was identified as a person of color was an affirming experience.

> One time I walked into the class, and there was me and my friend who's Black,
> and our class is all white. Then my professor also was like, "Oh, why do the
> brown people have to [stand to the side?]" …And I'm like, [with enthusiasm,]
> "Oh, my gosh! I'm brown!" [Chuckles.] "She's calling me 'brown!'" … I felt
> really like … "Oh, Yes. People notice it and will claim it. I can claim that!"

The professor's off-handed remark, wherein she noticed two students and labeled them as "students of color," was deeply influential for Lyra because she was included in that category. Lyra spent time processing this comment because it engaged with a level of racially-informed bodily displacement that she normally carried with her. Lyra had to process that her body was actually sometimes read as non-white, and this experience, in public, with another person identifying Lyra as "brown," validated Lyra's own inner desire to claim herself as a person of color.

Jenelle found validation from a mentoring relationship that she spontaneously developed with a healer in the local community. She explained that she "met the most amazing woman in the world, she's African-American, and she's a queen!" Jenelle established a friendship, trust, and connection with this mentor. Jenelle reported learning history and culture from her mentor. Jenelle explained further:

Before, it was really hard to accept [that I could claim Blackness] because I didn't

fit in on either side. I knew I was Black … and I didn't feel like I could claim it

necessarily… So talking with her … She's helped a lot with me being able to just

accept it and own it and be confident in it and recognize that it's my birthright.

For contested whites who are used to being questioned, policed, and having to offer

proof, the validation of multiracial or complex racial identity, can have significantly

positive emotional and mental health effects. The desire for solidity is driven by the

confusion, displacement and ambiguity that pervades daily life for contested whites. The

responsibility for consummation of this desire appears to belong to the individual

contested white, as participants described their efforts to gather data, resolve confusion,

shape themselves through assimilation into a positionality that was comprehensible, or

"embrace" or "fight" for their complex identities.

Higher education spaces as context for validation. Across the narratives in this

study, the role of higher education spaces, practices and institutions appeared as a critical

backdrop for this yearning for solidity by contested whites. Higher education classrooms,

texts and assignments, social spaces, and community organizing and activism were

critical in facilitating processes of questioning, exploration, learning and claiming more

complex racial identities.

Many students reported minimizing racial differences until college and graduate

studies. For example, Nico said "for most of my life, probably up until college, I didn't

think much about race." When his own racial identity was contested, and it happened

quite often, he "didn't think much of it." He would "either ignore it or brush off." Nico

read more critical material as part of his graduate training, especially content around critical whiteness studies, and he started to see himself in the content he perused. Nico completed an independent study on critical whiteness studies, and engaged in active evaluation of the whiteness that he grew up immersed in.

Sofia likewise explained that reading class materials provided a space for reconsideration, reflection, exploration, and validation of her own identities.

I read *Borderlands* by Gloria Anzaldúa, of course. Then I was, "Oh, my God!" [Laughs]. I started getting this literature and this language and learning … that your identity is valid and you can theorize from that, you can process that. I think, a lot of my anxiety about talking about being mixed was … I don't want to talk over people of color and I don't want to talk over other mixed people. I don't want to. [But I learned that] I can just speak for myself … I realized I could validate that and theorize and process that … I can speak for myself and not others. I can contribute and process myself.

In this narrative, it is clear that for Sofia, scholarly labor combined in productive ways with emotional and mental health, engendered new thoughts, new insights, activism and more learning, individually and with others. When I interviewed Sofia, she had taken on leadership roles related to multiracial identities, gender, and equity in several activist and student social organizations on campus.

Conclusion

This chapter surveyed how the binary discourse and the discourse of normative whiteness work together to co-construct two primary subjectivities: The Ambivalent,

Illegitimate subjectivity and the Hermit subjectivity. Four themes that appeared across the range of data presented by contested white students were considered: (1) Technologies of racial categorization, (2) the compulsion for proof, (3) feelings of shame and fraud, and (4) the yearning for solidity. As is clear from the data, these themes overlap and feed into one another. The Ambivalent, Illegitimate subjectivity informs the day-to-day lived experiences of contested whites on an ongoing basis, whereas the Hermit seems to be somewhat more occasional for contested whites, meaning that while contested whites frequently find themselves retreating for safety to the Hermit subjectivity, they do not necessarily inhabit it as consistently as the Ambivalent, Illegitimate subjectivity. The next couple of chapters, Chapter 7 and Chapter 8, present and describe several other subjectivities that are available to subsets of contested whites, whereas the Ambivalent, Illegitimate and the Hermit subjectivities were inhabited by all contested whites.

Chapter 7: Intersections with Immigration

What are the differences between "domestic" contested whites and those who have a more recent immigration background? Should those seeking to understand the experiences of contested whites think of these as two separate groups, or do they share experiences and dynamics around racial contestation at the borders of whiteness? Some might argue that immigrant experiences around race should be understood as different from the experiences of domestic U.S. citizens because of their different histories in terms of race in the United States. On the other hand, the United States is a nation of immigrants, and dynamics of colonization, genocide, immigration, and racialization are tightly intertwined with one another and bound up in the fabric of the country. All U.S. residents are shaped by the threads of colonization and racialization. As such, immigrants, and the children of immigrants, whose racial locations butt up against the borders of whiteness should also be included in an examination of the contested white population. In fact, one of the main contributions of this work is its insistence that certain segments of monoracial immigrants also fall into the larger contested white experience. In order to look more comprehensively at contested whiteness, one must not only consider the domestic multiracial and mixed race experience, but also the experiences of monoracial and multiracial immigrants and their children who are positioned along the borders of whiteness. Taking this assertion as a premise for this work, in this chapter, I consider which racial discourses contested white immigrants take up and how these shape subjectivity. I argue that in addition to taking up discourses of essentialist anti-Black racism, contested whites with a first or second-generation immigrant background rely

heavily on discourses of assimilation, meritocracy, and denial in order to assuage the shame and ambivalence that is core to the contested white experience.

This study had a total of nine participants with a first generation, generation 1.5, or second generation immigration experience. Five of these individuals had parents who were both immigrants, and four had one first generation immigrant parent and a white, U.S. American parent. Below, I present the narrative accounts of two specific individuals. I do this not to make any grand claims of representation, but rather to delve deeply into two sets of stories and investigate how discourse shapes subjectivities for these two contested white immigrants. I illustrate how discourses of meritocracy, assimilation, and denial worked to co-construct the Ambitious, Assimilated subjectivity. Since both of these individuals hail from immigrant backgrounds connected to the larger Middle East/South Asia region, I also explore nuances in the contemporary racialization of Muslim immigrants.

I begin with a brief description of Boutros and Mona, both of whom were graduate students. These individuals relied heavily on discourses of meritocracy and assimilation. In addition, they employed the discourse of denial as they minimized the enactments of white supremacy in order to place greater emphasis on narratives of hard work, entrepreneurship, ambition, achievement, and patriotism. They also exhibited shame about their racialized identities, and actively worked to situate themselves closer to whiteness through approximating themselves to both maleness and Christianity.

Introducing Boutros

Boutros was a heterosexual, cisgender male in his late 20s. He was born in the United States and was a citizen. Both of his parents immigrated to the United States from the same Middle Eastern country, although separately. They met and married some years later in the Midwest. Boutros had three other siblings and was a middle child. Boutros earned a bachelor's degree in business, and was pursuing a master's degree in the social sciences. Boutros pursued this dual interest in business and social science for some time, through both his schooling and career choices. At the time of our interview, he worked full-time and attended graduate school full-time.

Boutros' family was struggling financially, although he described himself as coming from a middle class background. Boutros recently moved back in with his parents, selling both his own house and his parents' previous home in order to downsize the three of them into a smaller, more affordable residence. Boutros' family was also coping with serious health challenges, and much of Boutros' time was spent caring for an ailing parent. Boutros planned to complete his graduate degree, and was considering an entrepreneurial career change. He wanted to buy and run his father's old laundromat and achieve success as a small-business owner. He was in a long-term relationship with a white woman.

National culture, religious identity, and strong patterns of familial and ethnic socialization played a large role in Boutros' definition of his social identities. He mentioned that he held both his faith and his national affiliation "close." He described himself as particularly "proud" of his ethnic, national and religious heritage. Boutros was

personable, charming, and able to make social connections easily. He was energetic, eager, and generous in demeanor. He worked well with others, and contributed to the success of both his clients in his full-time job and his family members outside of work.

Introducing Mona

Mona was a young, married, cisgender, heterosexual woman in her early 30s. Her father immigrated to the United States from South Asia, and her mother was a white, U.S. American with a Scandinavian background. Mona was born in the United States and was a citizen. She was pursuing dual citizenship in the country of her father's birth, especially as her family engaged in estate planning and she was being positioned as the heir who would manage her father's properties in his country of birth.

Mona had one full-blood sibling, and two, older half-siblings. Mona converted to Christianity in her 20s as a prerequisite to marrying her devout Christian partner. She was raised both with her father's Muslim faith and with some exposure to Christianity as well. She and her partner had already agreed that any future children would be baptized and raised in the Catholic tradition. Mona identified as coming from an upper class background.

Mona worked full-time at a large Fortune 500 corporation, and was pursuing her master's degree in business on a part-time basis. She described herself as ambitious, and hoped to obtain her doctoral degree one day, perhaps becoming an academic and following her father's career path. Mona was a kind, approachable individual. She easily made friends and acquaintances in the various social settings she entered.

Patterns of Racial Identification

Both Boutros and Mona reported identifying as white when confronted with technologies of racial categorization, although this had evolved somewhat for Mona after college. As an independent adult, she took care to identify as both white and Asian on the various forms that she was occasionally required to complete. Both Boutros and Mona recounted instances of racial contestation, and described the pain and shame that such contestation engendered for them. Interestingly, both identified as "tan" at times, when they were referring not only to their skin tone, but also to their racial identities. This almost seemed to function as the label of an in-between or mixed racial category. Like other contested whites, both readily analyzed their phenotypic characteristics, especially in comparison to their siblings and other family members. Both reported not identifying as white in certain instances, such as on job and school-related applications. Finally, both Boutros and Mona used discourses of denial, particularly minimization, to position themselves closer to the borders of whiteness in their discussions on race and racial identity. Below, I present longer descriptions of how Boutros and Mona situated themselves.

Boutros. Like other contested whites, Boutros was very aware of phenotypic differences between family members. He identified himself as the darkest in his family: "I was so dark, darkest in my family, still the darkest of my family," he exclaimed. When Boutros described his grandfather, he described him as "dark as hell." When speaking about his elementary and middle school years, Boutros described his race as "brown," and when describing his race during high school, college, and contemporary years, he

used "tan," even commenting, that it is "cool to be tan, right?" This focus on skin tone, especially the phrase "dark as hell," hints at the working of the discourse of essentialist anti-Black racism. Throughout his discussion of phenotypic family differences, and also his description of the political leanings of extended family members, it was clear that discourse of essentialist anti-Black racism informed and shaped his family's perception of both African-Americans and Black immigrant groups. This is discussed in greater depth below.

Boutros grew up in a predominantly white suburb. He was very aware of being the only brown kid in elementary and middle school: "I was the only brown kid … with dark hair. People wanted to touch my hair a lot." Boutros also described himself as having excessive hair: "I was the only kid with hair on my arms, hair on my legs, like baby hair on my back." He explained how he got very dark in the summer because he played outside all the time. Boutros described himself through the assessment of the white gaze and discourses of normative whiteness. He is an outsider, a fascinating phenomenon, an object of inspection for the white gaze.

Boutros also described an increase in racial microaggressions after 9/11:

I was 11 [years old] when 9/11 happened. That was not the best time to be in middle school, so that was pretty difficult. [Laughs]. Whew! That was tough! I mean, they all knew I was Middle Eastern, right? They all know Middle Easterners did that, right? So, that was, you know, the name-calling, and all that? But whatever, I hate them, so… it's fine.

Boutros listed the pejorative names he was called during his middle school years, including "towelhead" and "terrorist." He was told to "go back to your country!" Boutros continued:

> [I was called] everything you could imagine, I mean even things that weren't even applying to me. I don't want to say the words, because they are bad, but, you know, every – N-word, faggot… like, I'm not gay … Anything! Anything! Oh yeah, anything, everything … It's okay, I'm past it.

Boutros listed the first names of six male classmates who taunted and ridiculed him during his middle school years. He rattled off a list of all the hateful racial insults that were hurled his way. During that time, Boutros decided that he would not date any white women in high school because of the pain that white classmates had inflicted on him.

Boutros' descriptions are rife with minimization. Each of the two narrative segments above ends with a small phrase that diminished and attempted to locate the pain created by this hostility as "done" and in the past. These discursive moves – deftly carried out with a simple phrase of two or three brief words – stand is stark contrast to the detailed descriptions that precede them. It is also important to note that slurs targeting Boutros' perceived immigration status, such as "go back to your country," and the reflected appraisal of his possible Muslim religious identity, reflected in the taunts of "towelhead" and "terrorist," are mixed with the worst anti-Black racial slur in the contemporary U.S. context – the "N-word" – and also with homophobic hatred. This mixture of anti-Black racism, Islamophobia, and anti-immigrant sentiment illustrates how racial contestation of Middle Eastern immigrants combines discourses of essentialist anti-

Black racism with discourses of assimilation and with heteronormative patriarchy. These discourses build off one another to position Boutros' "brown," middle school-aged body as unwanted, Other, dangerous, and an object worthy of policing and surveillance.

Like other contested whites, Boutros reported that names were a site for racial contestation:

Yes, I was very embarrassed of my middle name growing up. [When people would ask me what my middle name was,] I was like, "Oh, shit!" When people ask me I would get-- No, I wouldn't tell people. I was like, "I'm not going to tell you," and that makes it even more… when I don't tell them, they get more interested like, "What are you hiding?" Now I dug myself a deeper hole. If I just said it, they'll be like, "Oh, okay."

Boutros' name was a marker of difference and a site for racial contestation. While his first name was easily translated to its English equivalent, and therefore understandable by a larger U.S., English-speaking populace, Boutros' last name stood out a bit more as "other" and perhaps "foreign." Still, his surname was only two syllables and not particularly difficult to pronounce. Boutros' middle name, however, could clearly be appraised as a Muslim name since it is an Arabic word. Clearly, Boutros tried different strategies for managing tipping point moments around his middle name. Boutros exclaimed internal alarm – "Oh, shit!" – when someone asked him to reveal his middle name, knowing full well that he was further browned and othered by this additional marker of difference. Boutros' analysis of this dynamic remained more descriptive than critical, and opportunities to expound on the deep racism and xenophobia that belie both

his middle school experiences and this dynamic around his middle name could have been explored further. This lack of critical analysis points again to a general dynamic of minimization and an embrace of the discourse of denial.

When it comes to the Census and other technologies of racial classification, Boutros exhibited ambivalence. Sometimes, Boutros selected both white and his specific national, immigrant background. Sometimes, he chose white, and felt that he was obligated to choose this classification since recent Census forms classify individuals of Middle Eastern descent as white. Boutros was especially careful to choose white when applying for jobs. He commented that over, "the last few years, I'm like, 'Oh shit, I want this job, I'm going to put white.' I've got every job I ever applied for." On the other hand, sometimes, he only indicated the nationality of his family, a country in the Middle East. He explained:

> I applied for two scholarships to study abroad, and I got them. I didn't put white
> because, you know, I'm not going to put white on this because they probably want
> to give it to a person of color. So I put "Other," and I probably put [specific
> Middle Eastern nationality] … That usually works out. That's fine.

Boutros employed a series of somewhat contradictory logics. On the one hand, he claimed that he has never suffered hiring discrimination, and simultaneously, he revealed marking white on employment application forms in hopes that this would make him a more desirable prospective employee. Alternatively, when it came to securing academic opportunities, he chose to identify as something other than white, believing that it increased his chances for selection. While these actions and rationales seem jumbled, this

reflects both the ambivalence created by racial monitoring technologies and also the use of the discourse of denial. Boutros' actions indicated that race does indeed have material effects, such as employment offers and scholarship funding. On the other hand, he did not offer deeper analysis of systemic racism, and instead made comments such as "I don't want to get super tragic." This final comment in particular is an enactment of the discourse of denial, where analysis of the systemic nature of racism is dismissed by accusations of emotionality.

Mona. Mona's father was a first generation immigrant from South Asia, and her mother was a white U.S. citizen of Scandinavian descent. Although Mona acknowledged that she was both Scandinavian and South Asian, the emphasis she put on her Scandinavian background was marked. Mona had one full-blood sibling, and two half-siblings. Mona was the oldest of the younger sibling set, and she mentioned that she was "the darkest of the four [siblings altogether] in terms of skin coloring." Mona engaged in a detailed analysis of the skin color, hair color, hair texture, and facial feature differences and similarities between the four siblings. These similarities and differences have clearly been important for both Mona and her siblings over time, and she made linkages between these phenotypic features and social positioning over the course of the interview. Interestingly, like Boutros, Mona used the word "tan" when describing her current racial location.

In reaction to technologies of racial classification, Mona explained that her mother used to categorize herself and her sister as white:

My Mom marked everything "Caucasian" growing up. She never marked that we were half-Asian. But when my younger sister and I, they would only [allow us to] select one box, so my Mom marked "Caucasian." And I don't know if she did it to protect us, quite frankly, but I wouldn't be surprised [if] that's what she would say.

Here, like other contested whites, family members led the way in teaching mixed race children to identify as white on forms. Mona mentioned that her mother did this "to protect us." This statement implies that there was some danger in identifying as non-white, and even though Mona made this comment in an off-handed manner, the underlying acknowledgement of race leading to differential material effects is clear.

Following her mother's example, when she was younger, Mona was more likely to identify herself as only white. Once she arrived at college, Mona was surprised to find herself included in programming for minoritized students. She remarked, "I remember at orientation, I was like, 'What am I doing here?' Because I was among all of these people that didn't look like me. They were all of different ethnicities, and so I was so confused." This brief vignette reflects the depth of Mona's self-identification as white, seeing herself as a stranger or a misfit among a larger diverse group of students. However, over the course of her undergraduate years, Mona started identifying as both white and Asian, and she did the same in the present day.

Mona described instances of racial contestation both at work and in social settings. Contestation for Mona seemed to have increased in adulthood. She described two specific instances of contestation related to her name in the narrative segment below:

Today someone … that I was [meeting at work for the first time], she goes, "I expected you with blond hair." I mean my name is [first name,] so when you see [first name], people probably think they're going to get [someone] in their 50's because I have an older name. I mean even when I get picked up in an Uber, with the strong Somali population that we have here [driving the cab], they see [my first name] and they think it's a Muslim name. Then they're like, "I expected you to look a little different" and like "Well, I'm 50% [South Asian nationality]."

In the narrative above, Mona described two different instances of contestation. The first took place at work, and a new, white business acquaintance declared that she expected Mona to look more phenotypically white. The second instance took place in a more informal setting, in a cab, and in this case, the Somali driver contested Mona's white-leaning phenotype. Thus, Mona noted that she is contested both by white people and by people of color, including Muslims who expect her to inhabit a certain phenotype based on her name alone. Mona explained that she often has to educate co-workers, her employer, her husband's friends, and her in-laws on the mixed race experience.

To summarize, both Boutros' and Mona's overall articulation of their racial positioning parallels the themes described in Chapter 6. Both experienced confusion and ambivalence when confronting technologies of racial classification, both in the form of demographic surveys and in the form of racial microaggressions. Boutros suffered great pain and shame as a result of the onslaught of microaggressions directed towards him during his middle school years. Mona managed racial microaggressions more directly in her adult years. She described instances at work, with her in-laws, and with strangers in

public settings where she was repeatedly called on to provide proof of her racial positioning. Threads of shame and ambivalence can be noted throughout both Boutros' and Mona's narratives. Below, I argue that these feelings of shame and yearning are somewhat moderated for immigrant contested whites by their use of discourses of assimilation, meritocracy, and denial.

Stories of Immigration and Assimilation

In this section, Boutros' and Mona's descriptions of the immigration and assimilation patterns of their families are presented. Both Boutros and Mona portrayed their fathers as meritocratic heroes, and they each took up a "male" subject position themselves as they described their own aspirations and ambitions. Boutros and Mona positioned themselves as the ambitious child following in the footsteps of their heroic fathers. Discourses of assimilation and meritocracy were used to designate themselves as "good immigrants" who inhabit an Ambitious, Assimilated subjectivity.

Father as the assimilated hero. Both Boutros and Mona described their fathers in heroic terms. Boutros told a story of his father's immigration from a Middle Eastern country to the Midwestern United States. His father eventually bought and ran a small business. Boutros described the ups and downs of his father's entrepreneurial success, and explained that after years of hard work, his father was able to build a large, new house in the suburbs for his family. This house accommodated six adults, and was so big that "you wouldn't even see somebody if you didn't want to." Unfortunately, in the last several years, Boutros' father fell ill and suffered from a degenerative, chronic illness. His physical health and ability deteriorated dramatically. Boutros explained: "it's making

him very slow, very difficult to walk, very difficult to talk, his swallowing glands … are

very weak … he can't really process much … he falls a lot." As a result of this

devastating change in health, Boutros not only moved back in with his parents in order to

provide support for the physical care of his father, but he also sold his own home, sold his

parents' large home, and bought a smaller, single-level dwelling for his parents.

> Boutros described his father's previous intelligence and entrepreneurial acumen:
>
> He was the sharpest man in the world! You could tell him, "Dad, how much was
>
> your [electricity] bill from four years ago?" He'd tell you that, "In August, [it
>
> was]…," you know? He knew every bill! He never wrote down anything! It was
>
> all in his head – Oh my goodness! I mean, he owned 11 [laundromats] at one
>
> point, you know? And then this disease came and took him over. I mean, he sits in
>
> a chair 99% of the day [now].

Boutros recounted the victories and struggles of his father's life with compassion and

admiration.

> Boutros also shared stories about his father's sense of patriotism. For example,

Boutros recounted a time when his father instructed him to put "American" at the front of

his racial/ethnic identity, and to put his Middle Eastern identity second.

> When I was growing up, I remember this. I remember like it was yesterday … It
>
> was like 2000, 2001 so I was like 10, 11 [years old]. I was with my dad … He
>
> [said to me,] "You are American-[Middle Eastern ethnicity]. "American" comes
>
> first! America is more important to you than [Middle Eastern country]. What has
>
> [Middle Eastern country] done for you? I was like, "Dang!" …I mean, I was born

here. I grew up here. My father has a career because of that, he's free, we're all free. Since then, I've identified as American-[Middle Eastern ethnicity], yes … Because this country gave so much to my father, his [children] are American-[Middle Eastern ethnicity,] yes.

In the vignette above, the father taught the son to show a sense of gratitude for his immigration to the United States by identifying first with the United States, and only second as a member of a specific Middle Eastern ethnicity. Boutros' dad took up narratives of freedom, patriotism, and economic advancement – all elements of the discourses of assimilation and meritocracy – to justify this ranking of categories of belonging, and instructed his son in a preferred order of affiliation. This emotional display of patriotism was a pivotal moment in Boutros' memory, one that he recounted with pride during our interview conversation.

The story of Boutros' father's life was a heroic one marked by adversity, challenge, hard work, achievement, success, and more adversity. Boutros' father left his home country and built a strong family and strong business in the United States. His children and wife were now financially security in his new host country. Clearly, Boutros admired his father's hard work and grit, and wanted to follow in his footsteps, even to the extent of buying one of his father's businesses.

Mona also positioned her father as a hero who overcame obstacles and achieved success. Mona explained that her father grew up in a rural Muslim community in South Asia and that he has moved far beyond his humble beginnings. She elaborated:

He grew up in a very rural area … [houses were made of] mud packs in the village, whereas to have a brick house [meant] you were well off … He grew up in a… honestly if you look at the side of train cars, he grew up in something like that, where his bathroom that he had was in an outhouse.

Mona's father was the smartest of his siblings, "the golden child," and as such, his parents scraped together enough money to send him, from among all their children, to a boarding school in a larger city. Mona's father did well academically at the school and went on to pursue his bachelor's degree at university. Due to a combination of civil unrest and opportunities to pursue higher education in the United States, Mona's father immigrated to the Midwest and started graduate school.

Mona's father obtained his doctoral degree and assimilated to larger U.S. culture. Mona surmised that her "dad assimilated to the American culture because that's what he had to do, to survive in the United States … he assimilated because that was what was going to make him successful." Mona's father became a university professor, initially teaching in the physical sciences, and eventually entered academic leadership. In describing her father's success in the United States, Mona mentioned: "He has five patents. He's retired. He's still pretty actively involved on campus. He was the only [specialized science] professor, so everyone knew who he was." Towards the end of her narrative, Mona detailed some of the ways in which her father now supported education and development back in the local community where he was born:

My dad, back in his village where he grew up, he found out that girls were sitting on the floor in the school because they didn't have enough chairs. So, my dad …

ended up giving money. He went to go see the school, he got some chairs… Like

I said, you've heard the journey of who my dad was to who he is now, he's

evolved, it's amazing. It's an amazing journey … He then also started opening up

this Science Center. He's been sending back microscopes, books, etc., to help

these kids learn in the school. He's opening the Science Center in January. We're

going there for the opening.

Mona outlined her father's journey from living in a railroad boxcar in a rural

community in South Asia, to success as a leader of higher education in the United States,

and back to the small school in his village, but this time as a philanthropist. This is the

hero's journey, a quintessential story of immigration, meritocracy, assimilation, and

giving back. This is the story of "the good immigrant," one who takes advantage of the

"opportunities" and "freedom" offered by immigration to the United States, and who

returns back to the "developing world" to raise up others through further education, hard

work, striving, and achievement.

We can readily see that both Boutros and Mona positioned their fathers originally

as disadvantaged immigrants who sought "a better life" through immigration to the

United States. Once in the U.S., both fathers worked hard, strove, and pulled themselves

up by their bootstraps. Now both fathers, each in their own way, are giving back to

others. Boutros' father gives inspiration and love to his children and wife, and Mona's

father gives hope and opportunity to the rural girl children of a poverty-stricken, third

world country. Both fathers can be classified as "good immigrants." They are the ones

who worked and achieved. They are grateful and patriotic. They are benefactors.

Discourses of meritocracy and assimilation informed the ways that both Boutros and Mona positioned their fathers, their families of origin and, as examined below, their own life ambitions and career plans.

Immigrant children as ambitious. Both Boutros and Mona can be described as ambitious, focused on learning and growth, and oriented towards achievement, partly in order to please their fathers. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Boutros had a long-standing dual interest in both entrepreneurship and higher education. When asked about his future career plans, Boutros replied:

> I'd like to purchase my father's [business] from him and run that for a living … it is in an amazing location, it's an opportunity that I've been thinking more and more… just my personal goal is, I want to own something. I have a very strong desire to have something be mine, have a strong desire not to have a supervisor. I have a very strong desire to not work 9 to 5, not be on someone else's time… I'm still young, I feel I use this energy towards that, and that will be my source of income and be a source of pride, and then teaching in [an undergraduate program] will be my sense of giving back [to society].

Boutros appeared to have some of the same entrepreneurial drive as his father. He used the tropes of entrepreneurial meritocracy in the narrative segment above, including ownership of property, individual drive and effort, "pride" about entrepreneurial achievement, and freedom from hierarchical supervision. Even his achievements in higher education were clothed in discourses of meritocracy:

> I am getting a master's degree in [social science field] and learning … and it's very challenging, but it brings me a lot of joy to be able to get this degree. I love it! I can't believe I'm getting a master's! Oh my goodness! My father has a fifth grade education, and [laughs] I'm getting a masters, like, what?!

Boutros compared his educational level to that of his father, and expressed a sense of hesitation or disbelief at his own advanced achievements. Overall, it is clear that Boutros wanted to succeed both in terms of higher education and in terms of entrepreneurship. Boutros had a strong drive for "success" and achievement in the two primary arenas in which many new immigrants focus their efforts: business and higher education.

These conceptualizations of entrepreneurship and achievement rely on traditional conceptions of heteronormative masculinity. For example, early in the interview conversation, Boutros explained that his male identity was important to him. When asked where this showed up, he mentioned his ability to buy and sell houses, and the fact that he managed his parents' finances. He described one particular example, where he was buying a house, and his mother had accompanied him to the closing:

> When I was buying my house, I wasn't going to pay all the closing costs, like, I put my foot down. My mom was like, "No, no. It's fine" … "No, Mom. I'm not going to pay for these closing costs." …I use [my masculinity] in a certain sense, to be forceful, to make sure everything is fair. Also, a sense of being a provider, purchasing a house for my family.

Boutros became the male caretaker even though he was not the oldest; he managed his parents' finances, household, and property. Boutros distinguished himself as ambitious

and responsible. In fact, he declared that he wanted to achieve success through entrepreneurship, as his father had done before him. He already secured the role of the senior, male caretaker in his family of origin.

Mona also described herself as playing a masculine role in her family of origin, and tied this into her ambitious nature and future career plans in several interesting ways. First of all, she positioned herself as the eldest male child among her father's four daughters, even though she was female, and third in birth order.

> I was supposed to be the boy in the family. My parents thought they were having a boy, my name was supposed to be [male, Middle Eastern name], and he calls me his son-and-daughter. So I'm looked at as the person to do things, take care of the family, but then also I am a daughter and a female … we've grown to have a relationship where he's found me respectable, he knows I'm driven, he knows I'm ambitious … We're both very similar at the end of the day.

Mona was positioned both by herself and her parents as the male caretaker of the family. She explained that she was pursuing dual citizenship in her father's birth country so that she can manage his properties and estate after he passes away. She also was the only sibling to pursue graduate studies, and she wanted to be "successful" both in her current career in a Fortune 500 corporation, but also, someday, as a professor, like her father. Mona explained that she was "looked at" as the responsible party, and her father "found me respectable" particularly because of her drive and ambition. She concluded her account with unequivocally claiming that she and her father are "very similar." Mona

intended to continue his legacy of achievement. Here, discourses of assimilation and meritocracy work to position Mona as the Assimilated Achiever.

Boutros' and Mona's descriptions of their fathers and their own career aspirations illustrate that first and second generation contested whites rely on the discourses of assimilation and meritocracy, especially the elements of ambition, achievement, "hard work," "striving," and the heroic journey of the male provider. These heroic struggles and achievements moderate the shame and ambivalence that marks the contested white experience.

Good Immigrant, Bad Immigrant

Contemporary political discourse propagates a dichotomy of "good immigrant" and "bad immigrant." Good immigrants work hard, keep their head down, strive, and pull themselves up by their bootstraps. Within a few generations, good immigrants have assimilated into larger U.S. culture, and are barely distinguishable from the "average" [white] American. Bad immigrants are dark, swarthy, smell bad, live off welfare, are lazy, and bring crime and drugs with them (Press, 2016).

As illustrated throughout this chapter, Boutros and Mona used discourses of assimilation, meritocracy and denial to position themselves as Ambitious, Assimilated "good immigrants," particularly the levers of masculinity, ambition, higher education, and business "success." In the remaining segment of this chapter, I illustrate how Boutros took up the discourse of essentialist anti-Black racism to position himself and his family as "good" immigrants, and how both Boutros and Mona approximated themselves to

Christianity towards this same end, that is the distancing of their Middle Eastern bodies from racialization as Muslims.

Bad immigrants are Black and Muslim. During our conversation, I asked Boutros how his family would react if he were dating a Black female. He explained to me that he had dated African-American women before, but he had to keep it hidden from his parents and grandparents because their reaction would be very negative. They did not want their child dating a Black woman. Boutros also shared that his family had suffered from personal crime committed by Black individuals, and that these incidents had contributed to their disregard for Black Americans. Much later in our conversation, Boutros mentioned that many of his extended family members were politically conservative and anti-immigrant. Many of them were Trump supporters, and agreed with Trump's call for the expulsion of immigrants:

> More outside family were happy Trump got elected. Because they were like, "Let's get the bad people out of this country." Immigrants. My whole family is immigrants, and they say, "Let's get these bad people out of the country." Right?! So, that's interesting, right?! [Mostly, they are referring to] Somalis. Terrorists. [They don't really like Somalis.]
>
> [It's] about the way [Somalis] live and the way they treat others… My family – again, my whole family, not just my immediately family – they own businesses [in this urban area]. And there's a heavy population of Somalis. If you think about it, if you really break it down, these people are coming in, buying things, and putting money in my family's pockets. But [my family doesn't] like

them because they think they're dirty people. They're rude, they're mean.
[Somalis] think they run the place.

One time I was going to get my car washed, and it's this little road with a
sidewalk on each side so you can't – once [your car is in line,] the only way you
can get out is if you reverse. Or you go over the sidewalk. What happened is there
was a car in front of me, and I had noticed there was [no driver] in there.

I interpreted it as a Somali man parked his car there, went inside to go get
a carwash ticket, went back to his car and then went in. So I just sit there and wait
for him. I was like, I didn't know he was [Somali]. I was like, "Who the hell is
this guy? … I want to get my car! I have to go to work!" And then I found out he
was Somali, I had the thought like, "Dude! What the…" you know, like? They
just don't like the way they live.

The passage above is rich with various elements. First of all, Boutros described
the general anti-immigrant ideology among his family members. They want to get the
"bad" immigrants "out of this country." Who are these bad immigrants? Boutros defined
them as the local Black, Muslim, Somali population. These immigrants are "bad" because
of hygiene, lifestyle, culture and entitlement. I argue that these are masks for the
operation of essentialist anti-Black racism and Islamophobic discourses. In the account
above, Boutros tried to distance both his immediate family and himself from this hatred
and aversion, and yet, it is clear as the narrative continues that Boutros himself held some
of these same sentiments of aversion and dislike of Black Muslim immigrants and
considered them "rude" and "mean." By identifying Black, Muslim immigrants as

dangerous "terrorists" and "bad," Boutros and his family simultaneously constitute themselves as safe and "good" Christian immigrants in comparison.

Approximation to Christianity, distancing from Islam. Scholars across a range of disciplines argue that the racialization of Muslims constitutes an important contemporary racial project, largely informed by the resurgence of Orientalist and Islamophobic conceptualizations (Byng, 2017; Considine, 2017; Khabeer, 2017; Naber, 2015; Zopf, 2017). Boutros and Mona were both very aware of this racial project, and used religion as a lever to offset these forces from shaping their own bodies and racial location.

Boutros explained that when he was being contested racially, he would make sure to always mention his Christian faith among one of the very first descriptors of social identity. In other words, when people asked him, "Where you're from, what's your ethnicity, what's your heritage, where are your parents from, where were you born?," he would always answer, "I'm [Middle Eastern nationality], but I'm Christian." Boutros used to wear his gold cross necklace outside of his shirt, and he noted that keeping the necklace from slipping under his shirt or sweater "was an endeavor." He acknowledged that part of why he wore his cross necklace out all of the time was to indicate his Christian faith to others. Boutros "didn't want to be categorized [as] another Muslim person." He imagined that, in the higher education classroom, if people read him as Muslim, they would think to themselves, "He's not going to contribute to the group. He's not going to talk much. Probably he's not from here. Goddamn!" Boutros illustrated how

he used a physical emblem to avoid racialization as Muslim, and thus avoided being interpreted by larger dynamics of Islamophobia as potentially criminal and Other.

Mona also distanced herself, over time, from her Muslim background. Mona was raised with both Christian and Muslim traditions. Mona explained that they would celebrate Eid and Ramadan when she was a child. Mona did not feel much pressure to select either religion as she was growing up. During her middle school years however, she started to attend Church on a weekly basis with her best friend's family. Mona's father agreed that his daughter could participate in this weekly practice and, over time, Mona found herself aligning with Christianity. Eventually, Mona was confirmed as a nondenominational Christian through her best friend's church, but she noted that her father "did not want me to get baptized." Years later, after Mona married her husband, whom she described as a devout Catholic, she "got baptized because I needed to be baptized to get married in the Catholic Church." Mona told her soon-to-be husband, "Well, we can accommodate what your wishes are there, but I won't convert or anything." Mona and her husband have agreed that any children they have will be raised as Catholic. Mona concluded that she does believe in Christianity, but she is not a converted Catholic. She was baptized as Catholic in order to be wed according to her husband's preferences.

There was some ambivalence and confusion in Mona's description of her religious identification above. She was Christian, but not Catholic. She was baptized Catholic, but somehow did not convert. Her father both did not mind her weekly training and exposure to Christianity, and yet he did not want her to be baptized. She was both not

Catholic, and yet has committed to raising her children only in that tradition. What she was clearly not, however, was Muslim. Mona's Christian affiliation further distanced her from Islam and Otherness, and rendered her a "good immigrant."

Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined how two contested white immigrants used several different discourses to inhabit an Ambitious, Assimilated subjectivity. While both Boutros and Mona identified as contested whites and experienced the shame and ambivalence outlined in Chapter 6, they drew on the workings of the discourses of assimilation, meritocracy, and denial – along with the occasional uptake of the discourse of essentialist anti-Black racism and an anti-Muslim sentiment – to position themselves closer to the good, Christian, white-adjacent, immigrant. In other words, while these two contested white immigrants felt shame and ambivalence, they also used ambition and success to offset some of the feelings of illegitimacy.

Chapter 8: Fear of Race-Mixing

Dating and romantic relationships are a particularly important context for the workings of racial discourses on contested white bodies and subjectivities (Moran, 2001; Shiao & Tuan, 2008). Chapter 5 revealed that the fear of race-mixing constitutes particularly fertile ground for racial contestation. Jenelle's tipping point stories effectively illustrated that fear of race-mixing is a potent instigator of contestation, and that race-mixing constitutes an arena where the binary discourse is particularly productive. In this chapter, I argue that in this arena of dating and potential race-mixing, racial discourses produce different subjectivities based on gender. When it comes to cisgender women's bodies, discourses of normative whiteness and the binary discourse work together to recolonize the contested white woman and produce the "Hot Ho" or the fetishized "Dirty White." For cisgender male bodies, the discourses of denial, colorblind racism, and normative whiteness work together to produce the Unwanted, Colored Male.

It is important to note that my data collection was rather limited in terms of the spectrum of sexuality and gender identity. All of my respondents identified as cisgender, and only three identified as bisexual. In addition, none of the bisexual participants had experienced a same sex relationship, either in the past or present. There is clearly much more to explore at the intersections of sexuality, gender, and contested race, but this is beyond the scope of this work (see Tran & Johnston-Guerrero, 2016 for related ideas).

Fetishizing Women, Colonizing Women

Many contested white women were the recipients of gendered racial microaggressions. Participants reported that individual men of all races felt profoundly

entitled to request complete unknown contested white women to identify their racial

identities, often with an intimation of sexual attraction. Frequently in public settings,

unknown men approached contested white women and remarked, "Oh, you're a dirty

white" or "spicy white!" This was followed with, "What are you?" After the woman

answered, the retort was often some sexually tinged praise such as, "that's hot!" or "that's

sexy!" Thus discourses of normative whiteness, which assert that any race other than

white is not normal, and the binary discourse, which brings the urge for racial

identification to bear on contested white bodies, co-constructed these women as "spicy,"

"dirty," and "hot." I name this subjectivity as the "Hot Ho" or the "Dirty White," both

phrases which were articulated by contested white women during meetings of the

multiracial student group and several individual interviews.

> Lyra noted that these sexualized contestations often occurred when she was alone:
>
> When I'm alone and I think the curiosity of my race is like, "What is she? That's
>
> so interesting, that's beautiful." It's mostly like, "What are you?" … "What's your
>
> name?" And like, "Are you new here?" Like, "I have never seen you before, and
>
> what's your…" It's men from all backgrounds, but … mostly older men. This is
>
> disgusting, but yes … more so when I'm alone, that happens to me.

The fact that Lyra was often questioned about her race, and praised as "beautiful"

simultaneously, when she was alone, walking around campus from place to place, is

concerning. The gender and age differences between Lyra and the older men who

demand explanation entail power differences. The dynamic reveals a level of sexual

harassment and a threat of unequal power undercurrents based on gender, age and

physical safety since when an older male figure approaches an isolated woman, many women feel a sense of vulnerability and danger.

Natalia likewise explained that men often combined contestation and flirting. She reported trying to end such interactions as soon as possible because, like Lyra above, she found the fetishized dynamics to be uncomfortable and repulsive.

I've had instances where people try to hit on me by talking about what I am, which is really usually gross … I oftentimes will try to just not [engage]. If it's just a random person, I'll be like, "Oh," [trying to end the conversation with a brief comment]. They'll be like, "Where are you from?" and I'll be like, "[Big midwestern city instead of race, ethnicity or nationality]." They'll be like, "No, but what are you?"

Participants reported that even in the realm of online dating, men felt entitled to contest race. After constantly being asked to identify her racial background as a first question in online dating communications, Natalia tried to let interested prospects know that she was ill-disposed to being questioned about her race in a somewhat humorous way:

Interestingly enough, I do have a Tinder™… I would get tons of questions about my ethnicity. I have many stories of crazy things people said, but at one point … I changed my bio, and [my profile said:] "Now charging five dollars if you want to know my ethnicity." I [thought to myself,] "People won't ask then, because they know it annoys me." [But] they ask more! People would ask more! And then I

changed it to something about being Latina … [I eventually realized,] "I can

never win." They'll just always want to know.

In Natalia's two brief narratives above, as well as in Lyra's account, the frequency with which contestation was combined with an attempt to praise beauty or flirt creates an unsettling dynamic. Contestation and articulating sexual desire stimulate contradictory evocative states: One of pushing and questioning and doubting, and the other of appreciation and receptivity. The awkward combination of these two opposing dynamics created feelings of disgust and repulsion within these women. The hint of male dominance and entitlement to women bodies was also palpable and frightening. These men felt entitled to step into the inner worlds of these young women, demand proof of racial location, be allowed to assess their physical beauty and share their judgment out loud. The implication was that these women were supposed to be flattered and made more open to, and attracted to, these men by such actions. Even when a young woman clearly indicated that her racial identity was not open for questioning by stating so in her online dating profile, men continued to feel entitled to contest and demand. Thus, contested whiteness here is both a curiosity and something that is sexualized.

When it comes to the realm of heteronormative dating, the discourse of normative whiteness dictates that being white and female as an object of attraction is normal and taken for granted. The binary discourse steps in, and if there is a hint that an individual woman is not fully white, that woman is labeled as different, as "dirty white" and "spicy white." These Dirty White women or Hot Hos are enjoined to identify their difference immediately. This pressure and contestation constitutes the powerful work of the

discourses of normative whiteness and the binary discourse, combined with the dominance of heteronormative patriarchy.

Participants noted that the ways in which contested white women of different racial backgrounds are sexualized can vary, and this variance relies on tropes from the fetishization and sexualization of various groups of monoracial women. For example, Helen exclaimed that Asian women are fetishized in particular ways, and these stereotyped desires bear on her contested white experience as well:

> Something that frequently is fetishized with Asian women is being "cute," and I definitely get that a lot. That's not just from guys though. Even people in general frequently [say,] "No, you're so cute." Stuff like that. While it's not negative, it's kind of a compliment, it's also kind of annoying, honestly. I get it all the time, all the time! Probably every day somebody tells me that! For a while, it was nice because it's like, "Okay, this is positive," but I feel I want to be seen as more than that.
>
> Again, it's not negative … I'm not taking it negatively, but it's also just a common thing that – I don't like it anymore, it bothers me. Even friends that I've told that I don't like it, they still will do it. It's not always conscious, I think, but I definitely feel like, from guys, I feel I've definitely gotten that.

Rife throughout the narrative above are a range of discursive moves intended to minimize the harassment and to appear "positive" and appreciative of the praise. Even as she articulated the workings of the fetishized dynamic – which Helen did not hesitate to name – she made sure to add that "it's not negative," and it was actually a "compliment." While

Helen was battered "all the time, all the time" and "every day" by these sexualized racial microaggressions, she explained that she's "not taking it negatively." It "bothers" her, but she was not outraged. Helen was responsible for managing and diffusing the impact of these aggressions, and she takes up the position of a grateful object of beauty. In other words, well-worn patterns of heteronormative patriarchy instruct Helen to be grateful even as she is harassed and contested, and she complied.

Contested white women's bodies are rendered sexual as the Hot Ho and the Dirty White through the leveling of commonplace, everyday sexualized racial microaggressions. These women's bodies are recolonized through these microaggressions. None of the current typologies of monoracial microaggressions identifies this particular intersection of heteronormative patriarchy and white supremacy, although Johnston and Nadal (2010) do bring attention to this as a subtheme within their taxonomy of multiracial microaggressions. Still, there is substantial room to explore the profound pain, suffering, and danger produced by these sexualized racial microaggressions for contested white women. Discourses of normative whiteness and the binary discourse work together to position contested white women as Other, as objects for inspection, sexualization, and colonization by men of all races in everyday, moment to moment settings. Try as they might to resist being positioned as Hot Hos and Dirty Whites, the omnipresence of these discourses and their microaggressive work is profound, and as Natalia concluded above, "I can never win!"

Racialized desire from both sides. It is important to note that these sexualized racial microaggressions do not just come from white men. In fact, many participants felt

subject to fetishized desire from both white men and men of color. Recall Gloria's shame and weeping upon retelling the interaction with her Latinx boyfriend (Chapter 6) when he admitted to her that he was attracted to her because she was so Americanized and "whiter than me." Gloria explained that this revelation left a constant fear with her: "It's always in my head that that's what people think." In other words, Gloria was afraid that she had always been and would always be valued for her whiteness above her personality, skills, abilities or being.

Natalia echoed this sentiment. She said, "when men of color express interest in me, sometimes … I'm afraid that I'm preferred because of whiteness or lightness. That's a tough point because it's like you never know what someone's underlying stuff is." Natalia felt the same fear and pain of being sexualized and desired for phenotype, and linked it to "underlying stuff," or partially subconscious, psychologically-informed desires. In other words, Natalia identified this fetishized racial desire as a form of racial insanity, or racial mental illness, thus putting the responsibility on the shoulders of the man, and not herself. This constitutes a rare instance of clarity about responsibility across the broader range of narratives. The discourses of normative whiteness and the binary discourse shape the desires of all men and women, not just white men toward contested white women.

The Unwanted, Colored Male

There were a total of six male participants in my study, including two of my key informants. All six males identified as cisgender and heterosexual. Four of the six were in a long-term relationship, including two who were married. Five of the six men were graduate students. They reported a range of dating patterns and conceptualizations of the

interactions of race and dating. For some, being a contested white made them more attractive to women from high school onwards. Others depicted their dating experiences as marked by rejection and isolation. In the remaining portion of this chapter, I trace the narratives of two contested white male participants in particular: Roland and Michael. Through examination of their accounts, it is notable how the fear of race-mixing, this time through the arrangements of the discourses of denial, colorblind racism, and normative whiteness, create an Unwanted, Colored Male subjectivity.

Roland. Roland was a cisgender male graduate student at the end of his doctoral studies. He was the eldest sibling in a family of four. He grew up on the East coast, in a very white suburban community, and completed both his bachelor's degree and his graduate studies in the Midwest. He had hopes for a financially lucrative career upon graduation. Roland was a somewhat reserved, introverted individual, and described himself as having the tendency to spend a lot of time in reflection, "mus[ing] … too long" and "obsess[ing] … and play[ing] what people said to me over and over in my head." In the final year of his doctoral studies, Roland joined a couple of student groups and found some connection with others through those activities. In general, however, Roland was quiet and solitary.

Racial positioning. Roland's father was white, of Dutch and Scottish descent, and his mother was a third-generation Chinese-American. Roland had the darkest phenotype of his family members, and had even considered getting genetic testing to make sure that he was not adopted. Roland grew up with a series of health problems, and he remembered one particular visit to the physician where his mother asked – in front of him, he noted –

"if it was natural for me to have skin this dark." His narrative paralleled those of other contested whites who were very aware of phenotypic differences among family members.

Roland never felt accepted in either predominantly white spaces or predominantly Asian spaces. Roland actively avoided Asian spaces and activities on campus (another reflection of the Hermit subjectivity from Chapter 6). Roland explained that he was sometimes read as Asian, and sometimes as Native American. Roland identified as both half-white and half-Asian, but more often, he identified purposefully as "the colored man." He believed this was the most accurate descriptor of his body and positioning in the world, the way he was read on the street, since he has "felt the way people have treated me in my life is like I'm some unidentifiable minority." Part of the reason Roland preferred identifying as "the colored man" was "because I've been the victim of racism at various points in my life. So, I sympathize a lot with other people who are different skin colors and different races." Roland exclaimed that even in a recent phone conversation, his parents still could not understand why he identified as a man of color.

Roland easily recounted a wide array of stories of contestation that paralleled dynamics and details reported by other contested whites, including name-based contestation, racial slurs, and calls for proof of racial identity by whites, Asian internationals, Asian-Americans, Latinx and others. Roland explained that he was bullied in elementary and middle school, called "slant eyes," and "a lot of pejoratives, just a ton of insults."

> People would say "ching-chang" in front of me, stuff like that, or doing like this
> with their eyes, all squinty. They called me Jackie Chan, stuff like that. Some

great nasty stuff. One of the things that I was called was "Ching-chang, small

wang."

These microaggressions caused Roland pain and had significant impact on his sense of

self. His whole demeanor turned inward and exhibited signs of internalized shame while

he described these incidents and microaggressions to me during our interview.

   ***Dating and romantic relationships*.** Roland did not date much, and he claimed

that race literally circumscribed his possibilities, regardless of his personality or abilities.

Roland said:

   I've always felt that it's harder for me. I basically view this like [I am] less than

   desirable for white women. I just get the cold shoulder a lot of the time. I

   remember there was one time when a girl very clearly stated that we're just

   friends… It's mainly just shutting me out and not giving me a chance. [This

   dynamic did not change in college.] It's basically been the same.

The discourse of normative whiteness positioned Roland's non-white body as not

desirable, and Roland was critically aware that white supremacy shaped his dating

options and experiences. He reported being "less than desirable" particularly for white

women. He was "shut out," shunned, and "not giv[en] a chance." Roland felt unwanted

and the world reinforced this sense of undesirability. In some ways, Roland might

constitute a solid partner due to his earning potential, thoughtful demeanor, tendency

towards introspection and analysis, and his dedication to causes that he cares about. On

the other hand, he has not had a chance to learn about relationships and develop the skills

associated with partnership because the discourse of normative whiteness shapes his body as unwanted.

Roland continued to talk about dating and romantic relationships, and revealed some of his own contradictory racial desires. Both stanzas of this longer narrative segment begin with the same introductory phrase, "Racially, I don't really care who I date."

> Racially, I don't really care who I date so much. I'll be honest, I'm sort of against dating a lighter-skinned Asian person. I think a lot of it has to do with things I'm trying to shake off still … I got a lot of racism in high school for looking Asian, so then I just sort of had that association with lighter-skinned Asian people … that's very much underneath my skin that I'm trying to shake off.
>
> Racially, I don't really care who I date. I guess I do have somewhat of a bias for like lighter skin color. I don't think I'd date a very, very dark-skinned Black woman, but like a medium-skinned Black woman, yes, that can happen.

This narrative elicits both empathy and aversion. On the one hand, Roland's pain run deeps and the enactments of racial microaggressions from elementary, middle, and high school are still active. On the other hand, Roland's words are contradictory and reflect discourses of essentialist anti-Black racism. First, he stated that he did not want to date a lighter-phenotype Asian American woman in retribution for the racial microaggressions he faced as a darker-hued Asian American. Later, he stated almost the exact opposite: that he did prefer light skin after all. The ugly discourse of essentialist anti-Black racism made an appearance, and confirmed once again that an essentialist hatred remains active

and potent, and underlies much of the conceptualization of race. Even here, among contested whites, fear of race-mixing, especially with the darkest Black bodies, drives racialized, sexual desires.

Overall, Roland's body was arranged as non-white by the binary discourse, and unwanted and undesirable by the discourse of normative whiteness. The material effects of the co-construction of these discourses manifests particularly effectively in the realm of dating and race-mixing, thus producing the Unwanted, Colored Male.

Michael. Michael was a cisgender, male, doctoral student in his early 30s. A transracial adoptee from South Asia, Michael lived all his life – save a few weeks immediately after birth – in the Midwestern United States. Michael worked for a nonprofit and dedicated his career to the development and growth of some of the more disadvantaged members of larger society. This dedication to the greater good reflected the strong values of community service with which his birth mother raised him. Michael reported being worried about the sizeable student loans that awaited him as he drafted the last chapters of his dissertation and considered life after graduate school.

Racial positioning. Michael described himself as "the whitest non-white person you'll ever meet." Michael's articulations of his racial identity were laden with the discourse of denial and with minimization. In fact, he minimized the impact of race throughout our interview conversation. Michael explained his racial positioning (along with that of his transracially adopted brother) in comparison to the larger white context:

I knew we were different, [and] while I've known that my whole life, I thought we were the same. My brother and I both wanted to just assimilate to our community

and our surroundings, which are people who look different than us.…I

maintain[ed] that almost innocence … until I went to college … then also

recognizing we're different but then not understanding how that difference applies

to my life. I remember meeting other Indian students from the Indian Student

Association. They were Indians – like, their parents were Indians. They practiced

Indian traditions and culture and they had family members from there. I'm like, "I

have no idea what the heck you're talking about!"

When Michael described a sense of difference and separation in the account above, it was

not in relation to whites, but to second-generation Indian students at college. Note that he

used the word "heck" to emphasize dissimilarity and a sense of confounding separation.

Michael emphasized how different he is from first and second-generation Indian college

students, thus minimizing difference from his white context. Michael expertly listed

vectors of assimilation that he and his brother pursued, including mastery of English

fluency, mastery of a North American accent, clothing choices, being friendly and

outgoing, coming from a well-regarded family, involvement in service to the larger

community, extracurricular activities, including sports and piano, church affiliation, and

patterns of church attendance.

Michael continued to move in mostly white settings and to seek whiteness during

college. He explained:

I ended up becoming friends with mostly white suburban kids. All of my college

friends [have] … very similar cultural values and how we were raised, and the

things we ate, and kind of things like that. I was the same, and yet different at the same time.

Michael's childhood, youth, and early adult years were marked by assimilation to whiteness. He immersed himself in white culture and adorned himself with the accoutrements of success as articulated by discourses of normative whiteness, such as academic achievement, Christian religiosity, and community service.

Minimization of racism. Like other contested whites, Michael was able to easily recount instances of racial contestation. Below, he depicted, in quick succession, two incidents that occurred in public settings, one at a grocery store, and one with a coworker in the office:

I was at the grocery store and … the checkout register guy is like, "Do you like Indian food?" I'm like, "I guess, yes, it's not bad. Why?" He's like, "I just really had some great Indian food the other day, do you know [what] the spices are?" I'm like, "I don't know the fuck you are talking about, man." I didn't say that, but I get that a lot … I'm not going to get into it with the cashier guy at the grocery store, one. Then two, yes it bugs me, it does, but what are you going to do about it?

I look at people like that, I don't think they're being intentionally racially insensitive, it's just limited education or exposure, they just don't understand. I don't walk up to a fat person and say, "You've been eating a bunch of McDonald's clearly," or something like that.

In the vignette above, an unknown stranger judged Michael's racialized appearance as a topic appropriate for small talk at the checkout lane of a grocery store, and assumed that Michael's dark phenotype implied not just Indian racial background, but a whole host of other cultural characteristics, including knowledge of Indian cuisine and cooking techniques. Michael was angered by the cashier's erroneous reflected appraisal and the sense of entitlement that allowed the cashier to speak about this in a public setting. Michael was being read as a dark, raced body and being asked to provide his race knowledge. In the latter half of the vignette, Michael compared the cashier's ignorance to that which would have been exhibited by offending an unknown overweight person and accusing them of overeating fast food. In other words, Michael hinted that it was commonsense knowledge that discussing the racial appraisal of a stranger's race in public was offensive, just as it would be inappropriate and deeply garish to comment on a stranger's body type and eating habits. Michael then shared another contestation he recently experience:

> Somebody at a work a month ago asked me, "Do you make a lot of Indian food?"
> I just stared at him. I don't know how to respond and I'm like, "Do I give him an
> asshole response?"

Clearly, Michael was deeply upset in these two instances of racial contestation. In the first account, he used expletives to emphasize both his disconnect from his South Asian racial appearance, and his frustration and anger at being expected to be a gourmet of Indian cuisine. In part, Michael wanted to display some physical expression of anger and frustration – "get into it with the cashier guy," but as he explained later in our

conversation, "I'm not going to fight everybody who says something insensitive to me."

Beyond this, in both accounts, Michael expressed feeling powerless in the face of racial

contestation. "[W]hat are you going to do about it?" he asked himself. "I don't know how

to respond," he elaborated. Michael also attempted to excuse, rationalize and minimize

racism by commenting on the potential motivations and levels of education of random

strangers who instigate these microaggressions. This reflects the discourse of denial's

tendency to explain phenomenon by anything other than racism.

About halfway through our interview, Michael's boss walked in and immediately

contested his race, without a moment's hesitation (see Chapter 4 for a fuller description).

This event actually allowed Michael and I to shift our conversation, and we spent time

reflecting on his tendency to minimize racism. It was during this portion of our

conversation that Michael nonchalantly revealed that he has been called "the N word"

throughout his life and that he has been denied services, such as entrance to a restaurant,

based on his skin color. Michael commented:

> I'm confused because you'll see things in the news today – Black Lives Matter or
> racial profiling – where, yeah, I have had comments said to me or I have had
> things happen to me but not on this systematic... you know, I didn't grow up as a
> by-product of systematic oppression, or I don't feel like I've been marginalized.
> Maybe I have and I just haven't realized it, but, I look at myself … I've pretty
> much been able to do, you know, I've gotten most jobs that I've wanted in life.

Michael drew on discourses of denial and colorblind racism when he recast systematic

oppression to the level of individual experiences and to "feelings" of being marginalized.

It is interesting that Michael diagnosed himself even as he relied on these discourses. Michael proclaimed that he has not suffered from systematic racism, but "[m]aybe I have and I just haven't realized it," he stated with glaring insight. Michael continued to articulate significant ambivalence:

It's just like I don't really know where I fit in. Even after discussing with you for now an hour, I still don't really know where I fit in. I want to identify with racial issues and disparities and things like that. I haven't been pulled over systematically by police officers…but I have been pulled over, and some cops have been great to me. Then one is a prick. He put me in the backseat of a car for speeding. I know that's not the norm, until I told some friends a year later and he's like, "That's messed up man."**…**They just looked up my information because he thought I was lying … I told other friends and they are like, "That's not normal." I'm like, "Oh, I don't know. I just listen to what the police officer had to say." I think, almost, my naiveness with things probably has just played an advantage to me in life. Where it's just almost better off sometimes not knowing.

In the narrative above, Michael worked very hard to deny the enactments of racism, to be patient, ignorant of it, and "naïve." He did not "feel" that he was marginalized, even as he described in detail an incident of police restraint that his white friends confirmed as "messed up" and "not normal." Michael realized that anger in such moments will not serve him well. In fact, he stated that his active ignorance of racism is "probably" "an advantage to me in life." This tendency to minimize racism and to recast action as the work of a lone individual, such as one "prick" cop, is another manifestation of the

discourses of colorblind racism and denial. Michael used these discourses as a measure of self-protection. Michael acknowledged that employing these discursive tools and tricks protected him both from psychosocial crisis and probably from police brutality, at least in some instances.

Regardless of this effort to ignore the power of white supremacy, Michael's early to mid-30s have been characterized by increasing racial ambivalence, and an expanding recognition of the ways in which race and racial discourses appear to be shaping his lived experience. Michael explained:

Then it wasn't until after college, and I kind of started traveling the world a little bit more, that I started to kind of enter this [current] phase of more confusion.

[And] I've been in the stage [of confusion] in the last probably four or five years. Instead of following the traditional identity development trajectories of naiveté in early life, crisis in the middle and high school years, and resolution in early adulthood, Michael reported becoming more confused and ambivalent in his adult years. "I think what I'm trying to say," Michael mentioned, "is I really don't know where I fit in." I assert that part of the reason why Michael can no longer fully deny the operations of racism in his 30s relates to the fact that he is at a life stage where he is actively seeking a marriage partner. The fear of race-mixing orders his body as undesirable and unwanted to such an extent that the discourse of denial breaks down.

Dating and romantic relationships. Michael explained that he has had limited experience with dating and romantic relationships. Michael "had friends, but [didn't date much]." Michael explained, "I feel race has played a role, and I don't use race as an

excuse, but it's definitely impacted opportunities to date." Michael's admission of the

constraints of dating as a contested white man includes the uptake of discourses of denial

and colorblindness which assert that people of color complain and make excuses for their

circumstances. Michael wanted to be clear that he doesn't "use race as an excuse," but he

still believed race has had an impact. The discourses of denial and colorblind racism

cannot fully explain his lived experiences in this arena. Michael went on to detail his

experiences with online dating:

> I'm on these dating apps. The rate that I match with people is significantly less
>
> than my friends who have been on them! They're no better looking, I'm probably
>
> smarter, or I'm equally as smart as them, if not smarter, and our friends say,
>
> "You're a good looking guy, you're really interesting, you getting a Ph.D., you're
>
> pretty smart, you just ran an ultramarathon for my birthday last month." And you
>
> know, I can exercise for a very long time … I view it as all these apps, like
>
> Bumble™ or Tinder™ or whatever people are on, E-harmony™ or Match™, they
>
> are white people dating sites. …I [swipe right] with people, and I don't match
>
> with anybody! And I recognize I'm not the tallest person in the world, but I'm not
>
> the worst looking; I know a lot of people who are less attractive than me.

Michael understood clearly that his low match rates with other people that he finds

attractive on these "white dating sites" has to do with his phenotype. As a

countermeasure, he tried to highlight aspects of his life or his accomplishments that may

increase his value on the dating marketplace, such as his intelligence, his academic

achievements, his physical stamina, his drive to achieve, but he also acknowledged the

qualities that lower his value, namely phenotype and height. Michael sought the opinion of his white friends:

> I have talked to some friends about this, and they're my white friends who give me [an] unbiased lens, and they would say the same thing too. They've agreed with me! They are like, "[As a white person,] you know, you grow up here, like you're 10, 12 years old, you know, you're dreaming, you idealize who you're going to spend your life with, it's not somebody who's short and Indian!"
>
> …There's no doubt that, you know, you look at my profile on a dating site, someone can clearly tell I'm not white!

Michael's white friends acknowledged the primacy of normative whiteness which does not promote colored male bodies as desirable marriage material for white women. Over time, Michael found that he could not offset his phenotype with his long array of other qualities. Nothing he accomplished and no other physical characteristic that he has can counterbalance his non-white phenotype. Even Michael's white friends acknowledged the workings of racial discourses and the limitations produced for him.

During the latter half of our conversation, Michael could not move past this interview topic and kept coming back to it, wanting to analyze it further. He caught himself doing so, and commented:

> The dating thing has gotten to me, but it's like, What do you do about it? You can't do anything about it. People make comments to you like, "What are you going to do?" You can educate people. I can't fight my way through the world and most people are bigger than me. I'm not going to start throwing punches at people,

and that's not who I am as a person anyway. All you do is ignore and kind of shrug it off, and you don't let that stuff get down on you. I would say, and… I don't know why I'm still talking in circles about this dating thing. I think that it struck a chord.

Michael noted that part of the difficulty in trying to solve this problem is that it is unnamed, and even if he were to bring this up, "people are like, 'I can't believe you.'" How can the problem be addressed if there's no public discussion of the enactments of white supremacy, and instead, there is only denial and negation? Michael continued to come back to the topic of dating, and he noted, "I don't know. I don't really know what I'm saying anymore." This reflection on the realities of dating and white supremacy exhausted and confused him. The power of the discourses of normative whiteness, denial, and colorblindness are thorough, unspoken, unnamed, and effective. The discourse of normative whiteness positioned Michael as a brown body, and such bodies are unacceptable partner and marriage material. In addition, Michael, himself, took up discourses of denial and colorblindness as he attempted to make sense of and decipher the challenges he faced in the realm of dating and race-mixing. This combination of discourses effectively constrained Michael in an Unwanted, Colored Male subjectivity.

Epilogue to an interview. About two months after our conversation, Michael reported to me that he had just started dating a new white woman that he met through an online dating application. He revealed to me that her family does not like people of color and that he has not met them yet. He queried aloud, partly to himself, "I don't know if I

should break up with her! I mean, that's a big deal, right?" Michael clearly continued to wrestle with the power and constructions of racial discourses.

Conclusion

Dating and romantic relationships are sites for the enactment of racial discourses. These enactments appear to be shaped differently for different heteronormative genders. For contested white cisgender women, the discourse of normative whiteness and the binary discourse work together to create the Hot Ho and Dirty White subjectivities. For contested white cisgender males, discourses of denial, colorblind racism, and normative whiteness work together to produce the Unwanted, Colored Male subjectivity.

Chapter 9: Saving the World, Saving Ourselves

Public media, larger discourse, and everyday people often position contested whites as the future solvers of racism in the United States (Cashin, 2017; Funderburg, 2013; Johnston-Guerrero & Chaudhari, 2016; Pew Research Center, 2015, Velasquez-Manoff, 2017). They argue and hope that mixed race people will "end racism" by their very presence and being. More specifically, contested whites are positioned as the Healer of Racial Ills. In the first portion of this chapter, I focus on this subjectivity, which is often thrust upon contested whites, and explore how they alternatively take up or push back against this subjectivity. More specifically, contested whites argue that the Healer of Racial Ills can be most effective when redirected towards healing self, healing other multiracials, and healing local contexts. In the second half of this chapter, I present examples of the redirection of this healing labor. First, Lyra's articulation of her racial identity is examined in detail as an example of the redirection of healing towards self. Next, the formation and functioning of the multiracial student group is presented as an example of the redirection of healing towards other multiracials. Finally, Jenelle's senior capstone and general academic work is considered as an example of the redirection of healing towards local contexts.

Saving the World, Solving Racism

Larger discourses often position contested whites as "revolutionaries" who are going to "change the world," and as "bridges" between races (Carson & Heltzell; 2017; Cruz, 2011; Johnston-Guerrero & Chaudhari, 2016). The Pew Research Center (2015) claims that multiracial children constitute the "fastest growing racial population in

America," and with this observation comes expectations about how the children of mixed-race marriages will force larger society to re-envision race and heal racism (Saulny, 2011). Contested white participants in this study confirmed that they are often seen as saviors, as solvers of racism, and positioned as "the future" of race in the United States.

Contested whites are not immune to being positioned as the Healer of Racial Ills. Some are, in fact, charmed and persuaded by these heroic possibilities of contributing to change on a larger scale. For example, in a focus group conversation, Damien exclaimed:

I don't know enough about mixed people in general, our shared power, what that means? We're definitely redefining race … kind of like, breaking some of the boundaries, and breaking some of those things down. So yes, I think the potential is there.

Damien started to wonder about the potential for changing norms, breaking boundaries, and the power to change larger society. Other contested whites, both in meetings of the multiracial student group and in individual interviews, explained how they could serve as a "bridge" between various racial groups. For instance, at a meeting of the multiracial student group, several contested white participants explained how their own grandparents are Trump-supporters with strong aversion towards people of color and immigrants. Students claimed that, in these instances, they can serve as a bridge because they "see both sides" of the political spectrum, they can "humanize" Trump supporters and "humanize racist white people." Jenelle echoed this sentiment:

I've always felt like I can be a bridge between white and Black people. Things that I say to white people, if I say it nicely, then they don't see it as being an "angry Black girl." If I say it nicely to them, it's taken a lot better than my dark-skinned brothers and sisters. It's taken a lot better! Things I say to my [white] Mom get taken a lot better than things that my [Black] Dad has said to her.

Jenelle argued that her mixed race experience and her contested white phenotype made her messages more palatable and comprehensible to white people, even her own white family members.

Damien explained that, due to his white phenotype, he could identify with both white guilt and with being a victim of racism:

I feel I can understand both experiences more. I can definitely identify with white guilt and what that looks like and feels like, but I can also identify with people being racist as hell, and knowing what it's like to have a family that has grown up with these types of experiences, and stuff like that. I feel it gives me a unique perspective on things.

Some contested whites claimed that they could "understand" and "identify" with both whites and people of color. Damien argued that his contested whiteness gives him a "unique perspective." This statement alludes to the contested white experience of in-betweenness that positions contested whites as natural bridges and connectors between those who are "racist as hell" and those who have "grown up" a victim of "these types of [racist] experiences."

On the other hand, contested whites also articulated hesitation about being positioned as the Healer of Racial Ills and being made responsible for solving racism. Some wondered how individuals such as themselves, who experienced such ubiquitous contestation, who lived in a state of ambivalence and ambiguity, could help guide others to clarity and solutions. For example, Jenelle questioned:

> And a lot of people go into [interracial marriage] without really thinking about it, and then their kids grow up, and then they have an identity crisis like us! How are we supposed to have a revolution when we aren't solid in our identity? What are we really fighting for here?

The implication in Jenelle's comment is that contested whites do not necessarily understand the workings of racism any more clearly than anyone else. In fact, contested whites often carry the additional burdens of ambivalence, contestation, and lack of belonging, and this does not position them well as "solvers of racism." Jenelle continued:

> [T]here's [some] basic questions [that everyone must be able to answer]: How old are you? What's your race? What's your ethnicity? Your gender? If you can't [answer] any of those basic questions, it gives you a lot of self-identifying turmoil and I think that … if we don't grow up with any kind of understanding, of being able to figure that out, and having the freedom to figure it out for ourselves, then, no, we're not going to change the world!

In other words, Jenelle asserted that contested white people who are in "turmoil" cannot save others and end racism, when they, themselves, are deeply grappling with the constructions of racial discourses and white supremacy.

Educating others is a lot of work! The most heated discussion at the first meeting of the multiracial student group centered on the subjectivity of the Healer of Racial Ills, and specifically, the labor of educating others about race, racism, multiracial realities, etc. Some students argued that it was the responsibility of "mixed kids" to teach others about racism, monoracism, and multiracial identity and to "educate" them. The subtext here assumed that education would lead to change, growth, and the eventual elimination of racism, a form of "healing" or "saving the world." One student argued that it is each individual's responsibility to "make the world a better place." "But it does fall on us!" asserted another, adding "who else is going to teach them?" Some argued that educating others about race helps prevent future acts of racism.

Other contested whites expressed the exhaustion of racial battle fatigue (Smith, Allen & Danley, 2007) and were resistant to being positioned as responsible for the healing of a societal disease. The question was raised, "How much should we work with [perpetrators] or get angry at the [daily] microaggressions?" In other words, what is the balance between one's own pain and a responsibility to change the world? Juan reported that he did not mind educating others:

> I welcomed the invitation of talking about it, because if you don't talk about it, how can you stop the people from questioning it? You want to educate people, even if it's annoying and it's taxing on you. If they don't know it, that's your opportunity to tell them.

It is interesting that even though Juan positioned himself as being open and "welcoming" to undertaking the labor of educating others, he simultaneously acknowledged that it is

"annoying" and "taxing." Kamilia explained that when people ask her to "tell us what it's like" to be Native, "that makes me want to climb the walls! I really hate that." Kamilia described a moment in class when she tried to extend a passing invitation to her classmates about an upcoming event, and instead the instructor asked her to teach the class about her racial identity:

> I have to suddenly start educating everyone about what powwow is. A campus powwow is totally different than, like, a ceremony powwow, but [now I have to tell them] what a ceremony powwow is! I was like… I just wanted to be like, "Hey, come get a fry bread taco!" [Laughs]. I didn't want to have to educate everybody about these things. That happens pretty frequently across the board.

For contested whites, everyday moments can quickly be turned into injunctions for education and training, and the constancy of these requests can be tiresome and even oppressive.   Kamilia was so bothered by these "pretty frequent" requests that she wanted "to climb the walls."

Sofia elucidated the unjust positioning of responsibility for education and awareness at the feet of contested whites:

> I think it's unfair to say that we have the obligation to constantly educate, and that it's our responsibility to constantly educate if someone says something ignorant because that assumes that it's our fault and not theirs. Sometimes, I might say something, and sometimes I might not. It just depends. . . . I don't think you can say it's our duty to society, every second.

Sofia thus pushed back against the assignment of responsibility to contested whites for

healing the world through education, at least not "constantly." Thus, when discourse

positions contested whites as Healers of Racial Ills, some individuals reject that

positioning. Some argue that they have no additional responsibility to heal the world, and

some assert that they are in the midst of their own identity crisis. One participant at a

meeting of the multiracial student group retorted, "We're the next generation of… just …

people!" – not Healers of Racial Ills, not saviors, and not revolutionaries.

      Contested whites recognized that changing structural racism is an incredibly

complex, almost impossible task. They rejected the naïve notion that their mere existence

can "solve racism" or "erase race." Instead, they pointed to facets that complexify and

buttress systemic inequality and white supremacy. Natalia described some of the

complexity of being positioned as multiracial change agents. She advocated for

embracing mixed identity "without exalting it to" the Healer of Racial Ills.

> I do feel like mixed people by nature of existing are kind of challenging those
>
> understandings of what race is, and the fact that it doesn't exist in biology. But I
>
> do get concerned … I've heard a couple people kind of go in that direction of like,
>
> "Mixed people are so great! We're so cool" and like "We're the future" or
>
> whatever … I feel like mixed people sometimes get caught in this romantic idea
>
> of, "Oh, I'm so different and unique, and because I come from this complex
>
> background, that I understand so much more about race and society than anyone
>
> else." …I think [that] can become really problematic, and [we might end up]
>
> privileging mixed experience over other people of color, who have an

> understanding [or racism] that mixed people will never understand … I think it's
>
> really important to embrace [mixed identity] fully, but without exalting it to this
>
> "We're going to solve racism!" [Laughs].

In the account above, Natalia elucidated some of the complexity of undertaking racial

healing labor as a mixed race person, including an articulation of the differences and

impact of white privilege on contested whites and other racialized bodies. Natalia, and

many others throughout the interviews, urged caution against speaking over people of

color and using the white privilege inherent in contested whiteness to garner space and

attention in discussions of race and racism. Natalia also insightfully pointed to the

romantic notions that imbue the positioning of contested whites as Healers of Racial Ills.

Ignoring structural realities and the ubiquitous workings of white supremacy for a

romantic notion of healers and saviors takes up and promotes discourses of colorblind

racism that actually serve to promote racial inequities.

Saving Ourselves, or Redirecting the Healer of Racial Ills

On the other hand, these same contested white students reported doing substantial

work to "save" and "heal" on a number of fronts: personal mental health, research and the

creation of new knowledge, artistic works, naming themselves, forming community, and

pushing for change in their own immediate environments. In fact, I argue that contested

whites advocated for changing the scope of their healing labor, arguing that the Healer of

Racial Ills can be most effective in a self-directed, multiracial-directed, or locally directed

context.

Redirecting healing towards self. Contested white students avowed that they can affect the most change or healing when their labors are directed towards themselves. This can take a variety of forms including the pursuit of mental health. For example, Jenelle mentioned that "finding health" was "my side job during my college years." Jenelle pursued individual psychotherapy and massage, took classes on topics related to race, child development, and family studies, joined student groups, and engaged in self-care that fostered skills of meditation and reflection throughout her baccalaureate studies. She also joined off-campus therapy groups and worked at nonprofit organizations that were dedicated to racial healing and community building. Jenelle mused, "if I hadn't done that, who knows how long it would have taken me to get to this point?" Clearly, Jenelle's efforts towards healing her own mental and emotional well-being around issues of contested whiteness have been effective in helping her move forward. In fact, Jenelle eventually became one of the founding members of the multiracial student group, and was dedicated to the development and growth of other multiracial students at the university.

Another tactic that contested whites used to redirect healing towards self included that of naming themselves. Participants explored, reflected, debated and thoughtfully articulated emerging words and phrases that they used to describe themselves and their racial positionalities. These included: "mixed," "biracial," "multiracial," "fluid," "other," and "at this moment." Not everyone felt the same way about these various words and phrases, but all were engaged in new and different ways of positioning themselves and finding healing in the naming of their complex identities and positioning.

Other ways of redirecting healing towards self included creative expression through art and research. Two participants created a dance piece, which was performed as part of a Spring semester showcase with other dancers at the university. This piece centered on the experience of variously raced women of color and the navigation of commonplace, daily microaggressions. Besides this, at least five participants reported independently conducting academic research related to the contested white experience as either part of their undergraduate or graduate studies. This research spanned topics such as mixed race parenting, models of multiracial identity development, and various other facets of the contested white experience. Helen, for example, described a research project that she undertook as part of her internship with a university-affiliated non-profit organization, and explained some of the impact that the research had on her own sense making:

> Interviews really helped me process my own identity and think about things more conceptually because I had my [own] experiences. …Then talking to other people helped me. I'm actually in the process of writing some general things up, but talking to people helped me to really get at common trends.

As part of the interview process, each participant was asked to draw a representation of their social identities. Many drew a series of images with labels that identified their various social identities, for example "cisgender woman" or "Dutch." Others drew discrete images that represented various facets of their social identities, such as a Japanese flag or Mexican food. Lyra's diagram departed from these more linear articulations, and is presented below as an example of how contested whites can redirect

their healing labor in very interesting ways towards their own selves. In particular, Lyra's

creative expression of social identity captures a sense of ambiguity and tentativeness in

ways that I argue are healing, open, and generative. Figure 1 presents Lyra's drawing,

and this is followed by her somewhat longer narrative explanation of the image.

Figure 1. Lyra's drawing of her various social identities.

Lyra described her drawing in detail. The entire account was delivered with many

verbal pauses and an overall sense of hesitation. Lyra's voice had a shy quality to it,

which reinforced this sense of tentativeness and uncertainty, and many of her phrases,

which look more declarative in written text, were delivered with an upward inflection at the end, again conveying an overall impression of questioning and wondering.

> I decided to make a box. Then put all of my identities in them, and then I also wrote the places in which I think I learned about my identities, and then I wrapped it up in a present, with my favorite colors! [Laughs]. And then this is a bunch of "me"s dancing around it, and on it! [Laughs]. And then I also kind of intentionally wrote the words, like, softly, because I'm the most confused person [laughs] about all this stuff. As in, to be non-committal about the places where I learned them, especially talking about my racial identity. So it's kind of muddle-y.

Lyra started by explaining that she not only listed her identities, but also where and who taught them to her. Words such as "sister," "class," and "dorm" can be identified in the image above. Some of the words appear to have been written on the surface of each side of the box, and some have been written inside the box. Although it is not as clear in the rendering above, each word was written with extremely light lettering. The words almost had a whisper-like quality to them, and Lyra mentioned this was an intentional way to indicate the ambivalence and overall confusion that she felt about her various identities, but "especially my racial identity." Lyra's hesitant verbal delivery served to underscore the sense of ambivalence and uncertainty. At the same time, Lyra celebrated her identities and her confusion by wrapping them up with her favorite colors (purple, pink, and lavender), and putting a bow on top of the package. Lyra drew several figures of her body around the box, dancing on and beside both the box and these labels, and this constituted a form of celebration. I argue that these details constitute some initial glimmerings of

how Lyra used identification and articulation of her social identities towards the goal of healing self. Lyra was "the most confused person," but she was also going to celebrate herself and gift herself a present in the midst of this confusion.

The metaphor of "checking boxes" on Census forms and other technologies of racial categorization is a potent one for contested whites (Johnston, Casey Ozaki, Pizzolato & Chaudhari, 2014; see also Chapter 6). Contested whites regard boxes as both oppressive and insufficient. They try to fit themselves into various boxes, trying to check the correct answers, and so the placement of social identities within a box is particularly significant in Lyra's image. Lyra connected to this metaphor of the Census box as she explained her drawing in further detail:

> I've been thinking about boxes a lot lately, and a lot as in, like, being … being ambiguous, growing up. I tend to check a lot of boxes for people. I'm like, "I could pass as this for you. I could fulfill this, like, image of what you want to think." I don't know. You know how we talk about tokenization, and I think, for my friends and for my peers, especially as a child, I was the token surprise, and I could be this, or I could be that.
>
> [The box is meant to convey a sense of confinement], and then, I also thought about drawing it and then … was going to imagine some kind of bursting of it … The dancing as a way to navigate it, like, with my embodied knowledge. That's how it process a lot, and also a way to jump on it and disrupt it. I thought about drawing it so I could throw [the box] around, but also dress it up. [Laughs].

In addition to being constrained by the box, Lyra brought a generative sense of agency

and movement to the representation of her identities through dance, through decoration

with color, through imagining taking action on the box itself, including dancing,

climbing, bursting, jumping, pushing, disrupting, throwing it around, and dressing it up.

Lyra would not just be shaped by outside discourse, but she was aware of her own agency

to play with, celebrate, and trouble the identities that are put upon her by others and

larger society who want her to "fulfill" a certain "image of what you want to think."

Again, these choices of taking action, and not just being a passive recipient, belie a sense

of self-care, agency, and self-directed healing work.

Lyra expressed that she was reluctant to make definitive decisions about her

identity. She explained further:

[I started with a box, but then I've turned it into a present]. It's something to, like

a gift, just like something to be shared, and also to celebrate. I think a lot of that is

a positive way to explore my knowledge of what my identity is. And I think a lot

of it, too, is that I've never concretely been decisive about how I identify

[especially racially], and I'm still not. I still don't know how to do that, so it's a

way to comfort that, I think.

Lyra recognized that much of the labor around racially ambiguous identities and

contested whiteness is emotional in nature. She recognized that the confusion needs to be

comforted. It also needs to be disrupted and troubled. She ended her drawing still not

being willing to make firm commitments. Instead, she chose to comfort and heal that "not

knowing" aspect of her racial identity; she comforted the ambivalence, thus bringing

some healing to her struggle with social identity, to her confusion, to her sense of in-betweenness. Lyra's illustration constitutes a creative expression, with the potential to trouble, heal and celebrate some of the ambivalence, ambiguity and pain that accompanies the contested white experience and the powerful formations of racial discourse.

Redirecting healing towards other multiracials. Contested whites also advocated for redirecting the Healer of Racial Ills towards other contested whites and mixed race individuals and communities. During this study, one of the most effective formats for this healing work was the multiracial student group that operated during the 2017-2018 academic year. Below, I describe the formation of the student group and some of the goals articulated by founding members, mention some of the activities and events hosted during the academic year, and share one account of the healing impact of this group.

The multiracial student group. The multiracial student group was initially created by a several multiracial, cisgender male students who were dissatisfied with the Black student group on campus. A Facebook group for multiracial students attending the university was created, and students began inviting others who they knew were mixed race, or who they guessed were multiracial, to join the Facebook group. At this point, some invited contested white students wondered if this was actually a biracial, Black-white group only, and worried that they would not fit. For example, Helen commented:

I got added to the [multiracial student group] Facebook page, which was really new … A lot of people that started it are mixed Black-white … I'm happy they

started it, but I was like, "I don't know if I fit in here," because again, it's very different. Being half-Black is so different being half-Asian, so different… I was like, "I don't really know, how is it going to be?" … I was like, "I don't really know if this is going to be my people at all."

In Spring 2017, a student affairs staff member hosted a brown bag lunch and discussion on mixed race identities. Students such as Helen, who were hesitant and concerned about inclusion, attended the meeting. The discussion was so open and inviting that many attendees felt invigorated and encouraged to explore possibilities for the development of a truly multiracial – not just biracial – group. Jenelle attended that lunch, and subsequently became one of the primary organizers of the multiracial student group. She noted that the multiracial student group "is where, racially, we can find each other, and learn how to form our identities, and have community." Jenelle believed that first-year students, younger college students, and even high school students needed this type of space for healing. Jenelle did not want the gatherings to devolve into complaint alone, but wanted to achieve progress along the lines of identity development. Jenelle explained:

I don't want to have a bunch of meetings where we just talk and we vent about how shitty it is to be multiracial in this world. No, I don't think that that's going to be helpful… By the time that they've graduated, by the time they're out of it, I want them to have some kind of new understanding and new confidence in who they are, in the way that they see themselves, and the way that they view their own identity, and be a step or a couple steps further in that process.

Jenelle envisioned more than a sense of belonging or solidarity as the purpose of the

student group. She hoped for advancement along the lines of identity development and

healing along the lines of racial battle fatigue and the painful enactments of racism.

"Even if they just feel a little bit more confident that multiracial identity is a thing by the

time they graduate, I think that's huge," Jenelle surmised.

Many contested whites, both undergraduate and graduate students, both male and

female, explained that entering a monoracial space or becoming part of a monoracial

group activity felt awkward and invalidating for them. While some tried to enter these

spaces and environments, others were extremely fearful and kept themselves back

(briefly mentioned in the discussion of the Hermit subjectivity in Chapter 6). Thus

finding a multiracial space constituted a "turning point" for many contested whites. These

individuals claimed that they found both "community" in the multiracial student group,

and also found that being mixed race "is an identity in itself!"

The multiracial student group was specifically described as "amazing," a "turning

point," "place where we can process," "supportive," and a "helpful environment." The

student group was a space "where your voice can be heard," without being accused of

"posing" and without silencing other people of color. When describing the student group,

Sofia exclaimed:

> We can all relate to those feelings of not fitting in one place or another, or being
>
> just [laughs] really confused, and all over the place. I feel it is the most supportive
>
> environment … this is valid! We can talk about this! We can be intersectional, or
>
> this needs to be part of social justice, this can be a conversation!

For Sofia, and for many others, being in a student group where multiplicity was embraced, and not just in biracial terms, but also inclusive of transracial identities, multiple mixed identities, and contested whiteness, with a focus on social justice, learning, and community building, was "the most supportive environment." This group created a space marked by "validity," by realizing that "this can be a conversation." For many contested whites, this was a space of healing, validity, and legitimacy.

During the 2017-18 academic year, the student group held a variety of workshops on racial identity development along with some potlucks, social activities on campus, and field trips off campus. Some of the contested white students who attended activities had never before felt that they could publicly claim their non-white racial identities. It appeared that Jenelle's aspirations for the progress that contested whites could make in a multiracial group was indeed taking place. After one event in late October, Jenelle mentioned:

> One person came up to me after, and she was like, "I feel like I can fly after having that." It was that impactful for her to have that sort of a space with other mixed people to talk to. She didn't say much during the meeting, but it was so impactful for her … to have people say things that she didn't even need to say because they said it already ... That's how she felt from it!

It is clear from the depth and breadth of attendance, the frequency of activities, and the energy and participation in the multiracial student union that healing work can be effective when directed by contested whites with other contested white and multiracial individuals and communities.

Redirecting healing towards local contexts. Contested whites also redirected the labor of the Healer of Racial Ills towards local contexts through friendships, personal connections, discussions with friends and colleagues, creative endeavors, final class projects and papers, internships, and other projects related to the institutions and communities they were involved in. As mentioned above, Lyra and Sofia created a Spring showcase dance piece based on the interview conversations that we had together, particularly based on the concepts of racial microaggressions, white supremacy, ambivalence, and identity negotiation. Some of the research projects that contested whites undertook can also be understood as bringing healing – that is, new data, new insights, new recommendations for changes in practice and policy – to the local contexts in which these contested white students moved and operated. For example, Jenelle shared the ways in which she "ma[d]e change on an interpersonal level," in her local context. Jenelle described her senior capstone project, and spoke at length about the ways in which she provided critical feedback to her department:

> Oh, I do that all the time! I do that a lot in my department … One of my
>
> professors asked me to write my final paper on how we can change the
>
> department… Part of our [department's] mission statement is to "enhance the
>
> well-being of diverse families"… [but] all we talk about are white, middle class,
>
> often two-parent, heterosexual, cisgender, middle class, Christian families, like,
>
> all the time! All the time! And then we have like one chapter in the textbook
>
> about race, and sometimes one of our textbooks [only] describes the African-
>
> American section of the chapter, in the whole textbook! – just wanna make that

clear, it's that small!…and it's like, "Okay, how's anyone from this department supposed to "enhance the well-being" of Black families if that's how you teach us about it, and we only talk about it for, like, two slides, or one section of one chapter of the book?" It doesn't make any sense! … I did my whole Senior Showcase about it.

Not only did Jenelle engage in individual conversations with her professors when microaggressive incidents happened in class, she took the time to educate her instructors, explained what was hurtful or erroneous about the interaction, and suggested different ways of framing classroom discussion in the future to avoid microaggressions. This is really above the scope of typical instructor-student interactions, but Jenelle felt that she could make recommendations and effect improvement (healing) in both the classroom and her departmental curriculum. In addition, Jenelle researched class topics and explored their connections to multiracial reality, and wrote many of her final class papers on topics related to the contested white and multiracial experience. For example, she researched, wrote and published a series of blog posts, as part of a class assignment, but also available to the public, on parenting multiracial children. Finally, her senior paper and showcase consisted of critical reflection and analysis of the many ways in which whiteness was infused across and upheld by the pedagogy of her own academic department. These are a few examples of the ways in which contested whites redirected their Healing labor in very effective ways to their own local contexts.

Conclusion

Contested whites are often positioned as the Healer of Racial Ills. In this chapter, I explored how contested white students alternatively took up and pushed back against this subjectivity. More specifically, contested whites redirected the labor of the Healer of Racial Ills towards healing self, healing other multiracials, and healing local contexts. Contested whites, regardless of gender, age, and academic level, labor to make change and heal both themselves, their friends and communities, and the institutions in which they move and operate.

Chapter 10: Discussion and Implications

In this chapter, I briefly review the subjectivities produced by the racial

discourses named in Chapter 2, and identify these as components in a larger process of

the subjugation of contested whites. I then overturn the lens of inquiry and question what

is being produced for those who are not subjugated; in other words, what is being

produced for whites who are free from ambivalence, shame and illegitimacy? I bring

attention again to the powerful, yet flexible wall of racial discourses, and discuss the

importance of higher education as a context for their operations. Finally, I discuss

implication of this study for policy, practice, and future research.

Who is Being Constructed?

In this study, I identified eight racial discourses active and productive in larger

U.S. society. These include the discourse of essentialist anti-Black racism, the binary

discourse, the discourse of normative whiteness, the discourse of colorblindness, the

discourse of meritocracy, the discourse of assimilation, the discourse of denial, and the

neoliberal discourse. I interviewed 20 undergraduate and graduate contested white

students attending a predominantly white institution of higher education, conducted two

focus groups, and observed the meetings and activities of a newly formed multiracial

student group. I laid the rich and detailed narratives of contested white students against

the racial discourses and sketched out seven distinct subjectivities.

In Chapter 5, I analyzed Jenelle's tipping point stories and identified how the

binary discourse produced the Protector subjectivity. In Chapter 6, I looked across all

participant accounts, noted the overwhelming presence of shame, pain, and a deep sense

of fraud, and pinpointed how the binary discourse and the discourse of normative whiteness worked together to co-construct the Deeply Ambivalent and Illegitimate subjectivity and the Hermit. Next, in Chapter 7, I brought attention to the experiences and racial positioning of contested whites with a more recent immigration history. By focusing on the accounts of two generation 1.5 immigrants, I examined how discourses of meritocracy and assimilation worked together, along with the discourse of denial and the discourse of essentialist anti-Black racism, to constitute the Ambitious, Assimilated subjectivity. In Chapter 8, I considered the realm of romantic relationships and dating, and explicated how the discourse of normative whiteness and the binary discourse created the Hot Ho/Dirty White subjectivity for cisgender women, and how the discourses of denial, colorblindness, and normative whiteness constructed the Unwanted, Colored Male subjectivity for cisgender men. Finally, in Chapter 9, I outlined some of the ways in which contested white students pushed back against the subjectivity of the Healer of Racial Ills, a savior role that is often thrust upon them, and redirected the healing labor entailed by that subjectivity.

There are overall patterns about the frequency with which contested white students inhabited these various discourses. I claim that all of the contested white participants in my study inhabited the Ambivalent, Illegitimate subjectivity to some extent. This deep sense of shame, pain, and responsibility was something that all contested whites readily described and attested to, regardless of ethnic, national, or religious background or specific racial makeup. I have already noted that some contested white immigrants seemed to take on the Ambitious, Assimilated subjectivity in order to

approximate themselves to whiteness. Other contested whites, at various moments or situations, occupied and settled into other subjectivities, such as Protector, Hermit, or Healer, moving in and out of these available subjectivities. What strikes me as most meaningful is the contradiction between the Ambivalent, Illegitimate subjectivity on the one hand, and the Healer subjectivity on the other. In other words, while all participants experienced the immense pain and negative material effects of contestation through the workings of the racial discourses of white supremacy, many contested whites still made efforts to counteract, process, and heal themselves, their fellow contested whites, or their local communities and contexts.

What is Being Produced?

Overall, I assert that these various racial discourses and multiple subjectivities work together to subjugate contested whites as incomprehensible, marginalized, and unwanted entities. The process of subjugation for contested whites is both internal and external. Externally, contested whites suffer from daily, commonplace contestation, questioning, and disregard, from family, strangers, institutions, technologies, systems, and norms. Internally, contested whites generally take up responsibility for not readily fitting into larger mental models and oppressive conceptualizations. The racial discourses of white supremacy police the bodies of contested whites, create an overall sense of shame and ambivalence, and leave the responsibility not just for resolution of ambiguity or individual mental health, but also for healing the entirety of U.S. racism, at the feet of these contested subjects. Contested whites, in turn, enact larger societal imperatives such as an injunction to self-protect through hermitage and hiding, the incarnation of an

abiding sense of alienation from others, family, self and society, and the personification of an overall regard of being unwanted, not just in the realm of romance, but by larger society and its mental models of comprehension.

The attendant production of Uncontested Whiteness. If contested whites are responding to dynamics that labor to position them as not-white, who is on the other side of these forces? What unnamed opposite holds the other end of the rope in this tug of war? I argue that when discourse grapples to create a contested whiteness, on the opposite side of that construction is a furious, parallel construction of an Uncontested Whiteness. Those inhabiting a subjectivity of Uncontested Whiteness enjoy the liberty and freedom of being unquestioned, undebated, fully understood everywhere, all the time. This is the white supremacist freedom of being positioned as fully white, fully protected, and fully in a position of superiority. For every contested white that is caught up in subjectivities of ambivalence and responsibility, there are Uncontested Whites who revel in the subjectivities of safety, normalcy, comprehension, and being desired. This study, therefore, is not just an investigation of the pain and suffering of mixed race people at the borders of whiteness. This study also points to the ontological expansiveness of those firmly positioned beyond the borders, in a location of white embodiment and white property (Harris, 1993; Cabrera, Franklin & Watson, 2017; Lensmire, 2017).

The Power of Racial Discourses

As discussed in Chapter 2, and reinforced through analysis of the data in Chapters 6 through 9, racial discourses extant in the United States operate as a flexible, yet

powerful compilation. The discourses overlap one another's borders, hold each other up, stack up against one another, and "form an impregnable yet elastic wall" (Bonilla-Silva, 2014, p. 95). Looking specifically at the eight racial discourses employed in this work, analysis reveals that the binary discourse, the discourse of normative whiteness, the discourse of denial, and the discourse of colorblindness were the most active in constructing the specific subjectivities outlined in the preceding chapters. Of course, the discourses of assimilation and meritocracy showed up most readily in the accounts of contested whites with a more recent immigration history, but other discourses were also present and active. In fact, I argue that behind most of these apparently more active discourses lies the power and quiet operations of the discourse of anti-Black essentialist racism. This essentialist discourse most often works behind the scenes, powering other, more palatable discourses, dressed in new guises, with new terminologies and new regimes of ignorance. Thus, it is critical to acknowledge the quiet, steady power of anti-Black essentialist racism.

The discourse of neoliberal racism did not show up as concretely as the other seven discourses. Contested whites did not overtly use terminology or concepts that pointed to the core tenets of neoliberal understandings. They did not talk explicitly or at length about individualism, competition, consumerism, or the free-market. Again, I argue that the discourse of neoliberalism, much like that of essentialist, anti-Black racism, works primary in the background, at the level of assumptions and beliefs about the nature of the individual, the economy, society, human development, and ideas about progress. I do believe that further research on racial discourses and their constructions will delineate

more concrete enactments of the discourse of essentialist anti-Black racism and the neoliberal discourse. Thus, it is important to continue to study and demarcate the various ways in which racial discourses construct subjectivities and material realities.

Feminist poststructural approaches argue that discourse constructs identities and sense of self, and furthermore, it is a site of constant negotiation, contestation, and re-creation. These discourses are historically-bound and represent a consensual, but continuously contested, arrangement of larger society. Contested whites trouble the concept of a unified racial being. Since these subjects are sites of more obvious contestation and re-creation, they help draw our attention more directly to the ways in which racial discourses play with individual subjectivities and the ways in which such individual subjects push back on or take up racial discourses.

The Processes of Racialization

This study examines the processes of racialization, or racial formation, for contested white students. The analysis clearly illustrates that the racialization of contested white bodies is complex and ongoing. This racializing labor is taken up by a variety of actors, across a variety of settings, and has real material effects for both contested whites and uncontested whites. In this labor, power and agency are distributed, not solely amalgamated in strict hierarchical, oppressor-oppressed arrangements. Instead, while acknowledging differences in power and resources, a range of differently positioned individual and group actors express and contest racial discourses and subjectivities in everyday actions. This occurs on a moment-to-moment basis, especially through hegemonic, "commonsense" notions about racial categories and racial purity. This

racializing labor is dehumanizing for both the contested and the uncontested, for all

members of society. What becomes imperative, then, is the effort to become critically

conscious of the power of discourse and the depth of the immersion of individuals,

institutions, and others actors in discourse and its constructions. Gannon and Davies

(2005) explain that agency "becomes instead a recognition of the power of discourse, a

recognition of one's love of, immersion in and indebtedness to that discourse" (p. 319).

In other words, change can be effected through recognition of both the depth to which

discourse shapes and creates, and simultaneously, of individual and group agency to

trouble and complicate discourse. If subjectivity is constantly created and recreated,

troubled and affirmed, then increasingly critical consciousness of the shape, borders, and

common tactics of racial discourses is essential for those committed to creating and

sustaining equitable communities and connections. To that end, this study reinforces the

importance of critical self-reflection, both by individuals and groups (including

institutions), in fleshing out the details of racial formation labor and in questioning its

ends and costs. Ongoing acknowledgement of how "commonsense" and "logical" notions

of race are actually stories that that are told and retold is imperative. Conceding that race

itself is a story is critical, and the deconstruction, untangling and fleshing out of society's

most commonplace notions of racial difference becomes important work.

Thus, it is important to examine the racialization process for individuals who are

ambiguously positioned. Failing to critically engage nuance around race and racism either

silences, makes irrelevant, disengages, renders unreal, or oppresses individuals and

populations who occupy other waypoints on spectra of difference. With the increased

media and political attention on race, immigration, religion, and gender, the present moment is a potentially generative time to delve into and learn from the discursive construction of subjectivities for an ambiguously situated population. This examination can help us trouble taken-for-granted categories of difference, pull apart unquestioned hierarchies, and become more aware of both the opportunities and limits of agency.

Listening to and centering the stories and narratives of multiracial and contested white students through the tools of critical narrative analysis is also important. Stories reveal the operations and workings of discourse in a way that quantitative analysis cannot capture. Furthermore, centering the narratives of multiracials, including contested whites, helps us displace normative whiteness, upset regimes of ahistorical ignorance, and delineate the various and flexible ways in which white supremacy works to uphold its power. In fact, Harris (2016) calls for the creation of MultiCrit as separate from critical race theory (CRT), and this study can be considered as part of a larger range of scholarly work that contributes to that end.

The Importance of Institutions of Higher Education

Higher education literature points to the importance of young adulthood as a critical time in traditional stage-based models of racial identity development (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton & Renn, 2010; Jones & Abes, 2013). My data questions the certainty of models grounded in assumptions of linear development. For example, several of the graduate student participants in my study reported feeling more confused and conflicted about their racial identity in their 30s than in their 20s. Other scholars (Johnston, Ozaki, Pizzolate & Chaudhari, 2014, Saperstein & Penner, 2012) have also

argued that racial identity for individuals of multiracial or mixed race backgrounds may not follow a linear approach, but may be more fluid and shift back and forth over time and context.

Many studies have explicitly noted the role of higher education in racialization (Cabrera, 2017; Cabrera, Franklin & Watson, 2017; Cabrera, Watson & Franklin, 2016). Other studies of multiracial identity development have been conducted in colleges and universities (Brunsma & Rockquemore, 2002; Harris, 2017; Johnston, Ozaki, Pizzolato, & Chaudhari, 2014; Johnston-Guerrero & Chaudhari, 2016; Renn, 2004; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2004). I assert that institutions of higher education constitute a vital context for the construction work undertaken by racial discourses and for the production of both contested white subjectivities and Uncontested Whiteness. Participants at both the undergraduate and graduate levels described institutions of higher education as sites for the policing and racialization of bodies, and also for questioning, gaining knowledge, creating new knowledge, and developing critical consciousness. Many contested whites reported being included in multiracial organizations and spaces for the first time in their lives upon coming to the college environment. Some searched for places and spaces on campus where they felt a sense of belonging. Many were contested in new and brutal ways both on campus and during their years of study, including by faculty, staff, and fellow students. On the other hand, many formed friendships with others with varying racial backgrounds. They connected with faculty, staff, and student groups, and asked new questions of themselves and their home communities. Some registered for classes that exposed them to new histories, theories, or concepts, conducted research projects,

created artistic works, and sought mental health support that addressed the racialization and sense of identity that they were grappling with. As reported in this study, some created organizations and projects that sought to help others in their departments or local contexts to think more critically about race and racial identity, revise and enhance pedagogy and curriculum, and reexamine assumptions about dating, marriage, parenting, and other topics.

Much social science research focused on race – even that which is not articulated as higher education research – relies on college and university students as participants, since they are, in some ways, a readily accessible and "captured" population. In addition, scholars predict that the population of multiracial college and university students will increase dramatically over the next decade (Kellogg & Niskodé, 2008). For these reasons, along with the fact that college and graduate school constitute significant moments of change and development for emerging adults, it is important to continue to study the construction of race in higher education contexts.

Implications for Policy and Practice

In the 2000 U.S. Census, approximately 6.8 million people identified themselves as having more than one race (Jones & Smith, 2001). By 2010, this number grew to 9.0 million people (Jones & Bullock, 2012). About two-thirds of this population in 2000 were composed of people who were under the age of 18 at that time. Many members of this under-18 population have already found their way to institutions of higher education, or will be entering them shortly (Kellogg & Niskodé, 2008). Other demographers argue that 14% of the U.S. population is multiracial (Williams, 2017) and that this number is

growing fast (Lee, Iceland & Sharp, 2012). It follows that incoming undergraduate and graduate student populations will increasingly be multiracial. Thus, it is incumbent on higher education faculty, staff, and institutions to pay attention to the multiracial experience, including contested white students, to learn from multiracial students, and to support them.

In addition, this study shows that contested whites and multiracial students are not waiting for help from others. They are helping themselves, forming student groups, training each other on identity development, writing articles and blogs, creating dance pieces and performing for each other and the larger campus community, questioning pedagogy and curriculum, and making change in their local contexts. Higher education constitutes a space where contested whites and other multiracial students are organizing, building alliances, and calling into question larger discourses that shape both themselves and larger society. Through their actions and choices, multiracial students illustrate that higher education (both undergraduate and graduate levels) can be used as a lever for the exploration, learning, and fostering of critical consciousness about racialization. Institutions of higher education "are not simply neutral arbiters" (Cabrera, 2011, p. 77); institutions both uphold and sometimes question and trouble systemic racism. Thus, higher education has an obligation to engage in further critical self-reflection, and revise and replace operations and frameworks that uphold and support the oppression of others. Faculty, staff, and administrators can thoughtfully support contested white students and other multiracial students as well. Three main areas of policy and practice implicated by the findings of this study are presented and detailed below.

Measurement and categorization. When it comes to the categorization and measurement of student racial identity, there is much work to be done. Adequate and just measurement and categorization is not a simple task, and seems to reflect evolving societal conceptualizations of difference and belonging. Measurement and categorization impacts many of the measures and programs in institutions of higher education, from the design of admissions brochures, to admissions decisions, all the way to exit evaluation of student experiences upon graduation from both undergraduate and graduate degree programs. In the middle, other critical issues such as scholarship eligibility and distribution, persistence and timely progress, on-time graduation, and alumni engagement are all impacted by the ways in which racial difference is conceived, measures and rewarded. I agree with scholars (Kellogg & Niskodé, 2008; Renn, 2004) who argue that there is some need to more accurately determine the numbers of students who identify as mixed race, although I do worry that using technologies of categorization will enable them to continue to act as sources of contestation and policing. There is still wide variance in the ways that institutions measure racial diversity, and I expect that institutions will continue to struggle with inadequate and sometimes spurious conceptualizations of racial difference.

Conceptualization and promotion of racial diversity. Institutions of higher education would do well to critically examine the ways in which they assume and reproduce monoracism in their various products and policies, including mission statements, diversity statements, programming for multicultural, multiracial, white, and international students, advising and student support structures and services, including

those in housing and mental health support, and various other aspects of administration. For example, do institutional conceptualizations of "diversity" and "inclusion" disrupt or promote monoracist assumptions? Are there any administratively-supported spaces on campus for mixed race students, or do these organizations operate on more of an ad hoc basis (King, 2008; Wong & Buckner, 2008)? Does the institution employ mixed race advisors to support student groups or have any full-time staff in other corners of university administration who have a mission to reach out to and support multiracial students? Are there any university-wide events or programs that aim to bring light to and dismantle monoracism, such as speaker or workshop series? Do programs, departments, units and institutions recognize and critique their own histories around race, white supremacy, and monoracism?

Curricular change. It is important to have curriculum that reflects multiracial realities. Jenelle argued this point in her Senior Showcase. How do large institutions with diverse organizational structures, disciplines, and faculty do this? Why does it appears that students are leading the way here? How can we add both institutional and faculty support for the integration of critical multiracial awareness to the curriculum? More than this, however, I argue that it is crucial to have curriculum that exposes the spurious construction of racial differences in U.S. history. How would all incoming students be exposed to these insights, and what types of spaces and programming might best support discussion and learning?

Future Research

Much more research can be conducted and shared on the experiences of contested white students, especially by scholars of higher education. I have organized my recommendations for future research under four subheadings. The first two, entitled poststructural and critical approaches and discourse, are related to conceptual approaches to the study of contested whiteness and multiraciality. The third section focuses specifically on research concerning institutions of higher education, and the final section describes future research topics that are more focused on a contested white or multiracial student experience itself.

Poststructural and critical approaches. Evans et al. (2010) argue that most existing research on multiracial students is atheoretical. Renn (2004) and Matsumura (2017) both asserted that exposure to postmodern theories and postmodern thinking was important for inquiry in this area. My data also confirmed this conjecture as I found that multiracial and contested white students readily took up and employed poststructural and critical race concepts and models as they explored and made sense of the wide variance of what multiracial and contested identities can mean. At every meeting of the mixed race student group, and in many of my interviews and focus groups, I was struck by how contested white students found comfort in using language and terminology that pointed to tentativeness, shifting identities, and critical analysis of larger societal dynamics and constructions. In addition, they relied heavily on theories and language from critical race theory (CRT), gender and women's studies, and to a lesser extent, queer theory. Participants' words, creative expression and questioning through dance and art, and

explorations of embodiment, desire, and disruption support this. I see continued potential for learning from the application of poststructural, CRT, and queer theory and methods to the study of racialization in general and to this particular configuration of mixed race and contested whiteness. An emerging theoretical perspective of MultiCrit (Harris, 2016) has potential to move inquiry forward as well.

Discourse. It seems that a particular focus on the constructive power of discourse in the realm of racialization and ambiguously raced bodies and subjectivities is potent. In particular, I see room for critical research on essentialist anti-Black racism as an underlying discourse shaping racial realities and subjectivities for contested whites, whites, and other racialized groups. Further research on how contested whites with a more recent immigration history might delineate the nuances of Toni Morrison's claim that "a hostile posture toward resident blacks must be struck at the Americanizing door before it will be open" (Morrison, 1993, p. 57). Also, study of Islamophobia as a racial discourse born anew, including the examination and explication of the ahistorical amnesia that surrounds Islamophobia and Orientalism, and how it orders the bodies of segments of the larger contested white population is ripe for critical analysis (Jamel & Naber, 2008; Tehranian, 2009).

Institutions of higher education. There is also valuable research that can be conducted at the institutional level. For example, I agree with Kellogg and Niskodé (2008) that research should be conducted on how institutions of higher education collect, disaggregate, and report multiracial data. This is important not only as it relates to affirmative action admissions, but also for other applications of demographic data, such

as eligibility and awarding of scholarships, rewards, and other forms of recognition for contested white and multiracial students and faculty. As Tehranian (2009) noted, individuals of Middle Eastern descent are obligated to select "white" on forms, thus rendering themselves ineligible for programs designed to support racialized faculty and staff, and yet they suffer the microaggressions of being appraised as people of color in everyday life, including on college and university campuses and spaces.

Research on differences in multiracial programming and student support between northern and southern institutions of higher education will also be important, particularly since Census data indicates that there is a more robust multiracial population in the southern and western United States (Bialik, 2017;Kopf, 2017). Research on racial identity development and sense of belonging for multiracial students enrolled in historically Black colleges and university and other minority-service institutions across the country is also important. Furthermore, continued consideration of similarities and differences in formation and functioning of multiracial student groups across the country is critical for shedding light on best practices to support multiracial students on higher education campuses (Ozaki & Johnston, 2008). Moreover, studies that examine and analyze successful strategies and examples of shifting curricula and programming out of monoracism would be useful. Perhaps an initial study of higher education and student affairs master's degree programs that aim to foster critical consciousness of monoracism would be a generative starting point.

Multiracial/contested white students. There is a wide range of topics for further study related to the experiences and conceptualizations of both contested whites and

multiracial students. Overall, research that continues to expand the conceptualization of multiraciality and contested race to include both transracial adoptees and contested whites of Middle Eastern descent are critical because inclusion of these related groups will help further elucidate the operations of racial discourses in a way that more atomized perspectives will not capture. For example, studies which examine the conceptualizations of mixed race Muslims on their racial identity development in a U.S. context, both foreign-born immigrants or children of immigrants, as well as native U.S. Muslims, are important to include. Also, studies which examine the racial identity development of contested white Muslim women who veil and contested white Muslim men, and their negotiations of racial discourses, including those of Islamophobia and essentialist anti-Black racism, are timely and important.

The "family space" is another arena for further research. For example, consideration of continued racial identity development of both multiracial/contested white children, and their parents, as these young adults graduate from baccaulareate studies and enter middle age, would be suitable for study. What patterns emerge in sense-making between children and parents? Additionally, research on differently hued siblings with differing phenotypic qualities is a noteworthy area for inquiry. Do such siblings experience the enactments of racial discourses differently? How do they make sense of and accommodate phenotypic differences between family members? How does this impact racial identity development? How do the various members of a differently hued family manage varying levels of white privilege?

Another area for further investigation is the intersection of gender and contested whiteness. For example, how do variously gendered contested whites take up and perform their contested race as an embodied performance? What tactics do they deploy, such as manipulation of hair and clothing, and how are these received by friends, family, and campus? Have these bodily enactments changed over time? Additionally, there is room for the continued consideration of mixed race romantic relationships during college and university, perhaps with a focus on different subjectivities. One study could further examine the "Hot Ho" as a specific form of gendered multiracial microaggression, with increased attention to sexual harassment and physical danger experienced by cis- and transgendered contested white women.

Other topics for inquiry include continued examination of the healing labor thrust upon and taken up by contested whites, perhaps with an eye towards gender differences; management and negotiation of choices in partnership, marriage, and parenting as contested white enter middle adulthood; mental health repercussions and strategies for self-care, including the use of art and creative works by multiracial/contested white students; narrative analysis of the metaphors that multiracial students use to describe their experience in navigating and living a mixed race experience; conceptualizations and strategies employed by multiracial students to build "community across difference' – a phrase used by contested whites to describe their experiences in the multiracial student group and other spaces on campus; and further collection and examination of tipping point narratives.

Conclusion

Contested whites constitute an underexamined site for the consideration of racial formation. This study identified subjectivities constructed at the borders of whiteness by powerful, stacked racial discourses active in U.S. society. In this chapter, I briefly reviewed the seven subjectivities and eight discourses that act upon contested white students, including those that create deeply ambivalent, illegitimate, and responsibilized subjectivities for contested whites, while simultaneously constructing and buttressing an Uncontested Whiteness for those deemed white. The population of mixed race U.S. residents, including contested whites, is on the rise, and the construction work of racial discourses on these bodies and subjectivities will continue. It behooves scholars of higher education to continue to investigate, report, and trouble the racialization associated with contested whiteness on college and university campuses.

References

ABC News. (2017, April 10). Census finds least diverse part of nation. *ABC News*.

Retrieved from http://abcnews.go.com/US/story?id=93608&page=1

Adams, D. W. (1995). *Education for extinction: American Indians and the boarding*

school experience, 1875-1928. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.

Adas, M. (2004). Contested hegemony: The great war and the Afro-Asian assault on the

civilizing mission ideology. *Journal of World History, 15*(1), 31-63.

Ajrouch, K. J. & Jamal, A. (2007). Assimilating to a white identity: The case of Arab

Americans. *International Migration Review, 41*(4), 860-879.

Ajrouch, K. J. & Kusow, A. M. (2007). Racial and religious contexts: Situational

identities among Lebanese and Somali Muslim immigrants. *Ethnic and Racial*

Studies, 30(1), 72-94.

Alba, R. & Foner, N. (2014). Comparing immigrant integration in North American and

Western Europe: How much do the grand narratives tell us? *International*

Migration Review, 48(1), 263-291.

Allan, E. J. (2010). Feminist poststructuralism meets policy analysis: An overview. In E.

J. Allan, S. Van Deventer Iverson, & R. Ropers-Huilman (Eds.), *Reconstructing*

policy in higher education: Feminist posstructural perspectives (pp. 11-33). NY:

Routledge.

Alexander, M. (2012). *The new Jim Crow: Mass incarceration in the age of*

colorblindness. NY: The New Press.

Alliance for Board Diversity. (2016). Missing pieces report: The 2016 board diversity census of women and minorities on Fortune 500 boards. *Deloitte Development LLC*. Retrieved from http://www.catalyst.org/system/files/2012_abd_missing_pieces_final_8_15_13.pdf

American Civil Liberties Union. (2013). The war on marijuana in black and white: Billions of dollars wasted on racially biased arrests. NY: American Civil Liberties Union Foundation.

Applebaum, B. (2005). In the name of morality: Moral responsibility, whiteness and social justice education. *Journal of Moral Education, 34*(3), 277-290.

Barrett, D. (2016, March 10). Man arrested for punching protestor at Trump rally in North Carolina. *The Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved from http://blogs.wsj.com/washwire/2016/03/10/punch-of-trump-protester-in-north-carolina-sparks-police-probe/

Belczyk, J. (2009, August 18). Most US federal court judges still white men, but demographics changing: report. *Jurist*. Retrieved from http://www.jurist.org/paperchase/2009/08/federal-court-demographics-changing-to.php

Berry, J. W. (1974). Psychological aspects of cultural pluralism: Unity and identity reconsidered. *Topics in Culture Learning, 2*, 17-22.

Berry, J. W. (1986). The acculturation process and refugee behavior. In C. L. Williams & J. Westermeyer (Eds.), *Refugee mental health in resettlement countries. The*

series in clinical and community psychology (pp. 25-37). Washington: Hemisphere Publishing Corporation.

Berry, J. W. (1990). Psychology of acculturation. In W. R. Brislin (Ed.), *Applied cross-cultural psychology* (pp. 232–253). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Berry, J. W. (1997). Immigration, acculturation, and adaptation. *International Journal of Applied Psychology, 46*(1), 5-34.

Berry, J. W. (2003). Conceptual approaches to acculturation. In K. Chun, P. Balls-Organista, & G. Marian (Eds.), *Acculturation: Advances in theory, measurement and application* (pp. 17-37). Washington, D.C.: APA Books.

Berry, J. W. (2005). Acculturation: Living successfully in two cultures. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 29*(6), 697-712.

Bialik, K. (2017, June 12). Key facts about race and marriage, 50 years after Loving v. Virginia. *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved from http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/06/12/key-facts-about-race-and-marriage-50-years-after-loving-v-virginia/

Bonilla-Silva, E. (2014). *Racism without racists: Color-blind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in America* (4th ed.). NY: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Boncszar, T. P. (2003). Prevalence of imprisonment in the U.S. population, 1974-2001. U.S. Department of Justice. *Bureau of Justice Statistics*. August 2003. Retrieved from: https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/piusp01.pdf

Brayboy, B. M. J. (2005). Toward a tribal critical race theory in education. *The Urban Review, 37*(5), 425-446.

Briscoe, F. M. & Khalifa, M. A. (2015). "That racism thing": A critical race discourse analysis of a conflict over the proposed closure of a black high school. *Race, Ethnicity and Education, 18*(6), 739-763.

Brubaker, R. (2001). The return of assimilation? Changing perspectives on immigration and its sequels in France, Germany, and the United States. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 24*(4), 531-548.

Brunsma, D. L., Delgado, D. & Rockquemore, K. A. (2013). Liminality in the multiracial experience: Towards a concept of identity matrix. *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power, 20*(5), 481-502.

Brunsma, D. L. & Rockquemore, K. A. (2001). The new color complex: Appearances and biracial identity. *Identity, 1*(3), 225-246.

Burke, R. & Kao, G. (2013). Bearing the burden of whiteness: The implications of racial self-identification for multiracial adolescents' school belonging and academic achievement. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 36*(5), 747-773.

Bush, M. E. (2004). *Breaking the code of good intentions: Everyday forms of whiteness*. Lanham, NJ: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Bush, M. E. (2011). *Everyday forms of whiteness: Understanding race in a "post-racial" world*. 2nd ed. Lanham, NJ: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Butler, J. (1990). Performative acts and gender constitution: An essay in phenomenology and feminist theory. In S. Case (Ed.), *Performing feminisms: Feminist critical*

theory and theatre (pp. 270-282). Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Byng, M. D. (2017). Race knowledge: Racialized social legitimacy and second-generation Muslim Americans. *Du Bois Review, 14*(1), 273-293.

Cabrera, N. L. (2011). Using a sequential exploratory mixed-methods design to examine racial hyperprivilege in higher education. In K. A. Griffin & S. D. Museus (Eds.), *Using mixed-methods approaches to study intersectionality in higher education* (pp. 77-91). New Directions of Institutions Research, no. 151. San Francisco: Wiley.

Cabrera, N. L. (2012). Working through whiteness: White, male college students challenging racism. *The Review of Higher Education, 35*(3), 375-401.

Cabrera, N. L. (2014a). "But I'm oppressed too": White male college students framing racial emotions as facts and recreating racism. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 27*(6), 768-784.

Cabrera, N. L. (2014b). Exposing whiteness in higher education: White male college students minimizing racism, claiming victimization, and recreating White supremacy. *Race, Ethnicity, and Education, 17*(1), 30-55.

Cabrera, N. L. (2017). An unexamined life: White male racial ignorance and the agony of education for students of color. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 50*(3), 300-315.

Cabrera, N. L., Franklin, J. D., & Watson, J. S. (2016). Whiteness in higher education: The invisible missing link in diversity and racial analysis. *ASHE Higher Education Report, 42*(6), 7-125.

Cabrera, N. L., Watson, J. S. & Franklin, J. D. (2016). Racial arrested development: A critical whiteness analysis of the campus ecology. *Journal of College Student Development, 57*(2), 119-134.

Campbell, M. E. & Troyer, L. (2007). The implications of racial misclassification by observers. *American Sociological Review, 72*(5), 750-765.

Carson, S. & Heltzell, D. (2017, August 30). Multiracial citizens could bridge cultural divide. *Public news service*. Retrieved from http://www.publicnewsservice.org/2017-08-30/human-rights-racial-justice/multiracial-citizens-could-bridge-cultural-divide/a59218-1

Cashin, S. (2017). *Loving: Interracial intimacy in America and the threat to white supremacy*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Castagno, A. E. (2008). "I don't want to hear that!": Legitimating whiteness through silence in schools. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 39*(3), 314-333.

Castagno, A. E. (2014). *Educated in whiteness: Good intentions and diversity in schools*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Clayton, D. & Welch, S. (2016). Post-racial America and the presidency of Barack Obama. *Endarch: Journal of Black Political Research, 2016*(1), article 3.

Cohen, C. J. (1997). Punks, bulldaggers, and welfare queens: The radical potential of queer politics? *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies, 3*, 437-465.

Collins, J. (2016, December 8). Minnesota's changing: Here are key takeaways from new

    Census data. *MPR News*. Retrieved from

    https://www.mprnews.org/story/2016/12/08/minnesotas-changing-here-are-key-

    takeaways-from-new-census-data

Considine, C. (2017). The racialization of Islam in the United States: Islamophobia, hate

    crimes, and "flying white Brown." *Religions, 8*(165), 1-19.

Cook, B. J. (2012, Spring). The American college president study: Key findings and

    takeaways. *American Council on Education.* Retrieved from

    http://www.acenet.edu/the-presidency/columns-and-features/Pages/The-

    American-College-President-Study.aspx

Coughlin, E. K. (1988, March 30). Worsening plight of the 'underclass' catches attention

    of researchers. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, pp. A5-A7.

Crenshaw, K. (1993). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and

    violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review,* 43(6), 1241-1299.

Cruz, L. (2011, May 22). "Of many colors: Portraits of multiracial families" traveling

    exhibit bridges diverse backgrounds. *Daily Bruin*. Retrieved from

    http://dailybruin.com/2011/05/22/of_many_colors_portraits_of_multiracial_famili

    es_traveling_exhibit_bridges_diverse_backgrounds/

Curry, G. E. (2015). Donald Trump's racism fuels his popularity. *District Chronicles*.

    Retrieved from

    http://www.districtchronicles.com/news/view.php/1015267/Donald-Trumps-

    racism-fuels-his-popularit

Davis, F. J. (1991). *Who is black? One nation's definition*. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press.

Davies, B. & Gannon, S. (2005). Feminism/poststructuralism. In B. Somekh & C. Lewin (Eds.), *Research methods in the social sciences* (pp. 318-325). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Demby, G. (2013, December 20). The truth behind the lies of the original 'welfare queen.' *Minnesota Public Radio*. Retrieved from: http://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2013/12/20/255819681/the-truth-behind-the-lies-of-the-original-welfare-queen

Devos, T. & Banaji, M. R. (2005). America = white? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 88*(3), 447-466.

Dickerson, C. & Saul, S. (2016, November 10). Campuses confront hostile acts against minorities after Donald Trump's election. *The New York Times.* Retrieved from: https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/11/us/police-investigate-attacks-on-muslim-students-at-universities.html?mcubz=0

Doane, A. W. (1997). Dominant group identity in the United States: The role of "hidden" ethnicity in intergroup relations. *Sociological Quarterly, 38*(3), 375-397.

Doyle, J. M. & Kao, G. (2007). Are racial identities of multiracials stable? Changing self-identification among single and multiple race individuals. *Social Psychology Quarterly, 70*(4), 405-423.

Drake, B. (2013, September 6). Incarceration gap widens between whites and blacks. *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved from: http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/09/06/incarceration-gap-between-whites-and-blacks-widens/

Eichenlaub, C. (2008). "Minnesota nice": A comparative analysis of Minnesota's treatment of adoption by gay couples. *University of St. Thomas Law Journal, 5*(1), 312-334.

Eischens, R. (2017, March 6). UMN sees increase in bias-related incidents on campus. *Minnesota Daily*. Retrieved from http://www.mndaily.com/article/2017/03/bias-reports-up

Eitzen, D. S. & Johnston, J. E. (Eds.). (2016). *Inequality: Social class and its consequences*. NY: Routledge.

Engel, P. (2017, January 18). How Trump came up with his slogan 'Make America great again.' *Business Insider*. Retrieved from http://www.businessinsider.com/trump-make-america-great-again-slogan-history-2017-1

Er, J. (2017, February 14). 'Unjust, illegal, racist, Islamophobic': Duke faculty from countries affected by Trump's travel ban share their thoughts. *Duke Chronicle*. Retrieved from: http://www.dukechronicle.com/article/2017/02/unjust-illegal-racist-islamophobic-duke-faculty-from-countries-affected-by-trumps-travel-ban-share-their-thoughts

Evans, N. J., Forney, D. S., Guido, F. M., Patton, L. D., & Renn, K. A. (2010). *Student development in college: Theory, research, and practice.* 2nd ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Feagin, J. R. (2010). *Racist America: Roots, current realities, and future reparations* (2nd ed.). NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Feagin, J. R. (2014). *Racist America: Roots, current realities, and future reparations* (3rd ed.). NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Feliciano, C. (2016). Shades of race: How phenotype and observer characteristics shape racial classification. *American Behavioral Scientist, 60*(4), 390-419.

Fine, M. Weis, L., Pruitt, L. P., & Burns, A. (Eds.). (2004). *Off white: Readings on power, privilege, and resistance*. 2nd ed. NY: Routledge.

Flores, N. (2017, March 1). Three weeks after ICE raids, Austin immigrant community still panicked. *Statesman*. Retrieved from: http://www.statesman.com/news/local/three-weeks-after-ice-raids-austin-immigrant-community-still-panicked/92tAZbGsAFBLVJmC0Zue3I/

Fordham, S. (2008). Beyond Capital High: On dual citizenship and the strange career of "acting white." *Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 39*(3), 227-246.

Ford, D. & Payne, E. (2015, December 23). Grand jury decides against indictments in Sandra Bland's death. *CNN*. Retrieved from http://www.cnn.com/2015/12/21/us/sandra-bland-no-indictments/

Frankenberg, R. (1993). *White women, race matters: The social construction of whiteness*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Freire, P. (1993). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. (M. B. Ramos, Trans.). NY: Continuum. (Original work published in 1968).

Gall, M. D., Borg, W. R. & Gall, J. P. (1996). *Education research: An introduction*. 6th ed. White Plains, NY: Longman Publishers USA.

Gannon, S. & Davies, B. (2007). Postmodern, poststructural, and critical theories. In S. N. Hesse-Biber (Ed.), *Handbook of feminist research: Theory and praxis* (pp. 71-106). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Gans, H. J. (2012). "Whitening" and the changing American racial hierarchy. *Du Bois Review, 9*(2), 267-279.

Gee, J. P. (2005). *An introduction to discourse analysis: Theory and method*. 2nd ed. NY: Routledge.

Gee, J. P. (2014a). *An introduction to discourse analysis: Theory and method.* 4th ed. NY: Routledge.

Gee, J. P. (2014b). *How to do discourse analysis: A toolkit*. 2nd ed. NY: Routledge.

Georgopulos, S. (2013, October 21). Coming out as biracial. *Human Parts*. Retrieved from: https://medium.com/human-parts/coming-out-as-biracial-c25d6ae8f2af#.69bqkro3u

Gilliam, F. D. (1999). The 'welfare queen' experiment: How viewers react to images of African-American mothers on welfare. *Nieman Reports*. Retrieved from: http://niemanreports.org/issues/summer-1999/

Gleason, P. (1979). Confusion compounded: The melting pot in the 1960s and 1970s. *Ethnicity, 6*, 10-20.

Giroux, H. A. (1999). Vocationalizing higher education: Schooling and the politics of corporate cultures. *College Literature, 26*(3), 147-161.

Giroux, H. A. (2003). Spectacles of race and pedagogies of denial: Anti-black racist pedagogy under the reign of neoliberalism. *Communication Education, 52*(3/4), 191-211.

Giroux, H. A. (2008). *Against the terror of neoliberalism: Politics beyond the age of greed.* London: Paradigm Publishers.

Giroux, H. A. (2014). *Neoliberalism's war on higher education.* Chicago: Haymarket Books.

Goldberg, D. T. (2009). *The threat of race: Reflections on racial neoliberalism.* Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Gordon, M. M. (1964). *Assimilation in American life.* NY: Oxford University Press.

Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the prison notebooks of Antonio Gramsci.* (Q. Hoare & G. N. Smith, Trans.). London: Lawrence & Wishart. (Original work published 1948)

Graves, J. L. (2001). *The emperor's new clothes: Biological theories of race at the millennium.* NY: Rutgers University Press.

Gualtieri, S. (2001). Becoming "white": Race, religion and the foundations of Syrian/Lebanese ethnicity in the United States. *Journal of American Ethnic History, 20*(4), 29-58.

Gubrium, J. F. & Holstein, J. A. (2009). *Analyzing narrative reality.* London: SAGE.

Guinier, L. & Torres, G. (2004). Whiteness of a different color. In M. Fine, L. Weis, L. P. Powell & A. Burns (Eds.), *Off White: Readings on power, privilege, and resistance* (2nd ed., pp. 411-430). NY: Routledge.

Gullickson, A. & Morning, A. (2011). Choosing race: Multiracial ancestry and identification. *Social Science Research, 40*, 498-512.

Haney López, I. (1996). *White by law: The legal construction of race*. NY: New York University Press.

Haney López, I. (2014). *Dog whistle politics: How coded racial appeals have reinvented racism & wrecked the middle class*. NY: Oxford University Press.

Harris, C. I. (1993). Whiteness as property. *Harvard Law Review, 106*, 1707-1791.

Harris, J. C. (2016). Toward a critical multiracial theory in education. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 29*(6), 795-813.

Harris, J. C. (2017). Multiracial college students' experiences with multiracial microaggressions. *Race, Ethnicity and Education, 20*(4), 429-445.

Harrison, J. (2016, January 5). Make America great again? *The Huffington Post*. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jeb-harrison/make-america-greatagain_b_8896600.html

Harvey, D. L. & Reed, M. H. (1996). The culture of poverty: An ideological analysis. *Sociological Perspectives, 39*(4), 465-495.

Hickman, C. B. (1997). Devil and the one drop rule: Racial categories, African Americans and the U.S. Census. *Michigan Law Review, 95*(5), 1161-1265.

Hernstein, R. J. & Murray, C. (1994). *The bell curve: Intelligence and class structure in American life.* NY: Free Press Paperbacks.

Hunsberger, M. (2015, May 6). The blue eyes of a black nationalist. *The Secret History of America*. Retrieved from: https://medium.com/the-secret-history-of-america/the-blue-eyes-of-a-black-nationalist-a04ef17e394e#.g4h4xfwox

Hurd, C. A. (2008). Cinco de Mayo, normative whiteness, and the marginalization of Mexican-descent students. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 39*(3), 294-313.

Ignatiev, N. (1995). *How the Irish became white*. NY: Routledge.

Iverson, S. V. (2012). Constructing outsiders: The discursive framing of access in university diversity policies. *The Review of Higher Education, 35*(2), 149-177.

Jamal, A. A. & Naber, N. C. (Eds.). (2008). *Race and Arab Americans before and after 9/11: From invisible citizens to visible subjects*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.

Johnson, A. A. & Quaye, S. J. (2017). Queering black racial identity development. *Journal of College Student Development, 58*(8), 1135-1148.

Johnston, M. P. & Nadal, K. L. (2010). Multiracial microaggressions: Exposing monoracism in everyday life and clinical practice. In D. W. Sue (Ed.), *Microaggressions and marginality: Manifestation, dynamics and impact* (pp. 123-144). NY: Wiley & Sons.

Johnston, M. P., Ozaki, C. C., Pizzolato, J. E., & Chaudhari, P. (2014). Which box(ex) do I check? Investigating college students' meanings behind racial identification. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice, 51*(1), 56-68.

Johnston-Guerrero, M. P. & Chaudhari, P. (2016). "Everyone is just mixed to me":
Exploring the role of multiraciality in college students' racial claims. *Equity &
Excellence in Education, 49*(3), 254-266.

Jones, N. A. & Bullock, J. (2012, September). The two of more race population: 2010.
2010 Census Briefs. Washington, D.C.: United States Census Bureau.

Jones, N. A., & Smith, A. S. (2001). The two or more races population: 2000.
Washington, D.C.: United States Census Bureau.

Jones, S. R. & Abes, E. S. (2013). *Identity development of college students: Advancing
frameworks for multiple dimensions of identity*. San Francisco: John Wiley &
Sons.

Kamalipour, Y. R. & Carilli, T. (1998). *Cultural diversity and the U.S. media.* Albany:
State University of New York.

Kellogg, A. & Niskodé, A. S. (2008). Student affairs and higher education policy issues
related to multiracial students. *New Directions for Student Services, 123*, 93-102.

Khabeer, S. A. (2017). Citizens and suspects: Race, gender, and the making of American
Muslim citizenship. *Transforming Anthropology, 25*(2), 103-119.

Khalifa, M., Gil, E., Marshall, S. & White, G. J. (2015). Where has all of the community
rage gone? Neoliberalism, community encroachment, and unconventional
resistance in Detriot. In M. Khalifa, N. W. Arnold, A. F. Osanloo, & C. M. Grant
(Eds.), *Handbook of Urban Educational Leadership* (pp. 255-267). NY: Rowman
& Littlefield.

Khanna, N. (2004). The role of reflected appraisals in racial identity: The case of multiracial Asians. *Social Psychology Quarterly, 67*(2), 115-131.

Kibria, N. (1996). Not Asian, black or white? Reflection on South Asian American racial identity. *Amerasia Journal, 22*(2), 77-86.

King, A. R. (2008). Student perspectives on multiracial identity. *New Directions for Student Services, 123*, 33-41.

Kopan, T. & Shoichet, C. E. (2017, January 26). Key points in Trump's immigration executive orders. *CNN*. Retrieved from http://www.cnn.com/2017/01/25/politics/donald-trump-immigration-executive-orders/index.html

Kopf, D. (2017, December 23). Why is interracial marriage on the rise? *Priceonomics*. Retrieved from https://priceonomics.com/why-is-interracial-marriage-on-the-rise/

Krueger, R. A. & Casey, M. A. (2015). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research*. 5th ed. Los Angeles: Sage.

Kuang, Y. (2016). *The investigation of Minnesota Nice in terms of truth, communication style and personality* (Honor's thesis). Available from University of Minnesota Digital Conservancy. Retrieved from https://conservancy.umn.edu/bitstream/handle/11299/178838/Kuang's%20honors%20thesis%20(UDC).pdf%3bsequence=1.

Kurzman, C., Ghoshal, R., Gibson, K., Key, C., Roos, M. & Wells, A. (2014). Powerblindness. *Sociology Compass, 8*(6), 718-730.

LaFromboise, T., Coleman, H. L. K., & Gerton, J. (1993). Psychological impact of

    biculturalism: Evidence and theory. *Psychological Bulletin, 114*, 395-412.

Lather, P. (1991). *Getting smart: Feminist research and pedagogy with/in the*

    postmodern. NY: Routledge.

Lawton, A. (2000). The meritocracy myth and the illusion of equal employment

    opportunity. *Minnesota Law Review, 85*, 587-662.

Lazarus, E. (1889). *The poems of Emma Lazarus*. NY: Houghton, Mifflin & Company.

Lee, B. A., Iceland, J. & Sharp, G. (2012). Racial and ethnic diversity goes local:

    Charting change in American communities over three decades. US2010 Project.

    Russel Sage Foundation and American Communities Project of Brown

    University.

Lee, M. Y. H. (2015, July 8). Donald Trump's false comments connecting Mexican

    immigrants and crime. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from

    https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/fact-checker/wp/2015/07/08/donald-

    trumps-false-comments-connecting-mexican-immigrants-and-crime/

Lensmire, T. J. (2008). How I become white while punching de tar baby. *Curriculum*

    Inquiry, 38(3), 299-322.

Lensmire, T. J. (2017). *White folks: Race and identity in rural America*. NY: Routledge.

Leonardo, Z. (2002). The souls of white folk: Critical pedagogy, whiteness studies, and

    globalization discourse. *Race, Ethnicity & Education, 5*(1), 29-50.

Leonardo, Z. (2009). *Race, whiteness, and education*. NY: Routledge.

Leonardo, Z. (2013). *Race frameworks: A multidimensional theory of racism and education.* NY: Teachers College Press.

Linnaeus, C. (2015). *Systema Naturae*. (M. G. Agnethler, Trans.) Andesite Press. (Original work published 1758)

Liu, A. (2011). Unraveling the myth of meritocracy within the context of U.S. higher education. *Higher Education, 62*(4), 383-397.

Lopez, M. H. (2009, October 7). Latinos and education: Explaining the attainment gap. *Pew Research Center, Hispanic Trends*. Retrieved from http://www.pewhispanic.org/2009/10/07/latinos-and-education-explaining-the-attainment-gap/

Lum, L. (2009, February 5). The Obama era: A post-racial society? *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*. Retrieved from http://diverseeducation.com/article/12238/

Majaj, L. S. (2000). Arab-Americans and the meanings of race. In A. Singh & P. Schmidt (Eds.), *Postcolonial theory and the United States* (pp. 321-337). Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.

Malaney, V. K. & Danowski, K. (2015). Mixed foundations: Supporting and empowering multiracial student organizations. *Journal Committed to Social Change on Race and Ethnicity, 1*(2), 55-85.

Margolin, E. (2016, September 9). 'Make America great again'—who said it first? *NBC News*. Retrieved from http://www.nbcnews.com/politics/2016-election/make-america-great-again-who-said-it-first-n645716

Márquez, J. D. (2012). The black Mohicans: Representations of everyday violence in postracial urban America. *American Quarterly, 64*(3), 625-651.

Márquez, J. D. (2014). *Black-brown solidarity: Racial politics in the new Gulf South*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Márquez, J. D. (2016). Juan Crow: Progressive mutations of the black-white binary. In N. Elia, D. M. Hernández, J. Kim, S. L. Redmond, D. Rodríguez, & S. E. See (Eds.), *Critical ethnic studies: A reader* (pp. 43-62). Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Martin, M. (2012, April 5). In Trayvon Martin case, who's considered white? *National Public Radio*. Retrieved from https://www.npr.org/2012/04/05/150062609/in-trayvon-martin-case-whos-considered-white

Massey, D. S., Gross, A. B., & Shibuya, K. (1994). Migration, segregation, and the geographic concentration of poverty. *American Sociological Review, 59*(3), 425-445.

Mathis, W. (2015, October 26). Hundreds rally in New York City to protest police brutality. *Huffington Post*. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/rise-up-october-rally-nyc_us_562c0fd9e4b0aac0b8fd23f3

Matsumura, J. L. (2017). Hakujin: A narrative of multiraciality and student development theory in the U.S. *The Vermont Conection, 38*, article 14.

McLaren, P. (1998). Whiteness is… the struggle for postcolonial hybridity. In J. L. Kincheloe, S. R. Steinberg, N. M. Rodriguez & R. E. Chennault (Eds.), *White reign: Deploying whiteness in America* (pp. 63-75). NY: St. Martin's Press.

McIntosh, P. (2004). White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack. In P. S. Rothenberg (Ed.), *Race, class, and gender in the United States: An integrated study*, 6th ed. (pp. 188-192). NY: Worth Publishers.

McManus, D. (2015, November 25). What fuels Trump's rise? Anger and fear. *Los Angeles Times*. Retrieved from http://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-1125-mcmanus-trump-polls-paris-20151125-column.html

McNamee, S. J. & Miller, R. K. (2009). *The meritocracy myth*. 2nd ed. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Melamed, J. (2011). *Represent and destroy: Rationalizing violence in the new racial capitalism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Melamed, J. (2014). Dangerous associations. *American Quarterly, 66*(2), 289-300.

Melamed, J. (2015). Racial capitalism. *Critical Ethnic Studies, 1*(1), 76-85.

Miller, E. & Lensmire, T. J. (Under review). A tale of two white girls: Mammies, Brute Negroes, and white femininity in teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*.

Moran, R. F. (2001). *Interracial intimacy: the regulation of race & romance*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Morial, M. H., Lee, S., Candori, T., Logan, G. H. & Anyalebechi, J. C. (2018). *Save our cities: Powering the digital revolution, State of Black America 2018*. Executive

summary & key findings. National Urban League. Retrieved from

http://soba.iamempowered.com/system/files/NUL-SOBA2018-

Executive%20Summary.pdf

Morley, L. & Lugg, R. (2009). Mapping meritocracy: Intersecting gender, poverty and

higher educational opportunity structures. *Higher Education Policy, 22*, 37-60.

Morrison, T. (1993, December 2). On the backs of Blacks. *Time, 142*.

Morton, S. G. (1839). *Crania Americana: A comparative view of the skulls of various

aboriginal nations of North and South America*. Philadelphia: J. Dobson.

Moynihan, D. P. (1965). *The Negro family: The case for national action*. Washington,

D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Murray, V. M., Brown, P. A., Brody, G. H., Cutrona, C. E. & Simons, R. L. (2001).

Racial discrimination as a moderator of the links among stress, maternal

psychological functioning, and family relationships. *Journal of Marriage and

Family, 63*(4), 915-926.

Naber, N. (2000). Ambiguous insiders: An investigation of Arab American invisibility.

Ethnic and Racial Studies, 23(1), 37-61.

Naber, N. (2015). Muslim first, Arab second: A strategic politics of race and gender. *The

Muslim World, 95*, 479-495.

Nash, J. C. (2008). Re-thinking intersectionality. *Feminist review, 89*, 1-15.

Ngai, M. M. (2004). *Impossible subjects: Illegal aliens and the making of modern

America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Ngo, H. (2017). *The habits of racism: A phenomenology of racism and racialized embodiment*. NY: Lexington Books.

Nichols, A. H. & Evans-Bell, D. (2017, March). *A look at black student success: Identifying top- and bottom-performing institutions*. Washington, D.C.: The Education Trust.

Norton, M. I. & Sommers, S. R. (2011). Whites see racism as a zero-sum game that they are now losing. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 6*(3), 215-218.

Omi, M. & Winant, H. (1994). *Racial formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s* (2nd ed.). NY: Routledge.

Omi, M. & Winant, H. (2015). *Racial formation in the United States* (3rd ed.). NY: Routledge.

Ong, A., Dominguez, V. R., Friedman, J. Schiller, N. G., Stolcke, V., Wu, D. Y. H., & Ying, H. (1996). Cultural citizenship as subject-making: Immigrants negotiate racial and cultural boundaries in the United States. *Current Anthropology, 37*(5), 737-762.

Ong, A. D., Fuller-Rowell, T. E., & Phinney, J. S. (2010). Measurement of ethnic identity: Recurrent and emergent issues. *Identity: An International Journal of Theory and Research, 10*(1), 39-49.

Ozaki, C., C. & Johnston, M. (2008). The space in between: Issues for multiracial student organizations and advising. *New Directions for Student Services, 123*, 53-61.

Park, Y. (2006). Constructing immigrants: A historical discourse analysis of representations of immigrants in U.S. social work, 1882-1952. *Journal of Social Work, 6*(2), 169-203.

Pascoe, E. A. & Smart Richman, L. (2009). Perceived discrimination and health: A meta-analytic review. *Psychological Bulletin, 135*(4), 531-554.

Patterson, W. (2008). Narratives of events: Labovian narrative analysis and its limitations. In M. Andrews, C. Squire, & M. Tamboukou (Eds.), *Doing narrative research* (pp. 22-40). London: Sage.

Pearson, M. (2015, November 10). A timeline of the University of Missouri protests. *CNN*. Retrieved from: http://www.cnn.com/2015/11/09/us/missouri-protest-timeline/index.html

Perea, J. F. (1998). The black/white binary paradigm of race. In R. Delgado & J. Stefancic (Eds.), *The Latino/a condition: A critical reader* (pp. 359-368). NY: New York University Press.

Pew Research Center (2016, June 27). On views of race and inequality, blacks and whites are worlds apart. Retrieved from http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2016/06/27/1-demographic-trends-and-economic-well-being/

Pew Research Center. (2015, June 11). Multiracial in America: Proud, diverse and growing in numbers. Retrieved from http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2015/06/11/multiracial-in-america/

Phillips, M. M. (2016, January 26). Anxiety fuels Donald Trump's supporters. *The Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved from http://www.wsj.com/articles/anxiety-fuels-donald-trumps-supporters-1453854519

Phinney, J. S. (2008). Bridging identities and disciplines: Advances and challenges in understanding multiple identities. In M. Azmitia, M. Syed & K. Radmacher (Eds.), *The intersections of personal and social identities. New Directions of Child and Adolescent Development, 120* (pp. 97-109).

Phinney, J. S. & Alipuria, L. L. (1996). At the interface of cultures: Multiethnic/multiracial high school and college students. *The Journal of Social Psychology, 136*(2), 139-158.

Phinney, J. S., Chavira, V. & Williamson, L. (1992). Acculturation attitudes and self-esteem among high school and college students. *Youth & Society, 23*(3), 299-312.

Phinney, J. S. & Ong, A. D. (2007). Conceptualization and measurement of ethnic identity: Current status and future directions. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 54*(3), 271-281.

Pierce, J. (2012). *Racing for innocence: Whiteness, gender, and the backlash against affirmative action*. Stanford, CT: Stanford University Press.

Pierre, J. (2004). Black immigrants in the United States and the "cultural narratives" of ethnicity. *Identities: Global student in culture and power, 11*, 141-170.

Plaid, A. (2015, November 5). "Minnesota nice" and Minnesota's racism. *Twin Cities Daily Planet*. Retrieved from https://www.tcdailyplanet.net/minnesota-nice-and-racism/

Polkinghorne, D. E. (1997). Reporting qualitative research as practice. In W. G. Tierney & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Representation and the text: Re-framing the narrative voice* (pp. 3-21). Albany: State University of New York Press.

Porter, S. R., Liebler, C. A. & Noon, J. M. (2016). An outside view: What observers say about others' races and Hispanic origins. *American Behavioral Scientist, 60*(4), 465-497.

Portes, A. & Zhou, M. (1993). The new second generation: Segmented assimilation and its variants. *Annals, 530*, 74-96.

Press, E. (2016, September 2). Trump and the truth: Immigration and crime. *New Yorker*. Retrieved from https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/trump-and-the-truth-immigration-and-crime.

Reinert, L. J. & Serna, G. R. (2014). Living intersectionality in the academy. In D. Mitchell (Ed.), *Intersectionality & higher education: Theory, research, & praxis* (pp. 158-170). NY: Peter Lang.

Renn, K. A. (2000). Patterns of situational identity among biracial and multiracial college students. *The Review of Higher Education, 23*(4), 399-420.

Renn, K. A. (2003). Understanding the identities of mixed-race college students through a developmental ecology lens. *Journal of College Student Development, 44*(3), 383-403.

Renn, K.A. (2004). *Mixed race students in college: The ecology of race, identity, and community on campus*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Renn, K. A. (2012). Creating and re-creating race: The emergence of racial identity as a critical element in psychological, sociological, and ecological perspectives on human development. In C. L. Wijeyesinghe & B. W. Jackson (Eds.), *New perspectives on racial identity development: Integrating emerging frameworks* (pp. 11-32). NY: New York University Press.

Reynolds, C. E. (2015). *"Illegal children:" Metaphors and terminology used in newspaper coverage of Central American minors during Summer 2014* (Master's thesis). Available from The University of Arizona Campus Repository.

Riessman, C. K. (1989). Life events, meaning and narrative: The case of infidelity and divorce. *Social Science & Medicine, 29*(6), 743-751.

Riessman, C. K. (1993). *Narrative analysis*. Qualitative Research Methods Series, Vol. 30, Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Riessman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Rivera, L. M. (2010). Acculturation. In J. G. Ponterotto, J. M. Casas, L. A. Suzuki, & C. M. Alexander (Eds.), *Handbook of multicultural counseling*, 3rd ed. (pp. 331-341). Los Angeles: SAGE.

Roberts, D. J. & Mahtani, M. (2010). Neoliberalizing race, racing neoliberalism: Placing "race" in neoliberal discourses. *Antipode, 42*(6), 248-257.

Rockquemore, K. A. & Brunsma, D. L. (2002). Socially embedded identities: Theories, typologies, and processes of racial identity among black/white biracials. *The Sociological Quarterly, 43*(3), 335-356.

Rockquemore, K. A. & Brunsma, D. L. (2004). Negotiating racial identity: Biracial women and interactional validity. *Women & Therapy, 27*(1-2), 85-102.

Roediger, D. R. (1991). *The wages of whiteness: Race and the making of the American working class.* NY: Verso.

Roediger, D. R. (2007). *The wages of whiteness: Race and the making of the American working class*. 2nd ed. NY: Verso.

Ropers-Huilman, R. (1998). *Feminist teaching in theory and practice: Situating power and knowledge in poststructural classrooms.* NY: Teachers College Press.

Ropers-Huilman, R., Winters, K. T. & Enke, K. A. E. (2013). Discourses of whiteness: White students at Catholic women's colleges (dis)engaging race. *The Journal of Higher Education, 84*(1), 28-55.

Rugh, J. S. & Massey, D. S. (2010). Racial segregation and the American foreclosure crisis. *American Sociological Review, 75*(5), 629-651.

Sahlins, M. (2017, April 6). Teach-ins helped galvanize student activism in the 1960s. They can do so again today. *The Nation*. Retrieved from: https://www.thenation.com/article/teach-ins-helped-galvanize-student-activism-in-the-1960s-they-can-do-so-again-today/

Said, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism*. NY: Random House.

Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. 3rd ed. Los Angeles: Sage.

Sanburn, J. (2015, April 10). From Trayvon Martin to Walter Scott: Cases in the spotlight. *Time*. Retrieved from http://time.com/3815606/police-violence-timeline/

Saperstein, A. & Penner, A. M. (2012). Racial fluidity and inequality in the Unites States. *American Journal of Sociology, 118*(3), 676-727.

Saperstein, A. & Penner, A. M. (2014). Beyond the looking glass: Exploring fluidity in racial self-identification and interviewer classification. *Sociological Perspectives, 57*(2), 186-207.

Sarroub, L. K. (2002). In-betweenness: Religion and conflicting visions of literacy. *Reading Research Quarterly, 37*(2), 130-148.

Saulny, S. (2011, January 29). Black? White? Asian? More young Americans choose all of the above. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/30/us/30mixed.html?pagewanted=all

Sawyer, L. (2016, July 20). Arrests following Minneapolis as teachers, activities protest Philando Castile's death. *Star Tribune*. Retrieved from http://www.startribune.com/teachers-join-activists-to-protest-castile-shooting/387511391/#1

Schorr, D. (2008, January 28). A new, 'post-racial' political era in America. *All Things Considered, American Public Media*. Retrieved from http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=18489466

Shamsi, H. (2017, February 7). Flying home from abroad, a border agent stopped and questioned me… about my work for the ACLU. *American Civil Liberties Union*.

Retrieved from: https://www.aclu.org/blog/speak-freely/flying-home-abroad-border-agent-stopped-and-questioned-me-about-my-work-aclu

Shapiro, E. (2015, December 23). Several arrests made amid Black Lives Matter protest at Mall of America. *ABC News*. Retrieved from http://abcnews.go.com/US/arrests-made-black-lives-matter-protests/story?id=35923269

Shiao, J. L. & Tuan, M. H. (2008). "Some Asian men are attractive to me, but for a husband…" Korean adoptees and the salience of race in romance. *Du Bois Review, 5*(2), 259-285.

Shirazi, R. (2012, February 10). Beyond mullahs and Persian party people: The invisibility of being Iranian on TV. *Jadaliyya*. Retrieved from http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/4313/beyond-mullahs-and-persian-party-people_the-invisi

Shirazi, R. (2016). 'These boys are wild': Constructions and contests of masculinities at two Jordanian high schools. *Gender and Education, 28*(1), 89-107.

Shoichet, C. E., Berlinger, J. & Almasy, S. (2016, July 6). Alton Sterling shooting: Second video of deadly encounter emerges. *CNN*. Retrieved from http://www.cnn.com/2016/07/06/us/baton-rouge-shooting-alton-sterling/

Smedley, A. & Smedley, B. D. (2005). Race as biology is fiction, racism as a social problem is real. *American Psychologist, 60*(1), 16-26.

Smith, M. (2016, July 12). Philando Castile's last night: Tacos and laughs, then a drive. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from

http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/13/us/philando-castile-minnesota-police-shooting.html?_r=0

Smith, W. A., Allen, W. R., & Danley, L. L. (2007). "Assume the position… you fit the description": Psychological experiences and racial battle fatigue among African American male college students. *American Behavioral Scientist, 51*(4), 551-578.

Smith, W. A., Yosso, T. J. & Solórzano, D. G. (2011). Challenging racial battle fatigue on historically white campuses: A critical race examination of race-related stress. In R. D. Coates, (Ed.), *Covert Racism* (pp. 211-237). Boston: Brill.

Stein, S. & Liebelson, D. (2016, March 10). Donald Trump encourages violence at his rallies. His fans are listening. *The Huffington Post*. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/donald-trump-violence_us_56e1f16fe4b0b25c91815913

Steinberg, S. (2014). The long view of the melting pot. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 37*(5), 790-794.

Sue, D. W. (2015). *Race talk and the conspiracy of silence: Understanding and facilitating difficult dialogues on race*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Suh, E. (2015, September 16). The racist nostalgia behind 'mak[ing] American great again.' *The Huffington Post*. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/esther-suh/the-racist-nostalgia-behind-make-america-trump_b_8145962.html

Tehranian, J. (2008). Middle Easterners: Sometimes White, sometimes not. *Chronicle of Higher Education, 55*(5), B52-B54.

Tehranian, J. (2009). *Whitewashed: America's invisible Middle Eastern minority*. NY: New York University Press.

United States Census Bureau. (n.d.). *History, Index of questions: 1790*. Retrieved from https://www.census.gov/history/www/through_the_decades/index_of_questions/1790_1.html

Velasquez-Manoff, M. (2017, March 4). What biracial people know. *The New York Times*. Opinion. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/04/opinion/sunday/what-biracial-people-know.html?_r=0

Valencia, R. R. & Black, M. S. (2002). "Mexican Americans don't value education!"— On the basis of the myth, mythmaking, and debunking. *Journal of Latinos and Education, 1*(2), 81-103.

Vargas, N. (2014). Off white: Colour-blind ideology at the margins of whiteness. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 37*(13), 2281-2302.

Vargas, N. (2015). Latina/o whitening? Which Latina/os self-classify as White and report being perceived by others as White by other Americans? *DuBois Review, 12*(1), 119-136.

Vargas, N. & Kingsbury, J. (2016). Racial identity contestation: Mapping and measuring racial boundaries. *Sociology Compass, 10*(8), 718-729.

Vargas, N. & Stainback, K. (2016). Documenting contested racial identities among self-identified Latina/os, Asians, Blacks, and Whites. *American Behavioral Scientist, 60*(4), 442-464.

Vavrus, F. & Kwauk, C. (2013). The new abolitionists? The World Bank and the 'boldness' of global school fee elimination reforms. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 34*(3), 351-365.

Veldof, J. & Bonnema, C. (2014, July 11). Minnesota nice? It's like ice. *Star Tribune*. Retrieved from http://www.startribune.com/minnesota-nice-it-s-like-ice/266823811/

Warren, J. (2017, February 13). Bernie Sanders brands Trump's travel ban 'racist' and 'based on anti-Muslim ideology.' *Express*. Retrieved from: http://www.express.co.uk/news/world/766607/Bernie-Sanders-Donald-Trump-travel-ban-racist-anti-Muslim-ideology

Watson, D. (2012). Norming suburban: How teachers talk about race without using race words. *Urban Education, 47*(5), 983-1004.

Weber, M. (2002). *The protestant ethic and the "spirit" of capitalism and other writings*. (P. Baehr & G. C. Wells, Trans.) NY: Penguin Books. (Original work published 1905)

Weedon, C. (1997). *Feminist practice and poststructualist theory.* 2nd ed. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers Inc.

Wijeyesinghe, C. L. (2012). The intersectional model of multiracial identity: Integrating multiracial identity theories and intersectional perspectives on social identity. In C. L. Wijeyesinghe & B. W. Jackson (Eds.), *New perspectives on racial identity development: Integrating emerging frameworks* (pp. 81-107). NY: New York University Press.

Williams, J. (2017, May 18). Interracial marriage in America is the highest it's ever been since Loving vs. Virginia. *Newsweek*. Retrieved from http://www.newsweek.com/interracial-marriage-relationships-history-loving-611820

Williams, M. (2013, July 20). Trayvon Martin protests being held in more than 100 U.S. cities. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jul/20/trayvon-martin-protests-us-cities

Winant, H. (2006). Race and racism: Towards a global future. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 29*(5), 986-1003.

Wong, M. P. A. & Buckner, J. (2008). Multiracial student services come of age: The state of multiracial student services in higher education in the United States. *New Directions for Student Services, 123*, 43-51.

Yancy, G. (2008). *Black bodies, white gazes: The continuing significance of race.* NY: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Zeeman, L., Poggenpoel, M., Myburgh, C. P. H., & Van der Linde, N. (2002). An introduction to a postmodern approach to educational research: Discourse analysis. *Education, 123*(1), 96-102.

Zhou, M. (1997). Segmented assimilation: Issues, controversies, and recent research on the new second generation. *International Migration Review, 31*(4), 975-1008.

Zine, J. (2001). Muslim youth in Canadian schools: Education and the politics of religious identity. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 32*(4), 399-423.

Zopf, B. J. (2017). A different kind of brown: Arabs and Middle Easterns as Anti-

American Muslims. *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*, 1-14.

Appendix A

RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

Hello,

My name is Orkideh Mohajeri, and I am a doctoral student in the Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development at the University of Minnesota. I am asking for your help in spreading the word about a research study I am conducting on the experiences and conceptualizations of Contested White students at both the undergraduate and graduate student levels.

Contested Whites are individuals who have an ambiguous racial location that lies somewhere in between whiteness and "non-whiteness" depending on context, social situation, racial categorization, etc. These are people whose racial location is not clear cut, and in some instances, they can travel between racial locations. For example, an African American or Latinx student who can "pass" for white would be part of this group. A South Indian student who considers themselves to be Caucasian, but who is read as "Latina" would also be part of this group. There are many others who fall into this contested space.

This research will help complicate and nuance broader understandings around race and racial categorization in the United States. It will also be used to help educators, administrators, and instructors advocate for changes in policy and practice to increase equity and access for all students in higher education.

I am seeking self-identified Contested White undergraduate or graduate students who are currently enrolled at the University of Minnesota – Twin Cities. Participation is completely **voluntary** and will include a brief demographic questionnaire and one or two interviews lasting about an hour. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time and may refuse to answer any question and still remain in the study.

If you have any questions, please e-mail me at orkideh@umn.edu or call 651-373-0789.

Sincerely,

Orkideh Mohajeri

Appendix B

RECRUITMENT FLYERS

CONTESTED WHITES

Do others on campus treat you like a person of color...

$10 STARBUCKS GIFT CARD

BUT ARE YOU ACTUALLY WHITE?

Please consider participation in my study!

Email: orkideh@umn.edu

Appendix C

U of M IRB study no.
Contested White Students at a Predominantly White Institution of Higher Education

CONSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in a study designed to understand how students conceptualize and make sense of their racial location while enrolled as undergraduate or graduate students at the University of Minnesota – Twin Cities. Specifically, the study will address your thoughts and experiences on-campus and in the classroom and your career aspirations.

This study is being directed by Orkideh Mohajeri, a doctoral student in the Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development at the University of Minnesota – Twin Cities.

Study Purpose
The study focuses on students' expectations, experiences, and identities in order to understand how they make sense of their race and racial categorization as a student attending an institution of higher education in the United States. Given the limited literature on the experiences of those who are raced ambiguously, the study focuses intentionally on this population in order to add to the limited literature in an effort to expand thinking about race in higher education systems and more broadly in U.S. society.

Study Procedures
This study is completely voluntary. If you choose not to participate, it will not affect you in any negative way. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to:

Complete a brief demographic form; participate in one interview about your experiences as a student at the University of Minnesota; allow the researcher to audio record and take notes during the interview; and consider further participation in a future follow-up interview on the same general topic of race in higher education in the United States.

Risks of Study Participation
This study involves no significant risk to you except the loss of the time spent meeting with the researcher and the potential of bringing up difficult memories or experiences. Your name or identifying information will not be used. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There is a small risk that study data will be compromised; however, I will use the greatest protections of data that are available and therefore consider this possibility unlikely.

An additional risk presents itself if your interview takes place over Skype or Google+. In these cases, I cannot guarantee absolute privacy due to the fact that data will be traveling through a third party vendor.

Benefits of Study Participation
Benefits include time set aside to talk about an aspect of your identity and experiences on campus that may not often be addressed or acknowledged.

Confidentiality
The records of this study will be kept private. You will be asked if I may keep your contact information at the conclusion of the first interview in order to schedule a second follow-up interview. Contact and identifying information will be kept separate from your interview and demographic data and will be destroyed upon your request or 12 months after data collection begins.

Voluntary Nature of the Study
Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your current or future relations with the University or with the Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy & Development. If you decide to participate, you are also free to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships. You can withdraw by contacting Orkideh Mohajeri (orkideh@umn.edu).

Contacts and Questions
The sole researcher conducting this study is Orkideh Mohajeri under the advisement of Rebecca Ropers-Huilman, PhD. You may ask any questions you have now, or if you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact either individual at orkideh@umn.edu or ropers@umn.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study and would like to talk to someone other than the researchers, you are encouraged to contact the Research Subjects' Advocate Line, D-528 Mayo, 420 Delaware St SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455; telephone (612) 625-1650.
Please keep a copy of this information for your records.

Statement of Consent:
I have read the above information, and I wish to be a part of this study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____
        Student signature

Appendix D

Please take a few moments to complete this form. This demographic information is being collected as part of a doctoral study conducted by Orkideh Mohajeri on the experiences of Contested White students enrolled at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities campus.

This information will only be reported in aggregate in any findings to describe the scope of study participants and the broad range of their backgrounds. No personal information will be shared with either other study participants or with the general public. You can choose to omit this information from the study at a later date, should you so desire, by contacting me. If you have any questions or concerns, please email me at orkideh@umn.edu. Thank you for your participation.

What is your age?   _____

What is your gender identity?
_____

What is your sexual orientation?
_____

What is your citizenship?
_____

What country and city were you born in?
_____

Total number of years lived in the United States? _____

When/how did your family immigrate to the United States?

Have you lived for significant periods of time in other countries? If so, where and how long?

How do you identify your race?

_____

How do you identify your ethnicity or ancestry?

_____

How do you identify your nationality?

_____

What is your marital status? (Circle one, if possible).

      Married/Committed long-term relationship

      Single

      Divorced

      Widowed

What is your religion?

_____

What is your (or your immediate family's) socio-economic status? (Circle)

Low-income
(at or below 36,900 USD/year for a family of 4)

Middle-income
(Between 36,900 and 85,000 USD per year)

High-income
(Above 85,000 USD per year)

Are you the first in your family to attend college? (Circle)

Yes   No

If "No," who in your family has completed college?
_____

In your current program of study, do you live on campus, with parents, or otherwise? (Please explain).

What is the highest level of formal education that you have completed?

High school diploma/GED equivalent

Associate's degree

Bachelor's degree

Master's degree

Other:
_____

What is the highest level of formal education that PARENT 1 completed? *(Please indicate sex/gender of parent 1).*

What is the highest level of formal education that PARENT 2 completed? *(Please indicate sex/gender of parent 2).*

What is your Undergraduate Major or your Graduate Program of study?

What is your current year of study?

_____

When is your expected graduate date?

_____

Appendix E

PARTICIPANT RESOURCE LIST

Aurora Center for Advocacy & Education
http://aurora.umn.edu/
Appleby Hall
128 Pleasant Street SE
Minneapolis, MN 55455
24-hour helpline: 612-626-9111
Business phone: 612-626-2929
Text line: 612-615-8911 (text "TALK")

Boynton Mental Health Services
http://www.bhs.umn.edu/east-bank-clinic/mental-health-services.htm
Urgent: 612-625-8475

East Bank Clinic	*St. Paul Clinic*
410 Church Street SE	Coffey Hall, 1420 Eckles Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55455	St. Paul, MN 55108
Appointments: 612-625-3222	Appointments: 612-624-7700
Information: 612-625-8400	Information: Same

Disability Resource Center
https://diversity.umn.edu/disability/
180 McNamara Alumni Center
200 Oak Street SE
Minneapolis, MN 55455
Phone: 612-626-1333
Email: drc@umn.edu

Gender and Sexuality Center for Queer and Trans Life
https://diversity.umn.edu/gsc/
40 Appleby Hall
128 Pleasant Street SE
Minneapolis, MN 55455
Phone: 612-625-0537
Email: gsc@umn.edu

International Student and Scholar Services
http://isss.umn.edu/
190 Hubert H. Humphrey School
301 – 19th Avenue South

Minneapolis, MN 55455
Phone: 612-626-7361
Email: isss@umn.edu

Multicultural Center for Academic Excellence
https://diversity.umn.edu/multicultural/
140 Appleby Hall
128 Pleasant Street SE
Minneapolis, MN 55455
Phone: 612-624-6386
Email: mcae@umn.edu

Student Counseling Services
https://counseling.umn.edu/

East Bank	St. Paul Campus
340 Appleby Hall	199 Coffey Hall
128 Pleasant Street SE	1420 Eckles Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55455	St. Paul, MN 55108
Phone: 612-624-3323	Phone: Same

Office for Diversity in Graduate Education
https://diversity.umn.edu/gradeducation/
333 Johnston Hall
101 Pleasant Street SE
Minneapolis, MN 55455
Phone: 612-625-6858
Email: odge@umn.edu

Office for Student Affairs Care Manager
http://caremanager.umn.edu/
Emily O'Hara, LICSW
Phone: 612-625-2517
Email: eohara@umn.edu

Women's Center
64 Appleby Hall
128 Pleasant Street SE
Minneapolis, MN 55455
Phone: 612-625-9837
Email: women@umn.edu

Appendix F

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What racial discourses inform the subjectivities of contested white students?
2. What subject positions does the institution of higher education narrate as available to students?
3. How do contested white subjects take up and/or resist these discourses?

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. *(D)* Tell me a little bit about who you are and where you grew up.
    a. Probe for CITY, TOWN, STATE

2. *(D)* What kinds of people lived in your neighborhood?
    a. Probe for RACIAL and ETHNIC MAKEUP, CLASS

3. *(D)* Tell me about the kinds of schools that you attended while growing up.
    a. Probe for PUBLIC/PRIVATE, SIZE, CITY/SUBURB.

4. *(D)* What is your program of study and what do you hope to do once you've completed your degree?
    a. Probe for MAJOR, YEAR OF STUDY, EXPECTED GRADUATION DATE, CAREER ASPIRATIONS.

5. *(Q2)* Tell me about your general University experience so far.
    a. Probe for COURSES, RESIDENCE, FRIENDS, PROFESSORS, SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

6. *(Q1, Q3)* Okay, now we are going to get out paper, pencils and pens! Draw me a diagram of your various social identities. *Some people draw the intersections of their various identities, some do not. This is meant to be a creative exercise, so let's take 5 to 7 minutes with these several blank pages, and draw me a representation. You might end up making a draft or two, and then a final draft, or it might be very straightforward for you.*
    a. Describe the diagram for me.

     b.   What words do you use to describe your race? *(Let's circle them with this pencil).*

     c.   Are there other words used to identify your race that you don't use or don't like?

     d.   Can you comment on how your gender, economic class, religion, ethnicity, etc. influence your racial identity?

7. *(Q1)* How do you define the word "race"? If you had to explain to aliens from outer space what race is all about, what would you tell them?

     a.   Probe for definition of RACISM, BIOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES, INTERRACIAL RELATIONSHIPS, U.S. OR GLOBAL?

8. *(Q1, Q2)* Where and when did you learn about race? If you were to create a timeline of your understandings about race, what would it look like? What the major markers on the timeline? *Please use these pencils and pens to identify the major markers in your understanding of race over time. Take 5 minutes to do this, and please be as detailed as you'd like.*

     a.   Tell me about this timeline overall. What were important periods of time? What's unimportant?

     b.   *(Let's use this pencil to draw a larger circle around the periods when you were in Higher Ed).* What specifically did you learn about race during your years on campus, in Higher Ed?

     c.   What about last Fall, after the election? Have any of the events of the last year influenced your understanding about race?

          i.   Did you feel that the general feeling on campus changed after the Presidential election last year?

9. *(Q1, Q3)* Have you heard of this concept of "street race"? If you were walking down the street, what race do you think others – who do not know you personally – would assume you are, based on what you look like?

     a.   Is there a difference between your street race and how you personally identify your race?

          i.   If so, how do you make sense of this difference?

          ii.   How much power do you have in this space?

          iii.   Who has the power to resolve these differences? (UNIVERSITY, OTHERS, FAMILY, SOCIETY?).

     b.   Have you ever let people think you were from a different race? (SETTING, DETAILS).

     c.   Do you know anyone who does this? Tell me about it.

i. What about members of your FAMILY? Do they have the same choices as you? (PARENTS, SIBLINGS, COUSINS, OTHER).

10. *(Q2)* Now let's take a step back and think about the larger context that we find ourselves in. In what ways is race important or unimportant at the University, and how do you know?
    a. Are there specific places on campus where race is important?
    b. Are there specific places on campus where race is unimportant? How do you know? (PROBE FOR SENSE OF NORMALCY).
    c. If you had to summarize the institution's perspective on race, how would you describe it?
    d. How do you categorize yourself on official forms like admissions forms for the University? Have you ever categorized yourself differently over time on these forms? If so, why? Do you ever feel forced to classify yourself in a certain way?
    e. Does the way that the University classifies your race affect your studies in any way?
        i. Probe for SCHOLARSHIPS, SUPPORT GROUPS, BULLYING, SPOTLIGHT.
    e. If you could redesign the admissions form or the US Census Form around the questions of racial identity, how would you change them? *(Handouts, pencils). Explain your changes to me. Why?*

11. *(Q2, Q3)* Are there any moments in class, on campus, that your race has been described or mentioned in a way that surprised, confused or upset you?
    a. Probe for WHAT, WHO, WHY SURPRISING/CONFUSING/UPSETTING.
    b. What power do you have to address these situations? (INSTANCES WHEN UNABLE TO CHOOSE).
    c. Have you seen this happen on campus to other people?
    d. Alternatively, are there moments in class, on campus, that your race has been described or mentioned in a way that felt right to you?

12. *(Q3)* We all use our bodies in certain ways to indicate certain identities. For example, some parents dress up their babies in pink to let others know that this is a girl child. How do you use your body to signify racial identity to others? Are there acts you undertake in order to make your race more clear to others?
    a. Probe for SPECIFICS and HOW WELL IT WORKS.
    b. Is there anything beyond physical appearance that you do?

      c. Tell me about a time when you manipulated your appearance or identity.
         i. Probe for DESIRED OUTCOME.

13. *(Q1)* Have you heard of this idea of transracialism? This is the argument that if individuals can transition from one gender to another, then why can we not reassign our racial identity as well? What do you think of this? Is it possible?

14. *(Q1)* Let's think back to the killing of Philando Castile by Officer Jeromino Yanez, or the death of Treyvon Martin by George Zimmerman. How do you make sense of the race of the assailants in these two very public incidents?
    a. Who has the power to decide whether George Zimmerman is white or not?
    b. Who has the power to decide if Jeromino Yanez is white or not?

15. As I mentioned earlier, I want to learn about individuals who live at the margins of whiteness, and how institutions of higher education and larger society shape racial categories. Given that interest, is there anything else I should ask either about you, or about this topic, that I have not mentioned?

Appendix G

QUESTION 9, 2010 CENSUS FORM