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**The Social Construction of Race and Perceptions of Privilege for White College Students at a Predominantly White Institution**

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**The Social Construction of Race and Perceptions of Privilege for White  
College Students at a Predominantly White Institution**

**by**

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## **Dedication**

This work is dedicated in celebration of my parents Mr. Joseph George and Mrs. Judith Therese Wolfe who have truly inspired me with unconditional love and steadfast support.

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# **The Social Construction of Race and Perceptions of Privilege for White College Students at a Predominantly White Institution**

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This study explored white students' perceptions of their race and privilege at a predominantly white institution of higher education. Qualitative inquiry served as the foundation for the methodology to capture students' perspectives in their own voices. Individual interviews were conducted with eight student members of registered spirit organizations. Interviews were audio-tape recorded, transcribed and then coded. The data were peer-reviewed and member-checked for validity.

The following themes developed through analysis of the data: 1) Normalizing Whiteness, 2) Jeopardizing Entitlement, 3) Perpetuating Racism, 4) Highlighting Privilege, and 5) Contributing Campus Elements. The themes were derived based on responses from the participants, which were coded and placed in categories and subcategories. The categories were aspects of the data that were central to the broader themes that developed. Within each category, subcategories emerged which were more specific, detailed examples of the themes. This study contributes to the field of student affairs by expressing the importance of racial identity awareness and racial privilege awareness for white students at predominantly white institutions of higher education.

While many previous studies on white racial identity for college students have been quantitative in nature, this study provided qualitative data using student voices to discuss white students' experiences. Since racism is connected to lack of racial awareness for white students, it is imperative to enhance the level of awareness for white students regarding their race and privilege in an effort to eliminate racism at predominantly white institutions of higher education.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**

Perceptions of race and racial identity for white students at predominantly white institutions of higher education should be explored as a way to bring racial privilege to white students' consciousness, thus contributing to an improved campus culture and climate. "Social and institutional structures and cultures provide the limits and opportunities for both the creation of racial identities and the formation and expression of racial attitudes" (Chesler, et. al., 2003, p. 215). The effects of racism on white students is significant, preventing many white students from developing a sense of their racial identity. "Only recently have theorists begun to speculate about the harmful consequences of racism on the perpetrators of racism, which include the absence of positive White racial identity" (Helms, 1990, p. 50). At a predominantly white institution, white college students may be able to largely exist without ever critically examining their race and the implications associated with their race. Without an understanding of their race, white students are less likely to be aware of the privileges associated with whiteness as well.

...it is apparent that people of color, for the most part, know that they have been classified according to their race and that this racial grouping has meaning and significance for their personal identity. Whites, on the other hand, seem to be unaware of race as a group and personal characteristic (Carter, 1999, p. 198).

The ability to be oblivious to one's race is a luxury that white people have. "Whites do not look at the world through a filter of racial awareness, even though whites are, of course, members of a race. The power to ignore race, when white is the race, is a privilege, a societal advantage" (Wildman & Davis, 1997, pp. 317 – 318). By studying white students' perceptions of their race and privilege, the researcher explored how

attending a predominantly white institution perpetuates a lack of awareness of white racial identity and white privilege.

...it is by and large the cultural practices of *white* people (though not all white people, and certainly to varying degrees) by means of which individuals in societies structured in racial dominance are asked to engage with the institutions of those societies. Thus, to cite two examples, corporate culture and that of academia are culturally marked in ways that are (contingently) white as well as (also contingently) gendered and, so to speak, 'classed' (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 632).

A positive white racial identity and awareness of white privilege are necessary to dismantle racism on predominantly white college campuses. Likewise, a positive white identity can be based on the extent of racism. "The development of White identity in the United States is closely intertwined with the development and progress of racism in this country. The greater the extent that racism exists and is denied, the less possible it is to develop a positive White identity" (Helms, 1990, p. 49). The traditionalistic political culture that exists at a predominantly white institution can contribute to racism as well (Fowler, 2004). It is important that white students strive to develop a positive non-racist white racial identity because

The outcomes of such a process can help Whites be less fragmented in their self-appraisal. They can come to value and respect themselves without reservation or doubt. They can rid themselves of feelings of guilt, fear, anger, and hopelessness. They can be proud of personal accomplishments without concern that their benefits come as a result of skin color privileges. He or she can benefit from a greater mental freedom in that he or she no longer has to distort, deny, or avoid everyday realities. The result of this process is an integrated and complete human being (Carter, 1990, p. 207).

This chapter will establish the problem that can exist at a predominantly white institution with a traditionalistic campus culture, in addition to explaining the purpose of the study, followed by the research questions.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Racial identity development for white people in the United States, particularly white college students, is a topic that has not been widely researched. This is due in part to the relatively late arrival of white racial identity models, which did not emerge until the 1970s (Richardson & Silvestri, 1999). White racial identity models prompted the field of Critical Whiteness Studies, which developed and grew significantly in the 1990s. Critical Whiteness Studies has had a profound impact on the discussion of race. “From critical race theory of the legal profession to cultural studies, sociology, and American literature, whiteness is being interrogated and transforming the landscape of American racial discourse, research, and ideology” (Johnson, 1999, p. 1). Most early critical whiteness work was written by men of color for the purpose of challenging white supremacy (Johnson, 1999). Research was developed more steadily in the late 1990s; however literature examining racial identity development specific to white college students at predominantly white institutions remains minimal. Most research relating to racial identity development for college students is specific to students of color.

With a lack of understanding of racial identity development for white students, is the lack of education for white students on white racial identity and education generally related to race. This is due, in part, to most college campuses not requiring diversity programming for their students and many not even offering it. Diversity education

relating to race is particularly significant for students on college campuses where there have been increases in race-related incidents in recent years (Carter, 1990). Carter states

One shortcoming of antiracism training is that it doesn't explore differences in Whites' awareness of their status as racial beings...Whites seldom have an opportunity to examine the meaning of their Whiteness...Therefore, it seems important for counselors and educators to begin to consider how racist attitudes might be related to variations in white racial identity (p. 46).

Most diversity programs, or anti-racism programs, include education only about people of color, neglecting white as a race. According to Cary (2001) "Whiteness is a culturally constructed epistemological position of dominance effectively othering all considered non-white and creating the possibility of excluding them through objectifying and pathologizing their racial constructions" (pp. 422 – 423). If whiteness is not incorporated into diversity education, white students cannot begin to understand the impact of their race and the privilege associated with the white race. White privilege is defined as unearned benefits, which in our society, are determined by light skin color and the white race (McIntosh, 1988).

Generally speaking, racial identity development theory refers to "the belief systems that evolve in response to the racial group categorizations given meaning by the larger society. In societies like the U.S., where racial-group membership is an important determinant of social status, it is assumed that the development of a racial identity will occur, to some degree, in everyone" (Tatum & Lawrence, 1999, p. 2). Racial identity does not signify merely what an individual's race is; rather, Helms (1990) states that racial identity "refers to a sense of group or collective identity based on one's perception that he or she shares a common racial heritage with a particular racial group" (p. 3). Further, white racial identity refers to the "person of white European ancestry's

acknowledgement of shared racial-group membership with others of similar race...” (p. 5).

Without exploration of white identity development, societal messages of the dominant culture, or agents, are reinforced; this indicates that whiteness need not be studied because it is the norm. If whiteness is viewed as the norm, the implication is that any race other than white is perceived as abnormal. This perspective of abnormal contributes to notions of racism. “...prominent academics of color, such as Hooks (1990) and Spivak (1988), have repeatedly said that one of the most important efforts white people could undertake to address racism would be to examine self-reflectively how white racism works” (p. 119).

White students at predominantly white institutions are less likely than students of color to have an awareness of their racial identity. This is due to the fact that people of color do not have the luxury of being raceless in our society, in addition to the fact that often, white racial identity is based upon whites’ interactions with people of color (Helms, 1990). Without that interaction, it is unlikely that white individuals would ever attempt to critically understand their race and the implications of being white. “For Whites, the process involves becoming aware of one’s ‘Whiteness,’ accepting this aspect of one’s identity as socially meaningful and personally salient, and ultimately internalizing a realistically positive view of whiteness which is not based on assumed superiority” (Tatum & Lawrence, 1999, p. 2). According to Terry (1981), to own a white racial identity, we must first see racism, then admit that it exists, acknowledge that whites benefit from racism whether or not they want to and learn to define it as different from the racial prejudice that people have toward one another. “The process of transformation

in our racial identity development as white Americans ultimately forces us to embrace ourselves as both racist and antiracist” (Clark & O’Donnell, 1999, p. 2).

Recent changes in affirmative action policies may have created an increased awareness for white students regarding their racial identity, however this awareness is based on their sense of entitlement being placed in jeopardy. The fallacy of reverse discrimination has risen on college campuses, contributing to the lack of awareness regarding white privilege. When white students view students of color as receiving benefits based on their races, white students cannot acknowledge all of the privileges they have and maintain based on their white race. The discussion surrounding affirmative action has begun to place at risk the entitlement white students have been conditioned to expect. “Even those Whites who have not given much thought to their racial identity have thought about affirmative action” (Tatum, 1997, p. 114).

Predominantly white institutions of higher education should be responsible for providing a campus climate that is equitable and welcoming for all students, particularly students of color, who are underrepresented on these campuses. Additionally, institutions of higher education should be responsible for educating students not only about differences among people, but educating all students deeply about understanding themselves as well. Without the education and development of a positive white identity, racism is perpetuated. According to Kivel (2002) “Racism is based on the concept of whiteness – a powerful fiction enforced by power and violence. Whiteness is a constantly shifting boundary separating those who are entitled to have certain privileges from those whose exploitation and vulnerability to violence is justified by their not being white” (p. 15). Therefore, studies on racial identity and white privilege for white college students

are needed to interrupt racism on predominantly white campuses and to call into question accepted norms and cultures associated with the campus climate.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore white students' perceptions of race, racial identity and privilege as white students at The University of Texas at Austin (UT), a predominantly white institution of higher education. In addition to the participants' perspectives of racial identity and privilege, the campus climate, campus culture and actions of the institution were explored to determine the impact of predominantly white institutions on white students' perceptions of race, racial identity and white privilege.

The research questions that guided the study were:

1. What are the perceptions of white students regarding their race and racial identity?
2. What are the perceptions of white students regarding their racial privilege?
3. How do the campus climate and culture of the institution impact these perceptions?

### **Significance of the Study**

An outcome of this study was the identification of elements of a predominantly white institution and traditional campus culture, which contribute to a lack of racial identity development and denial of privilege for white students. Themes were identified regarding what predominantly white institutions can do to assist white students in the racial identity development process, and thus raise awareness regarding white privilege and how these notions contribute to racism.

This study extends the work that has been done regarding white racial identity development (Helms, 1984, 1990, 1995; Phinney, 1990; Hardiman, 1994) by examining the impact on white racial identity awareness and privilege for white students at a predominantly white institution. Further, this study contributes to college student development identity theory (Chickering, 1993) by examining a specific element of identity development not thoroughly explored. “Since institutions of higher education traditionally maintain the status quo, theories and models that explain how whites move from a racist to a nonracist perspective are important in creating equality and changing the power imbalance embedded in colleges and universities” (Evans, et. al., 1998, p. 87).

Since much of the current literature focuses on the impact of a predominantly white institution on students of color, this study expands the literature by exploring the impact of a predominantly white institution on white students. “[Yet] the theories and models available...represent only a tiny portion of what student affairs administrators need to know to ease the racial tensions prevalent on many campuses...and to create healthy campus environments in which students can explore this important dimension of their identity” (Evans, et. al., 1997, p. 87).

This study also furthered current research by examining the cumulative impact of white racial identity development, white privilege, predominantly white institutions, spirit organizations, traditionalistic campus culture, racism, and campus climate.

## **Definition of Terms**

For the purpose of this study, terms were defined as follows:

Agents: “Members of dominant social groups privileged by birth or acquisition, who knowingly or unknowingly exploit and reap unfair advantage over members of target groups” (Adams, et. al., 1997, p. 20).

Campus Climate: The “current perceptions, attitudes, and expectations that define the institution and its members” focusing on “specific sections or parts” (Bauer, 1998, p. 2).

Campus Culture: The “holistic, context-bound, and subjective set of attitudes, values, assumptions and beliefs” (Kuh & Whitt, 1988, p. 95).

Diversity Education: Educational programs provided to, or required for, college students that address the issue of race.

Predominantly White Institution: For the purpose of this study, institutions of higher education that have a white student population of 55% or more.

Privilege: “Unearned access to resources (social power) only readily available to some people as a result of their social group membership” (Adams, et. al., 1997, p. 73).

Race: A social-political construct of what it means to have certain physical features designed to categorize broad population groups in this country. This information is not anthropologically nor scientifically based (Helms, 1990; Adams, et. al., 1997).

Racial Identity: Sense of group or collective identity based on one’s perception, manifested in conscious or unconscious ways. A consciousness of one’s externally ascribed group membership (Helms, 1990; Carter & Thompson, 1997).

Racism: A *system* based on racial prejudices, involving cultural messages and institutional policies and practices as well as the beliefs and actions of individuals (Tatum, 2000).

Spirit Organizations: Registered student organizations that have “spirit” or “tradition” in their purpose; Spirit organizations serve to support the traditions and/or spirit of the institution.

People of Color/Students of Color: “People of African descent, people of Asian descent, people of Latin American descent, and indigenous peoples (sometimes referred to as Native Americans or American Indians)” (Tatum, 1997, p. 15).

Targets: “Members of social identity groups that are disenfranchised, exploited, and victimized in a variety of ways by the oppressor and the oppressor’s system or institutions (Adams, et. al., 1997, p. 20).

White: Americans of European descent (Tatum, 1997).

White Privilege: A set of unearned privileges and benefits afforded to white people in our society based solely on the color of their skin (McIntosh, 1988).

## **Delimitations**

The study only focused on white, undergraduate students at The University of Texas at Austin who were members of spirit organizations. The study did not attempt to evaluate current diversity education programs at The University of Texas at Austin. The study did not attempt to evaluate the participants to assess their level or stage of the racial identity development process. The study focused on race as the primary social identity. Other social identities such as level of ability, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and gender, although interrelated, were not considered to the same extent.

## **Limitations**

One limitation of this study lied in the difficult task of gaining white students as participants for the study. Because race can sometimes be a contentious issue and one that white people, specifically, are hesitant to discuss, gaining participation from white students was challenging. Many students are reluctant to discuss attitudes about race and ethnicity (Levine & Cureton, 1998). An additional challenge was gaining honest responses from the participants and not just having the participants tell the researcher what they thought was the right or politically correct response. Since the researcher was not an alumnus of any of the sample spirit organizations at The University of Texas at Austin, it may have been more difficult to garner support for the study.

The study was limited to white, undergraduate students attending The University of Texas at Austin, who were members of spirit organizations. Results cannot be generalized beyond this population.

## **Assumptions**

For the purposes of this study, the following assumptions were made. The institution plays a role or at least is partially responsible for the campus climate and culture that exists, as well as the education or information that is provided to students at the institution. An assumption was made that white students lack some level of awareness regarding their racial identity or the concept of privilege. This was not to say that no white students understand the implications of their race; rather, most white students do not have a positive racial identity and an awareness of the privileges they receive as a result of their race. An assumption was made that white racial identity awareness and an

understanding of white privilege is a positive and important component of the identity process.

## **Summary**

Awareness regarding race, racial identity, and privilege for white students at a predominantly white institution of higher education should be explored. College is a critical time when students develop their realities. Racial identity is an essential component of this process and is generally lacking for white students. With an understanding of their white identity comes the understanding of racial privilege as whites and an enhanced awareness of the association with racism.

This dissertation is organized in five chapters. Chapter Two provides a review of the literature regarding the identity process with regard to racial identity and college student development. It also provides discussion regarding key terms such as white privilege and campus climate. Chapter Three examines the qualitative framework utilized in the study. Data collection results and analysis are provided in Chapter Four. Chapter Five provides synthesis of the data and recommendations for future research and practice.

## **CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE**

The purpose of this chapter is to review the existing body of knowledge and literature related to white racial identity, white racial identity theories, and college student identity development. Specifically, information will be provided concerning campus climate, campus culture, spirit organizations, race, racism, and white privilege. The chapter concludes with methodological shortcomings.

### **Campus Climate**

Examining campus climate is essential to understanding the distinctiveness of an institution of higher education. Peterson and Spencer (1990) define three major facets of climate: 1) it examines common participant attitudes, perceptions, or observations that can be compared among groups or over time; 2) it focuses on current patterns of beliefs and behaviors; and 3) it is malleable in character (pp. 7 – 8). At a predominantly white institution, the climate can actually be seen as white.

One...reason for identifying academia as “White’ is that in many instances in predominantly White colleges and universities, the academic departments consist of a resounding majority of White faculty members. Thus, the demographics create an environment of ‘Whiteness’ ...the value systems upon which academic departments routinely function reflect the values of Western European, or White American cultural values. Furthermore, cultural racism within White academia is such that the White cultural values are strictly enforced and built into the power structure of academic departments (Cook, 1997, p. 101).

The phrase campus climate is often used to describe the racial climate at institutions of higher education. Campus climate relates to many aspects of the campus environment, but common attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs have a profound impact on the racial climate.

Racial climates are often marked by ambivalence, whereby organizations may claim to be concerned with certain important racial issues but will establish policies and practices that ignore or even refute these concerns. Excellent examples of this racial ambivalence are seen in the institutional practices of certain predominantly White universities. Key policymakers and administrators of these institutions may state that they intend to ensure that racially marginalized students feel a part of and are retained on their campuses (Carter & Thompson, 1997, p. 30).

The racial climate at institutions of higher education, and particularly predominantly white institutions, also plays an important role in students' concepts of racial identity development. Carter and Thompson (1997) state "Racial climate is influenced not only by the racial identities of coalitions within a group and organization and by the racial norm, but also by members' perceptions of power" (p. 31). In addition to climate in relation to racial identity, depending on the student, campus climate is often perceived differently. Hurtado, Carter, and Kardia (1988) present general findings of climate studies that indicate that "each racial and ethnic sub-group often has differing views on what diversity means to them and what kind of diversity would aid their comfort and satisfaction with campus life" (p. 56). The California Postsecondary Education Commission (1992) assert that colleges and universities "have a responsibility to provide a campus climate that is equitable for all students and that, further, a major criterion for assessing the overall quality of an institution is its ability to provide that equitable education" (Grieger & Toliver, 2001, p. 825).

Predominantly white four-year colleges and universities have a serious challenge in preparing all students to exist comfortably and competently in relation to diversity. As of 1994, African American and Hispanic students represented less than 4% of the total enrollment at these institutions (Carter & Wilson, 1994), and African American and

Hispanic persons represented less than 5% of all faculty (Reyes & Halcon, 1990). Equally disheartening are data regarding the persistence of underrepresented populations, which indicate that African American and Hispanic students are far less likely to attain either an associate's or bachelor's degree than are their white counterparts (Carter & Wilson, 1994; Nettles, 1994; Smith et. al., 1997).

The campus climate of most predominantly white institutions for students of color is not welcoming. Many campuses have recently experienced incidents of

Physical assault, threats of violence, graffiti, hate flyers, and racist...jokes and epithets...Also noted in the literature are feelings of social isolation, alienation and marginalization, stereotyping, invisibility, discriminatory treatment by faculty and staff, language barriers, difficulty with acculturation, a paucity of student services, few faculty and administrative role models, criticism for self-segregation, and hostility regarding affirmative action (Grieger & Toliver, 2001, p. 827).

Research has shown that attending college in a diverse educational setting is beneficial for all students.

A racially and ethnically diverse university student body has far-ranging and significant benefits for all students, non-minorities and minorities alike. Students learn better in such an environment and are better prepared to become active participants in our pluralistic, democratic society once they leave school. In fact, patterns of racial segregation and separation historically rooted in our national life can be broken by diversity experiences in higher education (Gurin, 1999, n.p.).

## **Campus Culture**

The culture of a campus is defined by many characteristics in synchronization with one another. Kuh and Whitt (1988) define culture as the “collective, mutually shaping patterns of norms, values, practices, beliefs, and assumptions that guide the behavior of individuals and groups in higher education and provide a frame of reference within which to interpret the meaning of events and actions” (pp. 12 – 13). Campus

culture is largely based on historical factors that resound to the present and are thus ingrained in the campus environment. Kuh & Whitt (1988) further describe culture as policies and processes, like decision-making, and the values and assumptions upon which policies and processes are based. Also relevant to this discussion is that the meaning of events cannot be separated from the institutional context. “What people attend to and how they interpret actions and events are filtered through lenses colored by past experiences, current circumstances, and personal agendas” (p. 95). Tradition is a significant part of the campus culture, resulting in established norms for the institution, students, alumni, staff, and faculty, and many times, the surrounding community. “Traditions, expectations, and routine practices are used to socialize new students and faculty into the norms and values of the institution...culture militates against, or engenders, the development of commitment, loyalty, and cohesiveness” (Kuh and Whitt, 1988, p. 95). While some aspects of a campus’ culture can be especially positive for an institution, once negative aspects of a campus culture are ingrained, they are not easy to undo. “...culture can be either a barrier to developing a sense of community or may serve as the glue that binds an institution” (pp. 95 – 96). When a racist culture exists it can be catastrophic and divisive to the campus environment. “Some aspects of student subcultures (e.g., racist behavior on the part of white students toward students of color)...can thwart attainment of institutional purposes as well as designate the integrity of individuals” (p. 96).

The culture of an institution of higher education is somewhat determined by geographical location. The traditionalistic political culture exists principally in the South (Fowler, 2004). Characteristics of a traditionalistic culture include: the belief that an established elite should provide leadership; maintaining the established order; and,

bringing about change with minimal disruption (Fowler, 2004). “Active participation in politics is considered a privilege that should be restricted to the members of the elite and those whom they invite to become involved” (p. 95). A major weakness of the traditionalistic culture is “its resistance to change [which] has been a major factor in perpetuating racism” (p. 97).

### **SPIRIT ORGANIZATIONS**

Spirit organizations are central to the discussion regarding a traditionalistic campus culture. Spirit organizations are registered student organizations that have some basis in supporting the spirit and traditions at The University of Texas at Austin (UT). Most of the spirit organizations at UT are single-sex organizations and the membership is predominantly white. Whether the organization focuses specifically on one aspect of UT spirit, such as a particular event, or is general in its scope to generate spirit for UT, the general notion of camaraderie surrounding traditions of the institution run throughout. Some of the organizations have existed on campus for a hundred years, while others were created within the last five years. All of these spirit organizations have one similar thread that connects them; they exist to perpetuate the spirit of UT on campus and in the community. From an outside perspective, these organizations seem quite similar both in purpose and in membership make-up. They appear to lack diversity in many aspects. Predominantly white organizations tend to perpetuate their membership as such because white students recruit new members like themselves. Many of these spirit organizations are very old and have not shed their racist underpinnings from inception, which discourages students of color to join. One example of this is an organization whose name

when first founded at UT in 1941 included the word “spook.” “Spook” is “a derogatory slang term for blacks which connotes danger, mystery, otherness. The word is also a synonym for ghost – an invisible presence, just as many of the underclass...remain invisible within mass culture” (Berson, n.d., n.p.). The “Spooks” changed their name in the 1960s. At one time their attire consisted of hoods, masks, and sheets. While the racist name was changed, the impact of a racist history still resonates today. Another example of racism in spirit organizations stems from a women’s organization founded in 1923. A personal account by one of the first African American members in the 1960s describes a painful experience that depicts the impact of such a racist history. When Linda\* (name has been changed) was tapped into the organization, several members came to her residence hall in the middle of the night. All of these women, white women, came and got her, blindfolded her, and tried to lead her out of her residence hall. Not understanding the impact on an African American person being blindfolded and led out of her residence hall by several white women, the organization members could not understand why Linda protested. While some of the racist elements of the organization may have been forgotten, these spirit organizations continue to be predominantly white organizations that neither examine nor deconstruct their racist histories.

## **Race and Ethnicity**

Essential to the discussion of predominantly white organizations and institutions of higher education are the terms race and ethnicity. In 1997 the United States Government Office of Management and Budget (OMB) adopted Statistical Directive 15 standards for maintaining, collecting, and presenting federal data on race and ethnicity.

The standards presented five categories for data on race: American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and White. There are two categories for data on ethnicity: “Hispanic or Latino” and “Not Hispanic or Latino.” These categories are defined as follows: American Indian or Alaska Native, a person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America), and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment; Asian, a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asian, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam; Black or African American, person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa. Terms such as “Haitian” or “Negro” can be used in addition to “Black or African American;” Hispanic or Latino, a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race. The term, “Spanish origin,” can be used in addition to “Hispanic or Latino;” Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands; White, a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa (“Office of Management and Budget,” 2004).

Zack (2001) dictates the assumption of three main human racial groups: white, black, and Asian. She goes on to state “Although different races have different histories and cultures, their histories and cultures are not part of the biological foundation of racial differences” (pg. 43). In fact, no data exist to support race as a useful biological concept to classify human beings (Zuniga & Castaneda, 2000). According to Smedley (1999) race

exists as a social reality but not as “something biological, tangible, and existing in the outside world that has to be discovered, described and defined, but as a cultural creation, a product of human invention” (p. 6). Carter and Thompson (1997) elucidate race as a social construction exercised by White Europeans and Americans to

establish social demarcations, elevate the White race, and justify the oppression and exploitation of certain ethnic groups who were presumed to be inferior in intelligence, physicality, morality, and culture. The institutionalized enslavement of Africans, the legal sanctioning of Jim Crowism, and terroristic acts committed against Blacks, Native Americans, Asian Americans, and Mexican Americans represented strategies carried out by Whites to justify the inherent and cultural inferiority of certain ‘racial’ groups relative to Whites (p. 3).

Frankenberg (1993) emphasizes the perspective of race as a social construction. “I have found most useful those analyses that view race as a socially constructed rather than inherently meaningful category, one linked to relations of power and processes of struggle, and one whose meaning changes over time” (p. 11).

## **Racism**

The perverse thing about growing up amidst racism is that no matter your own views, no matter your own commitment to resisting it, you inhale it anyway; you ingest it as surely as you ingest the oxygen without which you could not live. Having inhaled it, you are then always at risk of coughing it back up, of vomiting it back into the world from whence it came. This can take the form of something verbalized, or merely thought, which thought then runs the risk of affecting our behavior (Wise, 2005, p. 133).

While the word racism seems to have existed for quite some time, the first documented appearance of the term dates back to the 1930s in the second edition of *The Oxford English Dictionary* (Garcia, 2001).

Racism existed in our society long before the word was established. “From the time of formalized slavery to the present, whites have oppressed people of color through

the perpetuation of racism at every level of life. It is present in our institutions, our culture, and our individual actions” (Katz, 2003, p. 9). Racism creates an enduring circumstance where people of color are not treated as individuals, rather people of color are treated as a group.

...because they experience themselves collectively and historically as being treated differently based on their skin color, people of color learn to see themselves as a racialized people, as a social group defined by skin color. ..In addition, because racism is imposed by whites upon people of color, the racialized group sense that people of color have doesn't originate in their own group (Scheurich, 1997, p. 122).

Kivel (2002) points to Darwin's theory of species modification and Linnaeus's system of classification as one of the scientific definitions of race as a biological/genetic characteristic. This, among other theories, attempted to “classify the human population into distinct categories or races and put them on an evolutionary scale with whites on top” (p. 16).

Feagin (1984) defines racism as “an ideology which considers a group's unchangeable physical characteristics to be linked in a direct, causal way to psychological or intellectual characteristics, and which on this basis distinguishes between superior and inferior racial groups” (p. 5). Carter (1997) offers a different perspective, specifically with regard to cultural racism, as

The conscious or subconscious conviction that White Euro-American cultural patterns and practices, as reflected in values, language, belief systems, interpersonal interaction styles, behavioral patterns, political, social roles, economics, music, art, religious tenets, and so forth are superior to those of other visible racial/ethnic groups (Asian, Black, Hispanic, Indian Americans) (p. 200).

Jones (1972) identified three types of racism: 1) individual racism, individual beliefs that black people as a group are inferior to whites because of physical traits, social

behavior, and moral or intellectual qualities; 2) institutional racism, established laws, customs, policies, regulations, and practices which systematically maintain racial inequities in society; and 3) cultural, societal beliefs that the agriculture, economics, music, art, religious beliefs, traditions, language, and story of African peoples are inferior and the thought that suggests that these aspects have no distinction apart from those of mainstream white America. “Writers, historians, researchers, and activists have shown that racism is a social, political, economic, and psychological force that has permeated the lives and perspectives of both the oppressed and the oppressors” (p. 7).

There exists a common notion by whites today that racism is a thing of the past, improved by the ideal of multiculturalism embraced by Americans. Multiculturalism is “a significant and recent reflection of the long-continuing politics of identity in America...multiculturalism can be seen as a specific aspect of the broader movement of ‘political correctness,’ which is itself a product of the dynamics of the collective construction and reconstruction of identity in America” (Spencer, 1994, pp. 547 – 548). Multiculturalism has become a meaningless term that falsely connotes the eradication of racism.

A focus on the material and global relations of oppression can help us to avoid reducing the ‘problem’ of multiculturalism to simply one of attitudes and temperament or, in the case of the academy, to a case of textual disagreement and discourse wars. It also helps to emphasize the fact that in the United States the concoction called ‘multiculturalism,’ which has resulted from a forensic search for equality and the political ladling of the long-brewing ‘melting pot,’ has produced an aversion to rather than a respect for difference. Regrettably, multiculturalism has been too often transformed into a code word in contemporary political jargon that has been fulsomely invoked in order to divert attention from the imperial legacy of racism and social injustice in this country and the ways in which new racist formations are being produced in spaces culturally dedifferentiated and demonized by neoconservative platforms that

anathematize difference through attacks on the concept of heterogeneous public cultures (McLaren, 1994, p. 195).

Along with the notion of multiculturalism is the notion of whites' refusal to admit that racism exists at all. According to Scheurich (1997), the difference in how white people and people of color experience themselves is

crucial to understanding why whites misunderstand judgments that they are racist. When people of color assert that the academy is racist, individual whites in the academy, who do not see themselves as racist, are offended or think the judgment doesn't apply to them. People of color see this unwillingness of whites to acknowledge their racism as one way that white academics protect their position of privilege" (p. 122).

There are many reasons for whites' denial of their race and the implications of their race on people of color. This is another privilege white people experience and the continual denial allows them to fortify this privilege.

The majority of white Americans are confused or troubled in their thinking about racial matters because they deny easily ascertainable social realities – probably because they are generally conforming and lacking in introspection when it comes to many of their racial attitudes and views...it would likely be too disruptive of their self-concepts to accept the fact that they live in a very unfair and non-meritocratic society. If these whites admitted that significant black *disadvantages* existed, then, conversely, they would have to acknowledge that significant white *privileges* also exist (Feagin & McKinney, 2003, pp. 11 – 12).

One rationale for the prolongation of the existence of racism is that white people utilize racism as a strategy for preserving their white privilege.

On the simplest level, racist attitudes persist because racial inequality persists and the beliefs reflect it...White people in America can no longer ignore the problem, deny it, run away from it, or revert to old forms of suppression. At the same time, however, many demands made by black people, if implemented, could potentially involve losses of privilege to whites. How then, do white people currently explain the subordinate position of blacks and justify the advantaged position of whites?" (Wellman, 1977, p. 41).

According to Kivel (2002), racism itself is based on the notion of whiteness. “Whiteness is a constantly shifting boundary separating those who are entitled to have certain privileges from those whose exploitation and vulnerability to violence is justified by their not being white” (p. 15). White people typically distance themselves from racism by disconnecting from the label of racist. “Generally whites think of racism as voluntary, intentional conduct, done by horrible others. Whites spend a lot of time trying to convince ourselves and each other that we are not racist. A big step would be for whites to admit that we are racist and then to consider what to do about it” (Wildman & Davis, 1996, p. 21).

## **White Privilege**

Racism is a direct result of a lack of awareness or denial of white privilege. “The term ‘racism/white supremacy’ emphasizes the link between discriminatory racism and the privilege held by whites to ignore their own race” (Wildman & Davis, 1997, p. 318). White privilege is “the package of benefits granted to people in our society who have white skin; a parcel of privileges that white people have been granted, which allows them certain free passes to certain things in our society that are not easily available to people of color” (“Examining White Skin Privilege,” 2005). Bonilla-Silva (2003) introduces the concept of “racial structure” to describe the origination of white privilege. “When race emerged in human history, it formed a social structure (a racialized social system) that awarded systemic privileges to Europeans (the peoples who became ‘white’) over non-Europeans (the peoples who became ‘nonwhite’)” (p. 9). Examples of these societal privileges granted to white individuals include but are not limited to: greater access to

jobs and housing, better treatment in department stores, and not having actions of one individual represent the entire white race (McIntosh, 1998). McIntosh continues to describe white privilege as “an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, assurances, tools, maps, guides, codebooks, passports, visas, clothes, compass, emergency gear, and blank checks” (p. 291). White privilege is unavoidable for white people in America, even if they choose to ignore it. “In a white supremacist culture, all white people have privilege, whether or not they are overtly racist themselves” (Jensen, 1998, n.p.). Most white people do not recognize, nor want to recognize, their privilege or the implication of that privilege on society. “Even if a white academic strongly opposes racism in her or his intellectual work, she/he still benefits as a white from the inequitable social distribution of power and resources. There is no individual escape from one’s racial group” (Scheurich, 1997, p. 126).

Whiteness is so ubiquitous, so habitual, so imbedded that it exists even where and when most whites cannot see it. Stated or unstated, it is a fundamental given of this society. White prerogatives stem from the fact that society has, from the beginning, been structured in terms of white gains and white-group interest. Once this system was put into place in the seventeenth century, white privileges soon came to be sensed as usual and natural (Feagin, 2000, p 175).

While white privilege pervades our society, it is important to note, however, that all white people do not benefit from their whiteness equally. Socioeconomic status, gender, age, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, and mental and physical ability are all factors that affect our access to social influence (Tatum, 2002).

White privilege must be carefully defined because without acknowledging white privilege, many people can continue to deny it exists at all. Without exploring whiteness,

the concepts of white advantage and privilege are minimized in our society. We must not ignore that white is a creation, an invention.

The need to speak of whiteness further specifies what is at stake in speaking or racism in relation to white people...whiteness refers to a set of locations that are historically, socially, politically, and culturally produced and, moreover, are intrinsically linked to unfolding relations of domination. Naming 'whiteness' displaces it from the unmarked, unnamed status that is itself an effect of its dominance. Among the effects on white people both of race privilege and of the dominance of whiteness are their seeming normativity, their structured invisibility (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 6).

White privilege is something that is inherent, unobtrusive and inexorable. "...white privilege is not something that is taught and is not necessarily the result of overt white supremacist attitudes. White privilege is, rather, a result of a society that has been trained, as a whole, to be more accepting, understanding and forgiving of people with white skin" ("Examining White Skin Privilege," 2005). White privilege is the conundrum that permits white people in our society to maintain advantages and power. "The epistemology of whiteness is a culturally advantaged standpoint from which to maintain positions of privilege and power" (Cary, 2001, p. 423). White privilege is often unnamed and unnoticed. "The invisibility of privilege strengthens the power it creates and maintains. The invisible cannot be combated, and as a result privilege is allowed to perpetuate, regenerate, and re-create itself" (Wildman & Davis, 1996, p. 8).

In a racial hierarchical society...Whites are conferred power and advantages and people of color are confronted with (and resist) systematic social and economic disadvantages. Depending on nonracial social identities (e.g., class, gender, and sexual orientation), Whites differentially experience racial privileges on both macro levels (e.g., educational and economic) and micro levels (e.g., intrapsychically and interpersonally). Although Whites primarily benefit materially from racism, they are also confronted with a myriad of costs associated with White privilege (a corollary of racism), primarily on micro levels (e.g., psychological and interpersonal stress) (Casas, et. al., 2001, p. 269).

Grover (1997) challenges white people by holding white people accountable, in a satirical manner. “With your white privilege, there ought to be one or two white responsibilities” (pp. 34 – 35).

With the ideal of a society where white individuals recognize their white privilege, is the goal of a non-racist society; not a society where race is no longer acknowledged, or a colorblind society. “Defined simply, colorblindness says that our racial and ethnic group membership are irrelevant to our treatment. Consequently, we should not take race and ethnicity into account when forming impressions and making decisions” (Hitchcock, 2001, p. 55). With regard to white people and colorblindness “An affirmation of color blindness allows whites to ignore, deny, or disregard any notion that race matters in people’s lives” (DiTomaso, et. al., 2003, p. 196). Color-Blind Racial Attitudes (CoBRA) are similar to the ideology of white privilege in that this mentality denies the “existence of ideological and structural racism and to believe that race doesn’t play a meaningful role in people’s lived experiences” (Casas, et. al., 2001, p. 270). The notion of colorblindness is well intentioned; however treating everyone the same often times means treating everyone as though they operate from a white paradigm. “Specifically, ‘any other client’ implies ‘any other White client,’ betraying the fact that the helping professional is using White cultural values and norms as the standard of comparison for everyone else” (Norton & Coleman, 2003, p. 124). According to Hitchcock (2001), maintaining a colorblind perspective is a way to ignore race.

The phrase ‘colorblind white people’ is an oxymoron to colorblindness, yet the central, mainstream culture of the United States is still very white. This is not an accident, but rather a product of our national history...it involves naming race, generally in this case their own race...these same colorblind white people share a

cultural heritage with white supremacists as people of European descent” (Hitchcock, 2001, p. 62).

Hitchcock continues indicating that to establish a goal of colorblindness means to think of seeing color as a bad thing. “Colorblindness spends a lot of time literally trying not to see color...If we truly are over our racism, how can we be so cynical to assume that looking at color will cause us to become, once again, unmitigated racists” (Hitchcock, 2001, p. 65). Colorblindness has also been referred to as racial harmony. From this perspective racial harmony seeks a society in which different racial groups live harmoniously and interdependently with one another on a plane of equality” (Blum, 2002, p. 94). Despite historical representations and modern day examples of racism, still many individuals in our society insist on the idea of colorblindness (Hitchcock, 2001). “Finally, colorblindness, while voiced to various degrees by all Americans, is voiced most strongly by white Americans. Americans of color frequently regard it with a suspicious gaze. This seems peculiar, since colorblindness characterizes itself as a benefit to the racially oppressed” (Hitchcock, 2001, p. 54). White people utilize their racial privilege to avoid acknowledging race at all.

Whites do not look at the world through a filter of racial awareness, even though whites are, of course, members of a race. The power to ignore race, when white is the race, is a privilege, a societal advantage...The perpetuation of white supremacy is racist. All whites are racist in this use of the term, because we all benefit from systemic white privilege” (Wildman & Davis, 1996, p. 20 – 21).

## **White Racial Identity**

Acknowledging the existence of white privilege is generally a component of the white racial identity development process. This can be difficult to achieve because white people are generally not taught to be aware of themselves in the context of race. “...in

everyday language, there is little recognition of the fact that race has personal psychological significance for Whites and, as such, is an aspect of each person's personality and developmental processes" (Carter, 1997, p. 199). Tatum (1997) maintains that many white people either have not thought about their race or have thought about it and feel guilt and shame as a result. "White is transparent. That's the point of being the dominant race. Sure, the whiteness is there, but you never think of it. If you're white, you never *have* to think of it" (Grover, 1997, p. 34).

Historically, designations of their own such as French, German, and Italian became white (Frankenberg, 1993; Kivel, 2002; Guglielmo, 2003) as a way to achieve, and then maintain, positions of power.

Immigrating to the United States, Italians, like all others arriving on America's shores, were made to fill out a standardized immigration form. In the box for race, they faced two choices: North Italian or South Italian. On the line requesting information on color, they wrote simply 'white.' By World War II, the only option they had for race and color questions was 'white.' This identification is suggestive of the many ways in which Italians became white on arrival in the United States. While many suffered from racial prejudice and discrimination, they were nonetheless viewed as white, with all the privileges this color classification bestowed... (Guglielmo, 2003, p. 1).

White is a creation, a political fiction used to harm and oppress others (Jay, 2002). The white race not only harms and oppresses, but the benefits associated with whiteness are so ingrained, it has become a deeply woven fiber that is neither challenged nor doubted.

Recently, issues relating to affirmative action policies on college campuses have resulted in increasing awareness for white students regarding their race. This is in part because white students sometimes become aware of their race when the entitlement they have previously experienced has been threatened or compromised. "Much of white America functions with benefit of a remarkable state of amnesia with regard to the 250

years of history in which black people were totally excluded, either by law or by public etiquette, from admission to American colleges and universities” (n.a., 1995, p. 20). Many white students now feel that they have been victims of reverse discrimination as a result of affirmative action policies for college admission. “And if white folks remind each other about being white, too often the reminder is about threats by outsiders – nonwhites – who steal white entitlements like good jobs, a fine education, nice neighborhoods, and the good life” (Grover, 1997, p. 34).

Public opinion polls show that between half and three-fourths of whites believe that, as a group, they are routinely discriminated against. A 1999 poll, commissioned by the Seattle Times, found that 75% of whites agreed with the statement saying that ‘Unqualified minorities get hired over qualified whites’ most of the time or some of the time. Two-thirds said the same about promotion and 63% said the same about college admission (Pincus, 2001/2002).

White people in America have received and continue to receive so many messages of superiority in overt and covert ways that these messages have become ingrained to the extent that most whites do not even recognize their existence, let alone comprehend the messages or their impact. “Since white supremacist attitudes and values permeate every aspect of the culture, most white folks are unconsciously absorbing the ideology of white supremacy. Since they do not realize this socialization is taking place, many of them feel that they are not racist” (hooks, 1995, p. 267).

They [white people] are, in effect, still trapped in a history which they do not understand; and until they understand it, they cannot be released from it. They have had to believe for many years, and for innumerable reasons, that black men are inferior to white men. Many of them, indeed, know better, but, as you will discover, people find it very difficult to act on what they know. To act is to be

committed, and to be committed is to be in danger. In this case, the danger, in the minds of most white Americans, is the loss of their identity (Baldwin, 1963, pp. 8 – 9).

Many white people attempt to distance themselves from the designation of white by identifying as American instead. “In the United States the concept of who is an American is often conflated with who is white” (Kivel, 2002, p. 22). Grover (1997) questions the entitlement of white people to a land that does not belong to the people who claim it. “Is ‘white culture’ really *white* culture? Or is it just American culture, nothing more, and the white folks who think it’s white culture have just moved in like they’ve discovered it, like the white Europeans decided they’d discovered America and just moved in and took it over like they were entitled to it...” (p. 34).

### **White Racial Identity Development Models**

Several individuals have produced models to attempt to understand white racial identity development (Helms, 1984, 1990, 1995; Sue & Sue, 1990; Sabnani et. al., 1991; Hardiman, 1994; Rowe, Bennett, & Atkinson, 1994). White racial identity refers to “awareness of one’s own racial group membership, underlying race-related cultural values, and an understanding of the sociopolitical implications resulting from membership in a particular racial group” (Richardson & Silvestri, 1999, p. 49). White racial identity development begins when a person first realizes that people of color exist (Carter & Thompson, 1997). There has been some disagreement regarding the effectiveness of existing white racial identity models. “...most white identity development models focus on how whites view people of color rather than themselves;

thus their racial identity is conceived as a reflection of their views of ‘the other’” (Chesler, et. al., 2003, p. 217).

Helms’ (1984, 1990, 1995) evolving white racial identity development model, explores how whites develop their racial group membership and asserts that whites must attain a positive white racial identity based in reality, not assumed superiority. Helms’ model, which utilized the White Racial Identity Attitude Scale (WRIAS), has been utilized widely. According to Helms (1990) “The development of white identity in the United States is closely intertwined with the development and progress of racism in this country. The greater the extent that racism exists and is denied, the less possible it is to develop a positive White identity” (p. 49). Since Helms’ research, the body of knowledge on models of white racial identity has greatly increased, with the work of Ponterotto (1988), Phinney (1990), Sue and Sue (1990), Sabnani, Ponterotto, and Borodovsky (1991), and Rowe, Bennett, and Atkinson (1994). Most early white racial identity theorists drew from minority racial identity models. A criticism of this derivation is that as members of the dominant culture, whites experience a very unique perspective on our society, particularly when considering oppression and power in our society.

Originating from models of black racial identity development and using similar terms, white identity models fail to attend seriously to the quite different ways in which whites of different social classes and genders experience and incorporate race into their personal identities, especially how they do or do not account for their power and privilege (Chesler, et. al., 2003, p. 217).

White racial identity development is often referred to in levels, which are composed of “attitudes, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors toward both self as a member of the White racial group and members of nondominant racial groups” (Carter, 1997, p. 199). Focusing on white identity development, or whiteness, is not merely a way to shift

the focus back on white people, as has been done historically in our society. We must focus on the historical aspects of racial categorizations. “Scholars and activists critically interrogating whiteness seek to decenter rather than recenter whiteness by making performances of whiteness visible” (Cuomo & Hall, 1999, p. 3). While the models and theories may represent differences in scope, the common thread that runs throughout is that the highest stage or level “involves an awareness of personal responsibility for racism, consistent acknowledgement of one’s Whiteness, and abandonment of racism in any of its forms as a defining aspect of one’s personality” (Helms, 1990, p. 53).

### **HELMS**

Helms’ (1984, 1990) White Racial Identity Development model creates a means for individuals to acknowledge the reality of whiteness. “...if one is a white person in the United States, it is still possible to exist without ever having to acknowledge that reality” (Helms, 1990, p. 54). Without acknowledgement of whiteness, racism is perpetuated. The White Racial Identity Development Model contains six statuses, formerly five stages, which are part of two phases. The phases are the abandonment of racism and defining a non-racist white identity (Helms, 1994). Helms originally developed the five-stage process, including attitudes, emotions, and behaviors. A sixth stage was added to reflect Hardiman’s (1979) assertion that self-examination is an important component in defining a positive white identity (Helms, 1990).

The first status of Helms’ revised White Racial Identity Development Model (1994) is the Contact status. An individual can enter the contact status one of two ways, either by way of curiosity or with trepidation. An individual in Contact “automatically

benefits from institutional and cultural racism without necessarily being aware that he or she is doing so” (Helms, 1990, p. 55). Tatum (1997) likens this lack of awareness to “breathing the smog,” or internalizing the societal stereotypes of people of color. For entering students to an institution of higher education, they may enter the Contact status if they are having interactions with people of color that they did not have previously. If the institution is not diverse, the white students are less likely to interact with students of color. In initial interactions with people of color, whites are likely to use people of color to educate them about what people of color are like. Important aspects of Contact are the emotions of fear and caution. This is grounded in the assumptions that much of the information whites receive about people of color is negative. With the false information, whites are not encouraged to interact with people of color and are unlikely to question or think critically about their own racial perspective. Once whites have received information through contact with people of color, they eventually must acknowledge that whites are treated differently than people of color in our society.

Through repeated personal encounters and interactions with people of color, whites can enter into the next status, Disintegration. According to Helms (1990) “entry into the Disintegration status implies conscious, though conflicted, acknowledgement of one’s Whiteness. Moreover, it triggers the recognition of moral dilemmas associated with being White...” (p. 58). Once awareness about the societal inequities that exist for people of color is established, it is difficult to ignore or avoid. According to Tatum (1997) the new awareness is typified by discomfort. “The uncomfortable emotions of guilt, shame, and anger are often related to a new awareness of one’s personal prejudices or the prejudices within one’s family” (p. 97). At this point, the individual not only questions

personal and family prejudices, but also questions those racial realities she or he was taught to receive.

At the Reintegration status, the individual acknowledges their white identity. “He or she comes to believe that institutional and cultural racism are the White person’s due because he or she has earned such privileges and preferences” (Helms, 1990, p. 60). Individuals at this status may either avoid situations where they might encounter people of color or they may treat people of color as inferior to protect their white privilege. Collusion is common at this status as the pressure from peers and others can be intense and influential. Once the inequities for people of color in our society are visible, it is difficult to ignore the existence. “The conflict between noticing and not noticing generates internal tension, and there is a great desire to relieve it” (Tatum, 1997, p. 101).

The next status is the Pseudo-Independent status. This status represents the first status toward redefining a positive white identity. “...in this status the person begins to acknowledge the responsibility of Whites for racism and to see how he or she wittingly and unwittingly perpetuates racism” (Helms, 1990, p. 61).

Immersion/Emersion is the next status. This status represents a process of redefinition where individuals critically examine who they are racially and what implications that knowledge bears.

The last status is Autonomy, which represents the internalization of a positive identity. This status is “evidenced by a lived commitment to anti-racist activity, ongoing self-examination and increased interpersonal effectiveness in multiracial settings” (Tatum & Lawrence, 1999, p. 3). At every status, apart from Autonomy, there is a correlation with individual, institutional, and cultural racism.

White college students cannot be categorized as primarily being at one status or stage or another. According to Helms (2004), in her White Racial Identity Model “most White students are not anywhere. Rather, I conceptualize them as manifesting different levels of each of the racial identity statuses, ranging from none at all to the maximum amount. It is possible that most students are undifferentiated with respect to identity” (Helms, J.E., personal communication, November 16, 2004). It is also important to note that Helms places emphasis on white racial identity in relation to “Blacks” specifically, referencing other people of color intermittently.

#### **JACKSON AND HARDIMAN**

Jackson and Hardiman’s (1983) Racial Identity Development Model, presents five stages for white individuals to develop a positive racial identity.

At stage one no social consciousness exists. In this stage white individuals see themselves as normal and all others as different. Acts of prejudice are unconscious but individuals may at times deliberately and consciously act on prejudices as well. Individuals are generally not aware, at this stage, of their privileges and unearned benefits they receive as a result of their dominant group membership.

Stage two is Acceptance. At this point individuals accept stereotypical messages about racial groups. With this concurrence comes active acceptance that expressions are overtly within the belief that white people are superior and passive acceptance, which is an unconscious identification with being white. Stage two is characterized as both passive and active. An unconscious identification with being white is exemplified as passive

acceptance whereas expressions of beliefs of white superiority are considered active acceptance.

The third stage is Resistance. This occurs as the white person encounters information that conflicts with previous beliefs about race. This prevails through either active resistance, which entails ownership in perpetuating racism or passive resistance, in which there is an awareness of racism, but no behavioral changes take place.

Redefinition is the fourth stage. At this juncture the individual may see her/himself with an affirmation of the positive aspects of white culture. This can include challenging racism in a more proactive way. At the final stage, Internalization, non-racist attitudes and behavior become spontaneous expressions of self.

#### **ROWE, BENNETT, AND ATKINSON**

Rowe, Bennett, and Atkinson (1994) challenged other white racial identity models, which focused on attitudes of white people toward people of color without including how white people viewed their own group. Additionally, Rowe, et. al. articulated trepidation towards Helms' most recent status model for white racial identity "with regard to its exclusive focus on Blacks, the conceptual similarity to minority identity models, and the developmental nature of the model" (Leach, et. al., 2002, p. 68). They were also concerned that "the White identity statuses mainly describe different levels of sensitivity to other racial/ethnic groups but little about a White identity" (p. 68). According to Rowe, et. al. (1994) two forms of identity statuses exist, achieved and unachieved. These two forms of identity statuses comprise seven attitude types. Within the achieved statuses, four internalized attitude types exist:

*Dominative* attitudes refer to strong ethnocentric perspectives that justify the oppression of minority groups. *Conflictive* attitudes reflect opposition to discriminatory practices and opposition to programs designed to reduce or eliminate such discrimination. *Reactive* attitudes entail recognition that White society wrongly benefits from and promotes discriminatory practices. *Integrative* attitudes refer to comfort with one's Whiteness and with minority groups (Richardson & Silvestri, 1999, p. 51).

Three attitude types exist within the Unachieved Attitude Types: 1) Avoidant Types, that ignore the significance of racial issues for themselves and others; 2) Dependent Types, base their racial attitudes on the attitudes and opinions of others; and 3) Dissident Types, are often in transition and are uncertain about racial issues (Carter & Thompson, 1997).

## **College Student Development Theories**

Expanding on racial identity development, the time when college students participate in higher education is critical in terms of their overall identity development.

[This is]...a time during which they define themselves in relation to others and experiment with different social roles before making permanent commitments to occupations, social groups, and intimate personal relationships. In addition, for many students college is the first sustained exposure to an environment other than their home communities (Gurin, 1999, n.p.).

Student development theories provide the foundation for student affairs practice, particularly in regard to creating and developing educational environments, which can effectively meet the needs of college students.

Knowledge of student development theory enables student affairs professionals to proactively identify and address student needs, design programs, develop policies, and create healthy college environments that encourage positive growth in students. Because student development theories focus on intellectual growth as

well as affective and behavioral changes during the college years, they also encourage the collaborative efforts of student services professionals and faculty in enhancing student learning and maximizing positive student outcomes in higher education settings (Evans, et. al., 1998, p. 5).

A modest amount of attention has focused on how racial identity affects the daily lives and decision making of college students (Evans, et. al., 1998) and no theories exist in the realm of college student development that directly address white racial identity development for college students. Many student affairs practitioners draw upon Helms' White Identity Development Theory and apply it to college students; however, little data exist that articulate specific issues for white racial identity development in college students. Current literature focuses generally on student development, considering race or ethnicity as a background factor for students. Since the mid 1960s student development theories and models have evolved, exploring how students learn, develop and succeed in college. Most student development theories that consider race examine the implications of underrepresented student populations and the racial make-up of a specific institution. For example, Tinto (1987) focused on the retention of African American students at predominantly white institutions.

### **ERIKSON, CHICKERING, & REISSER**

Many college student development theories, rooted in psychosocial perspectives, stem from Erikson's human development model (Evans, et. al., 1998). Erikson's eight-stage theory was the first to describe identity development and focuses on the psychosocial crises that individuals must overcome. Within these stages, developmental tasks, or issues, must be addressed. As Erikson indicates, each stage occurs when internal psychological and biological changes interact with external social demands and, thus,

create a developmental crisis (Erikson, 1959). With Erikson's psychosocial foundation, student development theorists began to apply Erikson's notions to college students.

Chickering expanded upon Erikson's theory first in 1969 and again in 1993. Chickering and Reisser (1993) proposed seven stages of college student development, called vectors, which are "major highways for journeying toward individuation" and contribute to identity formation (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 35). The vectors are: 1) developing competency; 2) managing emotions; 3) moving through autonomy toward interdependence; 4) developing mature interpersonal relationships; 5) establishing identity; 6) developing purpose; and 7) developing integrity. Establishing Identity is the vector that applies directly to racial identity development. According to Chickering and Reisser (1993) "establishing identity...involves growing awareness of competencies, emotions and values, confidence in standing alone and bonding with others, and moving beyond intolerance toward openness and self-esteem" (p. 173). Attempting a holistic approach to identity development, Chickering and Reisser (1993) focus on the following elements of identity: 1) comfort with body and appearance; 2) comfort with gender and sexual orientation; and 3) sense of self in a social, historical, and cultural context. The attention to identity in a cultural context focuses only on the identity development for students who are African-American, Native American, Asian American, Hispanic, and Mexican-American. No mention is made of white students in the identity development arena. This omission represents the prevalent ideology that white students need not explore their identity in relation to race because as white people, their race is not only static but conventional and racially void.

## **Methodological Shortcomings**

Most studies that have investigated white racial identity for college students were conducted utilizing Helms' (1990) White Racial Identity Attitude Scale (WRIAS). Therefore, most studies were conducted employing quantitative research methods. A qualitative study provides a narrative-like context for understanding students' individual perspectives on white racial identity, white privilege and the campus culture and climate. Previous studies (Christensen, 1997; O'Meara, 2001; Kyle, 2001; Ellis, 2002; Hutcherson, 2003) all utilized methods relying on Helms' (1990) White Racial Identity Attitude Scale or Phinney's (1992) Multi-group Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) when examining white racial identity development. Kyle (2001) specifies the need for further research revolving "around the meaning of these ideas and the dialogue that follows...using...Qualitative research methods...to render meanings from the arguments would do much more to further this area of inquiry" (pp. 60 – 61). O'Meara (2001) indicates that "both the fields of psychology and education would benefit from research on how to tap into other areas of White racial identity development" (p. 151). Additionally, continued research on white college student racial identity is critical to the field of student affairs. "Helping majority students...find avenues for exploring their identity can help curb and eventually eliminate violent hate crimes and other discriminatory practices against racial and ethnic minorities on college and university campuses..." (Evans, et. al., 1998, p. 88).

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **CRITICAL THEORY**

Research on racial identity and white privilege is based on the theoretical framework of critical theory. Many critical theorists began based on their own histories and experiences with personal oppression (Crusoe, 1999).

Critical Race Theory was birthed out of the Critical Legal Studies movement, which questioned the objectivity and neutrality of the law. When it was determined that Critical Legal Studies was not taking race into account in a meaningful way, a Critical Race Theory movement began (Brown, 2003, p. 1).

Critical race theory expands upon the foundation of critical theory. “The critical race theory (CRT) movement is a collection of activists and scholars interested in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 2). Using critical discourse, this study examines whiteness in relation to racism in higher education. “If racism were merely isolated, unrelated, individual acts, we would expect to see at least a few examples of educational excellence and equity together in the nation’s public schools” (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 52). According to Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), many critical race theorists believe that critical race theory is based upon three concepts: 1) Much of reality is socially constructed; 2) Stories provide members of outgroups a vehicle for psychic self-preservation; 3) The exchange of stories from teller to listener can help overcome ethnocentrism and the dysconscious conviction of viewing the world in one way. Racism in education is an issue that has been historically overlooked. “...we have argued the need for a critical race theoretical perspective to cast a new gaze on the persistent problems of racism in schooling. We have argued the need for this perspective because of the failure of scholars to theorize

race” (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 55). Accordingly, critical race theory is one of the few methodological theories that address the concept of white privilege through a historical record that permeates our society still today. “...more pernicious and long lasting than the victimization of people of color is the construction of whiteness as the ultimate property...whiteness – that which Whites alone possess – is valuable and is property” (p. 54). The use of stories, as utilized in this study, is essential to critical race theory. According to Barnes (1990) “...much of the scholarship of CRT focuses on the role of ‘voice’ in bringing additional power to the legal discourses of racial justice. Critical race theorists attempt to inject the cultural viewpoints of people of color, derived from a common history of oppression, into their efforts to reconstruct a society crumbling under the burden of racial hegemony” (Ladson-Billings, 2000, p. 265).

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this chapter is to reintroduce the purpose of the study and research questions, to communicate the research design that is the basis for this study and describe the sample, data collection, and data analysis for the study. The researcher utilized qualitative research methods, including interviews, to ascertain an understanding of white students' perceptions of their race and racial privilege at a predominantly white institution of higher education. The chapter expands on the methodological basis and theoretical constructs, concluding with a summary of the chapter.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore white students' perceptions of their race and racial privilege as white students at The University of Texas at Austin, a predominantly white institution of higher education. Additionally, the campus climate and campus culture were examined, through the students' perceptions and voices, to determine the impact of predominantly white institutions on white students' understanding of racial identity and white privilege.

The research questions that guided this study were:

1. What are the perceptions of white students regarding their race and racial identity?
2. What are the perceptions of white students regarding their racial privilege?
3. How do the campus climate and culture of the institution impact these perceptions?

## **Research Design**

### **QUALITATIVE INQUIRY**

Drawing from critical perspectives, research was conducted utilizing qualitative inquiry through participant-oriented methods. There are many different components that make up qualitative inquiry and, thus, interpretivist research. Examples of these components include ethnography, hermeneutics, case study, or phenomenology. Tesch (1990) categorizes the types of qualitative inquiry into four areas of research: characteristics of language (i.e., discourse analysis, ethno-science, symbolic interactionism, and others); discovery of regularities (grounded theory, critical research, ethnography, and others); discerning meaning (phenomenology, case study, life history, and hermeneutics); and reflection (educational connoisseurship, reflective phenomenology, and heuristic research).

Drawing upon the history of feminist interview research (Reinharz, 1992), the researcher utilized qualitative method in conducting an interview research study. Interviewing was utilized, as the data-gathering technique that dominates qualitative inquiry. As Patton (1990) maintains, “The purpose of interviewing is to find out what is in and on someone else’s mind” (p. 278). Through the use of interviews, the researcher explored white students’ perceptions of race and their experiences as white students at The University of Texas at Austin. Each participant’s response was interpreted by the researcher as the researcher’s questions were interpreted by each participant. According to Scheurich (1997)

the researcher has multiple intentions and desires, some of which are consciously known and some of which are not. The same is true of the interviewee. The

language out of which the questions are constructed is not bounded or stable; it is persistently slippery, unstable, and ambiguous from person to person, from situation to situation, from time to time” (p. 62).

Peshkin (1991) articulates this point in relation to subjectivity. “Whatever the substance of one’s persuasions at a given point, one’s subjectivity is like a garment that cannot be removed. It is insistently present in both the research and nonresearch aspects of our life” (p. 286). The researcher explored each student’s individual understanding and experience of the campus culture, campus climate, racial identity and privilege. The researcher periodically engaged in multiple interviews with which the researcher designed and redesigned the interview structure as the interviews proceeded. Individual, rather than group interviewing, was employed. Because the sample was from a specific type of student organization, there was great potential for the participants to know one another and thus, not answer the questions honestly in a group setting for fear of how they might be viewed by their peers. Unstructured, rather than structured, interviewing was utilized. “Unstructured interviewing can provide a greater breadth of data than the other types, given its qualitative nature” (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 652). Specifically, the researcher relied upon in-depth, ethnographic, interviews (Fontana & Frey, 2000). The interviews contained semi-standardized questions asked of the participants, however the researcher maintained the autonomy to ask different follow-up or new questions depending on the participants’ responses. This allowed the participants to speak in their own voices, using their own language, and to some degree, control the flow of the subject matter (Mishler, 1986).

Qualitative inquiry is appropriate for this study due to the gap that exists in the literature, as articulated in Chapter Two. Many quantitative studies have been conducted

utilizing Helms' White Racial Identity Attitude Scale (WRIAS). Researchers (Kyle, 2001; O'Meara, 2001; Chizhik & Chizhik, 2002) have indicated that future studies should be conducted qualitatively, using interviews, to gain a better understanding of college students' perceptions of racial identity and social justice discourse. To gain further insight into how concepts such as racial identity and privilege intersect with concepts such as campus climate and campus culture, it is appropriate to interview participants in an open-ended format to assess individual perspectives and experiences.

The strengths of utilizing qualitative methods involve the depth of data that was gained. By using an open-ended interview format, rather than a specified survey design, the researcher was able to trace themes among participants and ask for expansion on those themes.

#### **SAMPLE**

Prospective subjects for this study were identified through spirit organizations, as defined in Chapter One, within the campus activities area of the dean of students office at The University of Texas at Austin. Spirit organizations were identified because they are perceived as predominantly white organizations rooted in traditions and pride for the University. The spirit organizations vary in membership make-up with regard to gender, year in school, and academic major. The researcher was familiar with the organizations as a student affairs practitioner at the University. Though some researchers advise against conducting backyard research, conducting this study where the researcher was familiar with the institutional culture was beneficial to the study (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Glesne, 1999). Conducting this research at The University of Texas at Austin was

important for several reasons. The University has national standing as a reputable institution of higher education, a rich campus climate based on tradition, and is a predominantly white institution where many publicized racially motivated incidents have taken place as recent as 2005. Some of these incidents will be described in Chapter Four.

The researcher recognized the challenges associated with conducting research in her own backyard including the quandary of separating her professional role from that of her researcher role. Cassell (1982) points out that the dynamic between interviewer and interviewee can be distinctive based upon four dimensions: 1) the relative power of investigators, as perceived by subjects; 2) control of the setting where research takes place; 3) control over the context of research, and 4) control over research interaction. The researcher took these dimensions into consideration throughout the interview process. “In psychological experimentation, then, researchers have high-to-medium perceived power, high-to-low control of the setting, and high-to-medium control over contextual and interpersonal features” (Cassell, 1982, p. 12).

Of the eight total participants only one student noticeably recognized the researcher as a campus administrator. The researcher chose to address her role as an administrator and researcher and ensured that the participant felt comfortable and would not alter his responses as a result. The student was also a fourth-year student and would not be working with the researcher as an undergraduate student at the institution in the future. The researcher disclosed her administrative role to two other participants. One participant worked closely with students with whom the researcher had close relationships. The researcher thought there might be potential for the participant to recognize this and wanted to ensure the comfort of the participant. The other participant

to whom the researcher disclosed her administrative role at the University, inquired about a course co-instructed by the researcher. At the conclusion of the interview the researcher provided information on the course and informed the participant that the researcher was a co-instructor. The participant had the opportunity to withdraw from the study but chose not to. The researcher will not be in a position to directly instruct or grade the participant in the future and this was explained to the participant. While this did present some additional challenges to the researcher, there is also great benefit in the researcher's position as an administrator at the University. Throughout the researcher's employment at the University, she has had the opportunity to engage in dialogue and discussion with students about race and white privilege. Through these conversations, presentations, panels, classes, and programs the researcher has become keenly aware of white student perspectives at the University. This background knowledge helped the researcher to develop appropriate interview questions and also prepared the researcher for potential interview responses.

#### **SAMPLING METHOD**

Purposeful sampling is the sampling method that was employed. "The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting *information-rich* cases for study in depth" (Patton, 1990, p. 169). Within the realm of purposeful sampling, homogeneous sampling was utilized. Homogeneous sampling requires that the researcher select all similar cases in order to describe a subgroup in depth (Clark, 1998). These methods were used to make certain that the researcher could seek out participants who were all white students and

members of spirit organizations at The University of Texas at Austin. By interviewing each participant, in depth information was obtained about students' experiences.

Gaining access to particular student organizations can be difficult, especially when the researcher neither was a member of one of the sample student organizations, nor attended the institution as an undergraduate, as in the case of this study. Since the researcher was a white woman within 10 years of age of most of the participants, this may have created an element of ease in working with participants once the interviews began. This information was not provided to the potential participants through the introductory email, however (Appendix A). The researcher began by conducting a web-based search for officers of currently registered spirit organizations. Through the University website approximately 20 student organizations were identified using key search words such as "spirit," "tradition," and "university." Acknowledging the importance of first making contact with the organizations' gatekeepers (Glesne, 1999), the researcher contacted approximately five officers from each organization to obtain participants for the study. The officers were asked via email to forward the request to members of their organizations. The potential participants were told that white students involved with spirit and traditions at The University of Texas at Austin were being sought to describe their experiences on UT's campus. The potential participants were told they would participate in a maximum of three total interviews with the researcher for one hour per interview. The organizations ranged in size from approximately 10 members to approximately 800 members. With a potential to reach an estimated 2000 students, only one student contacted the researcher for participation in the study. Utilizing snowball sampling, the one participant was asked for other names of potential participants.

Snowball sampling is when the researcher obtains knowledge of potential participants through individuals who can identify people who meet the interests of the study (Wright & Decker, 1997). The researcher also gathered names from University staff members and other students and those students were contacted directly. The researcher modified the study and the participant consent form and after Institutional Review Board approval, offered compensation for participation in the study (Appendices B & C). Participants were then offered \$10 per hour of interview time. Several more students elected to participate and shared names of other potential participants. Several students responded back with questions about the study. One student challenged the study, specifically questioning the researcher's statement that the University was a predominantly white institution and suggested conducting the study at another institution, which the student perceived to be less diverse. Several potential participants did not show up for their interviews and eventually did not participate.

As expected and discussed in Chapter One, obtaining participants for the study was a challenging process. The researcher intended to interview a minimum of 10 participants; however, obtaining participants for this study was difficult. The researcher corresponded with 15 total potential participants, however seven of those potential participants eventually chose not to participate. In total eight participants were interviewed. After eight participants were interviewed, it was determined that saturation in the data was reached. The participants were interviewed from anywhere between one and two and one half hours.

## **Data Collection**

### **SETTING**

The University of Texas at Austin is a large, public, research institution located in the state capitol of Austin, Texas in the United States. The University of Texas at Austin is a predominantly white institution, with a current white student population of 59%. There has been a consistently low number of African American students at UT and in the year 2004 UT had just 1,756 African American students out of 50,377 total students. Consequently, 29,539 of the 50,377 students were white students (“Fall Enrollment,” 2005). UT is located in a predominantly white city; and in a state with a southern, traditionalistic culture. A traditionalistic culture that exists at predominantly white institutions of higher education can translate in the frame of a racist culture as well (Fowler, 2004). At The University of Texas at Austin, as recent as 2005, publicized racially motivated incidents have occurred on UT’s campus including vandalism of the Martin Luther King, Jr. statue. In 2002 the statue was egged, in addition to other incidents that year, such as the racial profiling of an undergraduate African American student by the university police department and fraternity-sponsored events where guests were photographed in racially offensive costumes including blackface.

### **INSTRUMENTATION**

The researcher utilized researcher as instrument, thus enabling the ability to be adaptable and responsive. “It would be virtually impossible to devise *a priori* a non-human instrument with sufficient adaptability to encompass and adjust to the variety of realities that were encountered” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 39).

The steps to gather the data included: 1) obtaining information from the University, including approval from the Institutional Review Board (Appendix C); 2) submitting information to the registered student organizations including an introduction to the study (Appendix A); and 3) conducting the actual interviews.

Participants in the study were assured of confidentiality. To substantiate confidentiality, pseudonyms were assigned to each subject to protect anonymity. The data were coded according to the pseudonym of the participant; no real names were collected. Participants read and signed consent forms and had the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time (Appendix B). Respondent convenience was prioritized; the researcher met the schedules of the participants and obtained a convenient secure location to conduct the interviews. Audiotape recordings were made of the interviews to enhance the researcher's ability to establish rapport with the participants, the accuracy of the researcher's notes, as well as to ease the analysis process. All audiotapes and transcripts were kept in a secure location in the researcher's residence. These materials will be kept for a total of three years after completion of the study for potential further analysis. All interviews were based upon sample questions developed by the researcher based on the existing literature and research questions. The sample questions provided a guided framework (Appendix D). The initial questions were designed to allow the researcher and the participant to build rapport. Early questions asked of the participants' general experiences at the institution. Once the participant felt more at ease questions regarding race were incorporated. In some instances participants incorporated race into their early answers at which point the researcher relied upon the flexibility of the question design.

## **Data Analysis**

Data analysis “involves organizing what you have seen, heard, and read so that you can make sense of what you have learned” (Glesne, 1998, p. 130). Data analysis was conducted throughout the various stages of the study to enable the researcher to focus and adjust the study as it advanced. Data analysis is “but a creative interaction between the conscious/unconscious researcher and the decontextualized data which is assumed to represent reality or, at least, reality as interpreted by the interviewee” (Scheurich, 1997, p. 63). Coding was utilized to determine several topics for individual narrative sets of data. “Coding is a progressive process of sorting and defining and defining and sorting those scraps of collected data (i.e., observation notes, interview transcripts, memos, documents, and notes from relevant literature) that are applicable to your research purpose” (Glesne, 1999, p. 135). The interviews explored how the students felt about their overall experiences with the University, campus climate and campus culture, including traditions and racism; the discussion of racial identity and privilege; and the role of the institution in raising awareness for white students regarding their racial identity and privilege. Categorizing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was also employed to organize coded data into categories depending on similar characteristics. The researcher identified words, phrases, and sentences that were of relevance to the research questions. Using comparative pattern analysis (Patton, 1990), the researcher sought similarities and patterns found in the data. The key findings were transferred to index cards in addition to the corresponding page number and line number from the transcribed notes. The index cards were analyzed using comparative pattern analysis with categorization and subcategorization.

## **TRUSTWORTHINESS**

Trustworthiness, also called validity, is essential to the credibility of the study. Time at your research site, time spent interviewing, and time building sound relationships with respondents all contribute to trustworthy data. When a large amount of time is spent with your research participants, they less readily feign behavior or feel the need to do so; moreover, they are more likely to be frank and comprehensive about what they tell you (Glesne, 1999, p. 151).

The researcher used triangulation as the primary technique for establishing trustworthiness in the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), specifically using interviews, peer debriefing, and member checking. "...triangulation is the process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, showing the different truths about the phenomenon" (Wildy, 2003, p. 121). Peer debriefing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was utilized to reduce biases of the researcher and to ensure credibility for the study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) define peer debriefing as "a process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytic session and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer's mind" (p. 308). The individual the researcher selected for peer debriefing was qualified on the basis of completing a research study which also examined issues relating to racial identity, obtaining a Ph.D. in a similar scholastic arena, and having experience both as a faculty member and practitioner in college student affairs. The peer debriefer and the researcher met upon completion of participant interviews for a period of two hours. The meeting was audiotape-recorded with the consent of the peer debriefer (Appendix B). This was also approved through the Institutional Review Board, thus ensuring the capability of utilizing these data (Appendix C). During the meeting specific aspects of the interviews were discussed as well as discussing themes as they pertained to the research questions. Member checking (Glesne, 1999) was also utilized to ensure trustworthiness. Transcripts

of all interviews were shared with the participants for review and potential revision and to ensure that the participants' views were appropriately characterized. All interviews were audiotape-recorded, which allowed the researcher to review the interviews and generate additional questions. An additional aspect to ensure trustworthiness was a journal kept by the researcher. This documentary tool can "serve as a useful tool for describing the role of the researcher" (Janesick, 2000, p. 392). After completing each interview the researcher would journal about the experience. This included the participants' non-verbal behavior that would not be readily recallable from the transcripts. The researcher also recorded information in the journal following professional activities related to race. Examples of this include facilitating class discussions, both as an instructor and as a guest presenter, and national or local presentations.

#### **LIMITATIONS**

The limitations of utilizing qualitative methods are mainly due to the challenge of coding and tracing themes within the interview data. Gaining access to the student organizations, as previously discussed, was also a limitation. Once access was gained it was important for the researcher to establish rapport with the participants to ensure honest responses during the course of the study. "In qualitative research, rapport is a distance-reducing, anxiety-quieting, trust-building mechanism that primarily serves the interest of the researcher" (Glesne, 1999, p. 96). Rapport can either be enhanced or flawed due to the researcher's position at the University, as an administrator.

The lens of the research is restricted to the lens of the researcher as the researcher was the primary research instrument. For this reason it is important to identify the

realities of the researcher, which contribute to the perspective of the study. The researcher is a white, heterosexual, temporarily able-bodied, female, college administrator at The University of Texas at Austin where she is also a doctoral student. The social identity as a white person assumingly had the greatest impact on the study with the secondary identity of college administrator also bearing significance. As Scheurich maintains (1997) the interpretation by the researcher is affected by the positionality of the researcher herself.

“...the researcher brings considerable conscious and unconscious baggage – other related research, training within a particular discipline...epistemological inclinations, institutional and funding imperatives, conceptual schemes about story-telling or power, social positionality (the intersection of race, class, gender, sexual-orientation, among other key social locations), macro-cultural or civilizational frames (including the researcher frame itself); and individual idiosyncracies, the interactions of which are themselves complex and ambiguous” (pp. 73 – 74).

### **THE ROLE AND PERSPECTIVE OF THE RESEARCHER**

When checking out books from my college library, a female student of color working at the library, scanning my books, came across one particular book I was checking out and asked me a question. The book was *White Guys* by Fred Pfeil and her question was “*Isn’t everything already about white guys?*” Her question was simple yet profound and the answer was obvious yet complicated. The palpable answer is “yes, everything already *is* about white guys.” *Because* everything already is about white guys we don’t feel like we have to question, study, challenge or examine anything related to white guys or white people in general. This examination is not a way to re-center the ever-present white person. Rather, studies such as this one are a way to make visible issues that have opportunely remained invisible for too long.

This study was of personal, academic, and professional interest to me, the researcher. First, on a personal level, I have only recently begun to struggle with the impact of my whiteness and the privileges associated with that whiteness, existing in excess of 25 years without thinking much about it at all. I use the word struggle intentionally and hyperbolically. The fact is I have not struggled, nor do I continue to struggle when considering the many privileges afforded me that actually prevent me from struggling. Once aware of my whiteness, however, the struggle I reference which includes questioning myself and my actions, thoughts, and beliefs is, in and of itself a privilege. Struggling with whiteness is still a privilege because it is something I voluntarily elect to do. Likewise, I can remove myself from it at any point that I begin to experience some discomfort. It is a life-long process that I have just begun to embark upon. I too was an undergraduate white college student attending a predominantly white institution less than 10 years ago. As I have worked in the last 8 years in an administrative capacity with college students I have seen myself more times than not reflected back to me in the students with whom I have worked. As I have grown in my profession and dedicated more time to examining social justice issues I have also undergone critical personal growth around the specific issue of race. I self-identify as a racist. I do this not to lessen the intensity of the association to the word but because I know that I contribute to racism in overt and covert ways. This is not to say that I consciously make decisions to be a racist. I have 29 years of racist messages that have been absorbed that I continue to wrestle with. I have to consciously unlearn these messages and I have to own the privilege in that as well. I do believe that all white people are racist in some way. I do not believe that all white people are intentionally devising

ways to make the lives of people of color difficult. There are a lot of really nice, well-intentioned, racist white people out there – good people – and I believe that I am one of them.

I have engaged in many conversations with undergraduate students about race, mostly challenging white students around issues of privilege. Even though I have often been frustrated, angered, and saddened by what I observed and heard from white students, upon reflection it could have easily been me sitting in that room as an undergraduate student saying the very things that were frustrating, angering, and saddening to me as a facilitator. This sentiment is not to suggest that once white college students graduate they magically become sensitive, aware social justice beings. Rather, I have also been frustrated, angered, and saddened engaging in dialogue with colleagues, family members and friends who have mimicked much of what has been spoken by white college students. Most white people, once learning of my study on white racial identity either became immediately defensive about the subject, questioned the legitimacy of such a study, or began to engage in rhetoric about their own personal experiences with people of color, never about their own whiteness. Occasionally, if I did not clear the room, we could engage in a thoughtful conversation about the issue of race. These reactions have continually confirmed my belief that white people do not have to, so do not, discuss race or racism. The implicit reason for mostly reactions of defensiveness or novelty is that the issues around race, racism, and privilege for white people often times mean feelings of guilt for racism that exists inside of us but that we have spent our entire lives convincing ourselves, with the assistance of the rest of society, is not the case. Bringing this to the attention of white people, regardless of age, presents for many a splinter in their ship of

privilege and even the thought of just waters trickling in is too threatening to consider. All of the reactions, even from the white person completing the transcriptions for this study, have been significant. The transcriptionist could not bring herself to type the words “Nigger” and “Spic” even though clearly spoken by one of the participants. She felt as though typing those words was somehow a reflection on her. When I would pick up the transcribed tapes from her office she would often briefly reflect upon the interviews, at one point mentioning that it was making her think about what she wanted her own children to know. Somewhat more significant, from my perspective, was her assertion that the interviews were making her think about herself and her own behaviors, or as she said, things she does that she may not even realize.

I have also had the opportunity to be taught by many friends, colleagues, and students of color who have been patient and willing to invest in my awareness process. Through hearing experiences of people of color on this campus and hearing the denial of these experiences by white people on this campus I felt it was important to critically examine how whiteness and privilege prevent progress in the journey to eliminate racism.

## **Summary**

This chapter provided background information regarding the methodology and research techniques utilized for the purposes of this study. A qualitative methodology drawing from critical perspectives was used with an emphasis on purposeful and snowball sampling and interviewing techniques. The following chapter will provide further insight into the findings and analysis of the study.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION**

This chapter begins with a brief description of each of the participants in the study and follows with the findings and research analysis. The following themes developed through analysis of the data: 1) Normalizing Whiteness, 2) Jeopardizing Entitlement, 3) Perpetuating Racism, 4) Highlighting Privilege, and 5) Contributing Campus Elements. The themes were derived based on responses from the participants, which were coded and placed in categories and subcategories. The categories were aspects of the data that were central to the broader themes that developed. Within each category, subcategories emerged which were more specific, detailed examples of the themes. Excerpts from the participant interviews are also included in each section demonstrating the connection between the theme and the participants' voices.

### **Participants**

While this study is not generalizable to any population, the participants also do not represent what the researcher deduces as the general population of white students at The University of Texas at Austin. Their reasons for participation in the study were varied. Some of the participants had friends and peers who were students of color that had engaged them in conversations about race or had participated in diversity trainings in the past. For these participants, this was an extension, a continuation of those prior discussions. For others this was a unique opportunity to discuss race from a white student's perspective, perhaps for one of the first times while attending the institution.

Still for others, this was an opportunity to vent about frustrations around race and racism. Collectively, the participants were of varying gender and year in school. Intersections of gender and socioeconomic status became apparent when several

participants discussed these social identities. Although no one divulged her or his own sexual orientation, issues relating to heterosexism and homophobia were mentioned several times as some students attempted to either draw a parallel from heterosexism to racism or as a device to shift away from the focus of racism. No participants discussed her or his privilege in relation to identities other than race. In order to best capture the distinctiveness of each participant, following are brief descriptions and introductions of each participant. They are listed alphabetically by the pseudonym they each selected.

#### **ALLEN**

Allen was completing his junior year at the University at the time of the interview. Allen had been extremely active in many student organizations throughout his three years at the institution. He described his experience in extremely positive facets, most of which came from evolving perceptions related to diversity which resulted in a great amount of personal growth. Allen came to the interview ready to discuss issues relating to diversity. In fact, he began discussing diversity with virtually no prompts from the interviewer. He immediately began reflecting upon the value of what he described as a diverse population at the institution.

“[the experience has been] very positive. And I think it’s, as most students who come to UT, your perceptions change about a lot of things. It’s a time in your life where I think people from all over, many different types of people are thrown together and you have to interact with them. It kind of widens your scope of thinking a lot” Allen (Interview May 4, 2005, p. 1, lines 13 – 16).

The racial diversity of UT was a newer experience for Allen in the last two years, which he calls a “great” experience. This newer experience was brought about by his establishing close relationships with students of color. He indicated that he had been

somewhat insulated his first year at the Institution in a predominantly white spirit organization. Allen said that his high school was comparable in the racial breakdown to that of UT. Allen seemed excited about the study and the chance to openly discuss his opinions.

#### **ANNE**

Anne described her experience at the University as “eye opening” and a big change from the urban setting she grew up in, in the same state. Anne was extremely academically focused in her interview, stressing the importance of students being driven to succeed academically and being here to accomplish their goals. Anne described her race, at one point, as “Anglo-Saxon” and her ethnicity as “American.” While all participants struggled in some way to find the appropriate terms to identify students of color or people of color, Anne typically melded students of color and International students. She seemed to assume students of color on campus were students who were citizens of another country and living in the United States for academic purposes. Anne’s elementary, middle, and high schools were also predominantly white. Her high school, she pointed out was more diverse than her other schools, with a large Latino population, and much more diverse than the neighborhood where she grew up which was almost all white. Anne seemed somewhat disinterested and detached during the interviews and was very concise in her answers. One of the most interesting components of Anne’s interview was how she often referred to students of color as international students, not acknowledging that there were students of color on campus who were born in America and whose parents and grandparents were potentially born in America.

**BRAD**

Brad was a graduating senior, majoring in biology, at the time of his interview, after being at the institution for four years. He described his experience here as “the time of my life” reflecting specifically upon the “parties,” “academics,” and “athletic events.” Brad described his ethnicity as French-Canadian, English, and German. He indicated that he got everything out of college that he wanted to. Brad described the campus environment as “relaxed” and the actual campus as “pretty” and “small.” He spoke quite a lot about his involvement in traditions, athletics, and a spirit organization in which he had been a member for eight semesters. Brad appeared to be somewhat uncomfortable with the topic of race. He began our interview with very brief responses and as we continued further he began to express his passion for the various topics we covered. Essentially, he began to vent about some of his frustrations surrounding the issue of race. Brad was particularly focused on his perceived disadvantages as a white person.

**JACK**

Jack was a graduating senior, majoring in liberal arts, who attended a small private high school in the state. He was also fifth-generation of UT students in his family. His particular high school was predominantly white and about 40% Jewish. Jack did not indicate if he was Jewish, however. He did identify his high school with having students whose families were mainly upper class. Jack classified himself as upper middle class. His only experience with “lower class kids” was doing community service projects with his church or the few students in elementary and middle school who were bussed in from “across the highway.” Jack’s spirit organization supported traditions on campus and was particularly involved with athletics, namely football games. Jack also believed that he had

gotten “exactly what I wanted” out of his college experience. At different points in our conversation Jack appeared frustrated with the idea of wanting to do the “right” things. He seemed to struggle with the notion of potentially being misunderstood, presumably by people of color, and the complications that could arise and have come about as a result.

#### **LAUREN**

Lauren described her transition to the University as “culture shock,” coming from a very small “country town” in the Northeast part of the state. She said her eyes were opened from her experience and now that she has gotten adjusted, one year from graduation, she felt like she could never go back to “what you used to be.”

“I’ve grown so much here with the experiences and the diversity” Lauren (Interview June 1, 2005, p. 1, lines 10 – 11).

She said the place she came from was very “small minded” and “bible belt.” Lauren described the small town she was from as “80% white, 12-15% Black and the rest were Hispanic.” Additionally, “it was all Christianity.” Lauren was a music major who highlighted the campus’ free speech area as a “great opportunity for anyone to speak their voice about what they think is different.” Lauren seemed thrilled to have the opportunity to discuss a white student’s perspective because she felt this perspective was not often sought after. She spoke freely and enthusiastically.

#### **MEREDITH**

Meredith was a sophomore, honors program student originally from Austin, where the University is located. At the time of the interview she had career aspirations in the realm of politics. She had really enjoyed her educational experience, mentioning the professors, students’ motivation to learn, and opportunities for involvement among the

highlights. One down side for Meredith was the large size of the institution and the potential to “feel like a number” or “feel a little lost in the crowd.” Meredith spoke of her spirit organization, which focused on educating new students about the history and traditions of the University. She joined her organization to help her find her “niche” and for the chance “to learn a lot about UT and meet other people.” Meredith described her ethnicity as having Italian heritage, considering herself as “Italian American.” Meredith seemed at ease with our conversations and genuinely interested in the topic, which she had experience discussing.

#### **MOLLY**

Molly was a second-semester sophomore from a suburb of a large town in Texas. She came to the University for an undergraduate degree in kinesiology for a future career as a physical therapist. Her experience at the institution had, to date, been “typical college, everything I really expected, everything I was really hoping for.” Her adjustment to classes and studying was a bit of a shock. Other than the classes and studying, her transition was minimal since, according to her, she was the second born, the youngest. Molly described the campus as “huge” and “giant.” Molly was the only student who responded to the initial call for participants of the study. She seemed comfortable and excited to participate in the study. She also believed it was a unique study – asking white students’ opinions.

#### **SUSAN**

Susan was going to begin her fourth year at the University. She described herself as having a lot of student involvement experiences, with her defining experiences

centered around student organizations. Born on the west coast, Susan's family moved to the North East before settling in Texas during her high school years. The high school she attended was located in a high socioeconomic area and was, in her approximation, 85% white. Susan grew up in a large Irish-Catholic family. She was the last student interviewed for the study and cited her interest in participation as her desire to attend law school and eventually work on public education policy.

### **Summary of Participants**

The participants of this study were all quite different, though sharing some commonalities. One common thread was that they were all white undergraduate students involved in spirit organizations that focused on some element pertaining to traditions at the University. All participants had positive experiences at the University and were sincerely excited when discussing their favorite elements of being a student. The researcher truly appreciated the willingness of the participants to engage in the interviews. Based on the minimal interest garnered from the repeated requests for participation, it is seemingly reasonable to presume that each participant took a risk even by responding to the researcher's request for participation. Their inclination to participate fully and candidly perhaps speaks to where they are in their own processes as well.

### **Categorizing the Data**

Significant themes clearly emerged throughout the data analysis process. As stated earlier, words, phrases, and sentences that were of relevance to the original research questions were identified by the researcher. The key findings were transferred to

index cards, noting the corresponding page number and line number from the transcribed notes. The index cards were analyzed using comparative pattern analysis with categorization and subcategorization (Patton, 1990). With each theme, category, and subcategory are direct quotations from the transcribed participant interviews. Forty-one developed categories emerged from the coding process. These elements were then further sorted to represent themes, categories, and subcategories. An outline of the themes, categories, and subcategories is provided in the following table. Additionally, a table precedes each theme discussion as reference for the reader.

**TABLE 1: THEMES, CATEGORIES, AND SUBCATEGORIES OF DATA ANALYSIS**

<p><b>THEME ONE: NORMALIZING WHITENESS</b> <u>Categories</u> Self Awareness: Racial Identity White/American Culture</p> <p><b>THEME TWO: JEOPARDIZING ENTITLEMENT</b> <u>Categories</u> Affirmative Action Scholarships Perceived Advantages for People of Color Perceived Disadvantages for White People</p> <p><b>THEME THREE: PERPETUATING RACISM</b> <u>Categories</u> Defining Racism Any Race as Racist Perceptions of Others as Non-Racist Individualized Racism <u>Subcategories</u> Perceptions of Self as Non-racist Organization Membership Friendships with People of Color Students of Color as Teachers Tokenizing Perceptions of People of Color Language Institutionalized Racism <u>Subcategories</u> Perceptions of Diversity on Campus Faculty/Staff Tradition <u>Subcategories</u> School Song Campus Incidents Landmarks <u>Subcategories</u> Buildings Statues</p> <p><b>THEME FOUR: HIGHLIGHTING PRIVILEGE</b> <u>Categories</u> Identifying Privilege Denying Privilege Choice</p> <p><b>THEME FIVE: CONTRIBUTING CAMPUS ELEMENTS</b> <u>Categories</u> Free Speech Area Diversity Education <u>Subcategories</u> Classes Orientation Multicultural Information Center Programs</p>
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## THEME ONE: NORMALIZING WHITENESS

**TABLE 2: THEME ONE AND CATEGORIES OF DATA ANALYSIS**

<p><b>THEME ONE: NORMALIZING WHITENESS</b></p> <p><u>Categories</u></p> <p>Self Awareness: Racial Identity</p> <p>White/American Culture</p>
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The concept of normalization has been noted in the literature by scholars (Cary, 2003), as has the notion of neutrality (Frankenberg, 1993; Marx, 2001). While not theorizing on normalization, “normalizing whiteness” emerged as a predominant theme throughout the interview process of this study as participants often described their race as being “normal.” One of the most prevalent perspectives of white people when asked to speak of their race is to struggle with the question. This enigma is based on the concept that white has been normalized in our society, so that white is virtually seen as raceless, where every other person’s race exists but white does not. “The gaze of whiteness as the unacknowledged norm” (Morrison, 1992, p. 90).

“It’s everywhere and you don’t really notice it if you’re white” Allen (Interview May 4, 2005, p. 13, lines 360 – 361).

According to Perry (2002) “To be defined as ‘normal’ means to not be defined at all, to just ‘be’” (p. 6). The participants were asked to describe what it has been like as a white student at the University. Many of them articulated feelings of normality.

“It just seems like it’s been, going anywhere else, like anywhere else, going to the store, going anywhere. It just doesn’t feel, it doesn’t feel like anything. It feels normal” Molly (Interview April 13, 2005, p. 19, lines 401 – 403).

“So I guess my experience of being a white student at UT is that there is not an experience because everyone is white, it feels like” Meredith (Interview May 3, 2005, p. 8, lines 171 – 172).

“I guess it’s [white culture] just doing...what everyone would consider as normal as possible, I guess within my culture. It’s a hard thing to describe....the culture, the norm” Jack (Interview May 9, 2005, p. 3, lines 61 – 65).

Each participant alluded to the notion of white as normal or ordinary at some point. Most participants did not think much about their race, if at all. Seeing themselves as normal also means not having to think much about themselves in a racial context.

### **Self Awareness: Racial Identity**

Within the theme of “normalizing whiteness,” the category of “self awareness” in regard to racial identity emerged. One of the major components of racial identity for white people is the privilege of not having to think about their race. At a predominantly white institution, the feeling of being a white student is one that many participants paralleled to being a student; As if there was no difference.

“Well you don’t really think about it because almost everyone is white. It’s just like being a student, I guess. It never even really came to mind,

like oh I'm white" Meredith (Interview May 3, 2005, p. 8, lines 167 – 169).

For some participants, participation in this study was the first time they had thought about or discussed what it was like to be white.

"I have never thought of it like until you sent us that email, really, I was really trying to think" Molly (Interview April 13, 2005, p. 19, lines 400 – 401).

When white is the norm, anyone who is a person of color is then othered. Often times white people notice a person of color's race more than noticing their own race as a white person. Chesler, et. al. (2003) describe this as a dangerous expression of naturalness. "The stance that overlooks one's own race and focuses on others' can itself be seen as a manifestation of the "naturalness" and dominance of whiteness" (Chesler, 2003, p. 217). This was conveyed by Jack.

"I don't think I think about my race as much. I think about other people's races and what might happen. I don't consider myself to be a special case" Jack (Interview May 9, 2005, p. 26, lines 547 – 548).

Not being a "special case" is similar to the idea of being normal. Susan had a similar perspective.

"So, my race and ethnicity...they just are. It's hard for me to understand how it is different from a lot of other people's" Susan (Interview June 16, 2005, p. 37, lines 793 – 795).

Brad had the perspective, discussed in more detail later, of only thinking about his race when he was potentially at what he perceived to be a deficit, when filling out applications.

"...the only times I really think about my race is during applications..." Brad (Interview May 2, 2005, p. 11, line 238).

Since Brad in particular, but others too, expressed that he felt white people were at a disadvantage when applying for scholarships, this allowed Brad the ability to identify with a victim status. If he is the victim then he does not have to see himself as the oppressor or as privileged. As in the perceived deficit example, participants also reported noticing their race when they are underrepresented, a situation that is not common at a predominantly white institution, city, state, and society. From the participants' perspectives, this situation occurred periodically, in a particular class or at a party.

“This semester I was in a class and I noticed...I was one of three white students and everyone else was, not any sort of typical racial profile or anything like that, it's just that was odd to me for the first time...I think I didn't notice it until a couple of days...look at that. That's kind of interesting...Finally, I'm a minority, alright” Molly (Interview April 13, 2005, p. 10, lines 205 – 218).

“[on being uncomfortable] not really unless you know you are the minority somewhere...you are one of the only white person...it can be intimidating sometimes” Anne (Interview May 11, 2005, p. 1, lines 22 – 25).

For some participants just the question of discussing their race and ethnicity seemed perplexing. It was clear that most participants had not had the experience of having to explain what their race or ethnicity meant to them. Molly had to be sure she understood what was meant by the question.

[regarding how you classify your ethnicity] “...like just how I write it down, my ethnicity?” Molly (Interview April 20, 2005, p. 14, line 298).

This indicated that perhaps the only time she was put in a situation to explain, describe or indicate her ethnicity might have been in the event of filling out forms or applications.

Anne's struggle with the concept of race and ethnicity was apparent as she identified her race as "Anglo-Saxon" and ethnicity as "American." Anglo-Saxon is a word that is not used widely today and means of English descent.

"...it would be fun for some of us to get together and...some really good American traditions that are mainly practiced by Anglo-Saxons" Anne (Interview May 12, 2005, p. 1, lines 8 – 10).

In this example Anne used Anglo-Saxon as a synonym for white. The hesitancy to use the word white could perhaps be that many of the participants tried to separate themselves from being generalized in the white population, instead of being an individual. This was a repeated attempt to separate themselves from all of the negative aspects associated historically and presently with being white, while also avoiding ownership of all of the positive aspects and privileges as well. Many of the participants didn't want to use the word white or saw the word white as negative. Molly, for example, wanted to be referred to as Caucasian and even took offense to being called white.

"...we're called Caucasian and White and English American and there are so many things, every time I fill in a bubble that is white on a form I feel kind of bad. I'm like why did they put white? I'm Caucasian" Molly (Interview April 20, 2005, p. 1, lines 300 – 303).

Molly wasn't alone in her naming of "feeling bad" when referring to her race as white. Several other participants communicated this notion of guilt. Jack, too, said he sometimes felt bad.

"...sometimes I feel bad that I'm white" Jack (Interview May 9, 2005, p. 25, line 529).

Susan referenced the color of her skin as a response to being asked to discuss her race and ethnicity. At first she clarified the question.

Researcher: “Can you talk a little bit about what your particular race and ethnicity mean for you?”

Susan: “My particular whiteness?”  
“Well, it means that getting a tan is a little harder...” (Interview June 16, 2005, p. 35, lines 746 – 748).

Susan was not the only participant to reference the color of her skin and being able to be “tan.” Molly made a connection to looking white and how she actually hoped she was not white because her skin was darker than her sister’s skin. Molly’s example was connected to how Latino students had referred to white students in her high school.

“I’m definitely white but...I’m more tan than my sister so it’s really like, I hope I’m not white because white is sometimes really associated, you’re a white boy or a white girl and I heard that growing up in high school from Hispanic people...that was one of the most offensive things that someone could call you. Don’t associate me like everyone else...” Molly (Interview April 20, 2005, pp. 14 – 15, lines 305 – 310).

The part of Molly’s statement of not wanting to be associated with everyone else is indicative of her desire to be an individual, thus not associated with the negative characteristics ascribed to white people because she believes she is different. White students often use the darkening of their skin as a way to relate to students of color without having to give up any of the privileges associated with still being seen as a white person. In spite of this earlier statement, Molly said she wasn’t troubled by her race.

“My race doesn’t bother me but it’s just something that I’m not actively aware of” Molly (Interview May 9, 2005, p. 16, lines 338 – 339).

### **White/American Culture**

References to white culture and American culture produced another category within the theme of “normalizing whiteness.” Throughout the interviews the participants repeatedly associated the white culture with American culture. This association was

presented as though the two designations were synonymous with each other, further communicating the points of lack of awareness regarding race and lack of awareness regarding white privilege. For example, Anne stated:

“For me it means...White, American, all that stuff” Anne (Interview May 12, 2005, p. 5, line 113).

“[on white vs. American culture] I would consider it the same thing...almost exactly the same” Anne (Interview May 12, 2006, p. 2, lines 32 – 35).

Meredith had some perspective about the realities of and privilege associated with being white in America:

“I guess that’s the sad thing about America, if you are white you don’t really care about your heritage...in America you’re white and that’s really all that matters” Meredith (Interview May 3, 2005, p. 8, lines 179 – 183).

When she says “that’s really all that matters,” this communicates that since white people hold the power in America, their specific ethnicity becomes irrelevant. Instead the most poignant aspect is being white, regardless of how white people specifically identify, ethnically. In America you only have to be white to have white privilege.

Another example of “othering” people of color came from Meredith.

“In America white almost isn’t a race, it’s you’re an American and everyone else is an American dash something” Meredith (Interview May 3, 2005, p. 16, lines 343 – 344).

Anne provided an added example of this.

“You kind of feel left out because their culture is definitely different from the American kind of culture...” Anne (Interview May 11, 2005, p. 2, lines 31 – 32).

Here, Anne is using the word “their” to categorize people of color. By setting the stage calling people of color “their” or “them” she is creating a “we” or “us” versus

“them” mentality. “The privileged group is the assumed ‘we’ in relation to ‘them.’ The ‘other’ is the ‘you people’ whom the ‘we’ regard as problematic, unacceptable, unlikable, or beneath ‘our’ standards” (Johnson, 2001, p. 103). Consequently, she is thus imparting that the cultures of people of color are different than the American, hence white, culture.

Meredith’s example of white people having claim over the status of American while people of color are then “American dash something” pronounces the status of white or American as normal and people of color as something else. Molly ascribed her culture to being the culture of “everyone else.”

“I don’t think I really have a culture besides what everyone else’s culture is...just like every other American” Molly (Interview April 20, 2005, p. 10, lines 212 – 216).

One might suppose that by “everyone else” she means everyone else who is white, which again normalizes whiteness to be tantamount to American.

Anne actually considered her ethnicity to be American:

“[on her ethnicity] it would be American and my race would be white” Anne (Interview May 11, 2005, p. 17, line 376).

Since she did not indicate at any point that she had Native American heritage, one could assume that she was confusing nationality with ethnicity. Or, perhaps she truly believes her European origins now have become meaningless since she is white in America.

Several of the participants struggled to answer the question when asked to describe white culture. Many of them felt that a culture did not exist for them. This was either due to the white culture and culture in general being the same thing and some identified with other cultures, in terms of lifestyles. Jack and Molly felt as though they

did not really have a culture, while Jack also identified with regional culture, as in the state where he grew up, and Brad identified with the culture of a student.

“I don’t feel like I have a real culture” Jack (Interview May 9, 2005, p. 23, line 510).

“...it’s just of something that you don’t feel as a culture, you don’t hear white culture, because culture is white culture” Molly (Interview April 20, 2005, p. 9, lines 190 – 191).

“I feel proud to be a [state resident] and...I guess you could say that might be my culture...” Jack (Interview May 9, 2005, p. 24, lines 523 – 524).

“My culture is as a student. That’s my culture. That’s everybody’s culture” Brad (Interview May 2, 2005, p. 14, line 285).

## THEME TWO: JEOPARDIZING ENTITLEMENT

TABLE 3: THEME TWO AND CATEGORIES OF DATA ANALYSIS

<p><b>THEME TWO: JEOPARDIZING ENTITLEMENT</b></p> <p><u>Categories</u></p> <p>Affirmative Action</p> <p>Scholarships</p> <p>Perceived Advantages for People of Color</p> <p>Perceived Disadvantages for White People</p>
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As this study progressed, the subject of entitlement emerged from the data. Even a white person who has limited resources feels entitled to feel superior, as long as they have white skin in America. This sense of entitlement is a basic norm of white society (Dennis, 1982; Helms, 1990).

According to Dennis (1982) and Helms (1990), white people in our society, by their own creation, have availed a long history, still with us very much in the present, of advantages, which has resulted in a secure sense of entitlement to those advantages. One point where all participants became aware of their identity as white people was when the privilege they enjoy as white people was jeopardized in some way. In this sense, white people view their race as a disadvantage, failing to recognize all of the benefits, unearned benefits, they garner. One particular issue that sparked this recognition of race was regarding the discussion around affirmative action or scholarships. The researcher did not specifically ask a question about either issue. Some participants brought up affirmative action or the awarding of scholarships to people of color on their own with no probing.

Other participants brought up either issue when asked if they believed there were advantages of being any race.

### **Affirmative Action**

Recent legal cases regarding affirmative action have inspired white students to consider their race where they had previously not done so. Molly, for example, believed affirmative action would negatively impact her in some way without really even understanding what affirmative action was.

“I don’t understand affirmative action. I do understand it but I wouldn’t want it applied to me...” Molly (Interview April 20, 2005, p. 20, lines 423 – 425).

This example, and others, indicates that affirmative action exists not to provide an opportunity for a qualified person of color or a white woman, but rather to take away an opportunity from a qualified white person and give that opportunity to an unqualified person of color. “...some white students feel their personal or group self-interest challenged and themselves systematically placed at a disadvantage because of the presence of students of color” (Chesler, et. al., 2003, p. 229). Molly went on to explain that she felt like affirmative action should be based on if the person was qualified, signifying that it currently was not based upon qualifications. She further went on to state that affirmative action was potentially no longer necessary since race made no difference anymore.

“It [affirmative action] should be based solely on credentials and experience...I just don’t feel like it’s really a necessary thing anymore because I guess, I don’t think that people are not hired, I think everyone now is, it seems like is hired on credentials and race really makes no difference” Molly (Interview April 20, 2005, p. 21, lines 447 – 451).

Brad's perspective of Affirmative Action was negative as well, likening Affirmative Action to a system of reverse discrimination.

“...it's really difficult being a white male whose parents make money, to get any sort of loan. That's not fair to me. It's almost like a reverse discrimination type thing...I'm just as entitled, I'm just as smart as the next person, the same qualifications, why can't I have that money?” Brad (Interview May 2, 2005, p. 6, lines 125 – 129).

Both Brad and Jack provided specific examples of white people they knew who did not get accepted to institutions because, they believed, lesser-qualified people of color had been accepted in “their” places.

“One of my buddies...I thought he had it in the bag...but he should have gotten in. But, whereas this kid he knew that was Hispanic, his grades weren't near as good and his resume couldn't have been close because his was unbelievable. He got in” Brad (Interview May 2, 2005, p. 21, lines 436 – 444).

“This girl back in high school...she got into Cornell. How does that work out? She's Black...Her SATs couldn't have been any higher than mine. If I would have applied there I would have gotten rejected because I'm white” Brad (Interview May 2, 2005, p. 21, lines 444 – 452).

“I have a friend...in UT Law, 3.2, he's Latino...then there's...dean's scholar...top twelve, she didn't get in to UT Law. She had like five fellowships and all this crap...I can't explain that. I never said anything but I'm sorry...I don't understand a 3.2 versus a 4.0 and an LSAT that is below average can get him in. I know she will be doing just as much for like disadvantaged people, that's what he wrote about...” Jack (Interview May 9, 2005, p. 27, lines 569 – 577).

Perhaps the most interesting facet about each of these stories is that the participants all singled out one student of color as though the student of color had taken the place of the white student who was not granted admission; as though the “spot” of the admitted student was already occupied by the white student and she or he consequently had her or his “spot” taken by a student of color. The participants assumed that they knew

all the details of each of the applicants and that, obviously, the white students were more qualified. None of the participants spoke about the likelihood that there were other white students who were less qualified who also were granted admission. The dichotomy of a lesser-qualified person of color getting admitted over a more qualified white person was consistent. This way of thinking articulates the sense of entitlement for white people; that even white people themselves assume they are, as a race, more qualified than people of color.

### **Scholarships**

Four participants communicated a similar point by discussing scholarships, rather than affirmative action.

“If I get rich I’m going to create a scholarship for white average people”  
Lauren (Interview June 1, 2005, p. 12, line 261).

The “white, average” part of Lauren’s statement again normalizes whiteness – as though the average person is white and the abnormal person is a person of color. Lauren’s statement also communicates that she does not believe there are any scholarships for white people and that white people are at a disadvantage when applying for scholarships. Molly, Brad, Susan, and Meredith had similar sentiments. Molly’s statement, like Lauren’s, conveys the message of white as “regular” in addition to pointing out that scholarships are easier to attain for a person of color.

“It’s really hard to get a scholarship here if you are not a minority...if you are minority status it’s ...easier...than if you are just a regular old white kid that can’t get any scholarships” Molly (Interview April 20, 2005, pp. 22 – 23, lines 480 – 485).

“I don’t really see it as an advantage [being a white student] when you apply for scholarships or grants or something...” Brad (Interview May 2, 2005, p. 6, lines 119 – 120).

“...maybe there are some scholarships for people of color or some universities looking for, to increase this group of applicants coming to school and staying in school” Susan (Interview June 16, 2005, pp. 38 – 39, lines 832 – 834).

Meredith, more aware of her privilege, was able to connect racial identity to the “controversy” over scholarships, even referencing the phrase, which the researcher heard several times, “reverse racism.”

“So, I don’t think people really think about being white. Unless, I guess, the recent controversy over the fact that people of color receive a lot of scholarships and people are talking about reverse racism...” Meredith (Interview May 3, 2005, p. 16, lines 344 – 347).

### **Perceived Advantages for People of Color**

Throughout the course of the interviews most of the participants expressed their perceived advantages for people of color and perceived disadvantages for white people. The researcher separated these two elements. Although they seem to be similar, there were different designations when a participant would specifically reference advantages or disadvantages specific to race.

Several of the participants named advantages for people of color in terms of opportunities and support, as indicated by Meredith and Brad. Meredith’s comments assumed several things. She assumed that “minorities” are generally not motivated, “on the ball,” or are not utilizing the opportunities afforded to people of color.

“...if you are a minority and you are extremely motivated and you are on the ball and you read up on things, like, there are so many opportunities for minorities...” Meredith (Interview May 3, 2005, p. 13, lines 277 – 279).

“...is definitely an advantage that they have that most of them [minorities] don't use...there are so many opportunities for paying for school, getting into school, jobs they want to fill up, they want to have, not quotas, that's illegal, but they want to have a nice representation at offices and etcetera. I think that is definitely an advantage...” Meredith (Interview May 3, 2005, p. 13, lines 281 – 285).

In Brad's interview, he likened the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), a civil rights organization established to protect and enhance civil rights for African Americans and other people of color, to the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), founded as a secret terrorist society, an organization that promotes white supremacy. The very comparison of these two divergent groups represents Brad's own ignorance and lack of awareness regarding the power and privilege white people have in our society.

“It's great to be Black, you have the NAACP on your side, biggest racial organization in the world...The NAACP is always on the Black person's side. Is there a white organization like that other than the KKK? You can't have the KKK backing somebody up...neither should the NAACP. It's the same reasoning in my book” Brad (Interview May 2, 2005, p. 9, lines 182 – 198).

Brad's perspective was that if white people cannot, based on disadvantage, have a white organization to “back them up,” wear t-shirts referencing the white race, or have pride in the white race, then people of color should not be able to do this either. Brad felt that an advantage for people of color was the ability to take pride in their races.

“Sometimes I will see t-shirts like ‘what can brown do for you?’ That's ridiculous” Brad (Interview May 2, 2005, p. 11, line 234).

“...it's cool to be, it's acceptable to take pride in a foreign culture...” Brad (Interview May 2, 2005, p. 13, lines 261 – 262).

From Susan's perspective, people of color had an advantage by speaking languages in addition to English.

“I think it is an absolute benefit to be bilingual.” Susan (Interview June 16, 2005, p. 38, lines 820 – 821).

Accordingly being bilingual is not a benefit that all people of color share and there are white people who are also bilingual.

### **Perceived Disadvantages for White People**

“Reverse racism” and “reverse discrimination” were two of the ways participants described the perceived disadvantages for white people. There is much to be ascertained even in the use of the word “reverse.” Stating “reverse racism” or “reverse discrimination” is indicative of the power dynamic white people possess over people of color. Having to indicate the “reverse” also indicates that racism and discrimination occur only against people of color by white people. Among the perceived disadvantages for white people, participants mentioned feeling uncomfortable in one or two locations on campus, feeling left out, negative stereotypes of white people, discrimination, racism, and not being able to form “white clubs.”

Meredith and Molly discussed not feeling welcome or comfortable in the Multicultural Information Center on campus.

“...so I guess that’s kind of the reverse thing. The Multicultural Information Center is predominantly students of color and when I walk in there they are kind of like, you are white, what are you doing here? You don’t have a place here. I guess that is my one experience” Meredith (Interview May 3, 2005, p. 20, lines 434 – 437).

“...it makes me uneasy even just walking by the room and looking in...” Molly (Interview April 20, 2005, p. 26, line 581).

What might make Molly so uneasy just by looking in the office?

“I don’t feel very comfortable, very welcome” [in the Multicultural Information Center] Meredith (Interview May 3, 2005, p. 20, line 441).

Neither Meredith nor Molly could articulate what it was exactly that made them feel uncomfortable about the Multicultural Information Center. Meredith said that going into the Multicultural Information Center was the one experience of feeling uncomfortable on campus, thus illuminating her privilege as a white person. There is only one physical location where she feels uncomfortable and she has the luxury and privilege of voluntarily entering that space and then removing herself at any moment she wishes. Yet, she and Molly are focused on the disadvantage they face as white people being made to feel uncomfortable by something they cannot exactly explain. This is potentially one of the few times white students are in an underrepresented situation where most students in a space are people of color. That feeling of being the only or one of the only members of an underrepresented population is one that can generate an awareness of race for white people. This, coupled with the feelings of guilt and anxiety of being one of the only white people in a space where there are mostly people of color, can place white students in unfamiliar territory where their sense of entitlement is once again put at risk.

“It’s kind of weird that the Multicultural Information Center probably doesn’t have anything about white people” Molly (Interview April 20, 2005, p. 27, lines 579 – 580).

“...whenever something is being advertised on campus...everyone is welcome, but when you come in and you’re a white student going there, you do get the looks. Like, why are you here, you are white, you’re the oppressor. You need to get away” Meredith (Interview May 3, 2005, p. 10, lines 196 – 200).

Interesting to note, as stated by Meredith, is that a particular “look” by a person or group of people can communicate “why are you here?” or “you are the oppressor.” The assertion is that Meredith’s own guilt as the oppressor is transferred to the people in the

multicultural education office who may or may not even notice she is there at all. This interpretation is especially significant.

“...there are still some issues that like where we’re being discriminated against” Meredith (Interview May 3, 2005, p. 15, lines 319 – 320).

“...I feel...as a white student that sometimes I’m discriminated against. Which I know that you are not really supposed to say that as a white person because you have no right to” Molly (Interview April 13, 2005, p. 27, lines 571 – 574).

Another perception of disadvantage for Molly was that there are more negative stereotypes for white people than for people of color.

“I would think [more] negative [stereotypes for white people] honestly because I think that the, racially, you can’t have too many positive stereotypes about the majority race...because if you are always building and building some race up that it feels like...other races are backlash out or become super-sensitive like everyone is right now to what anyone says about any other race” Molly (Interview April 20, 2005, p. 19, lines 404 – 408).

Both Brad and Anne described situations where they felt that they weren’t allowed, as white students, to do things that were considered acceptable by students of color.

“If I walked around with something...white biology students, they would kick my ass. But she is wearing a Black person shirt, that’s racist to me” Brad (Interview May 2, 2005, p. 8, lines 165 – 167).

Brad’s statement was in reference to seeing an African American student earlier that day wearing a “Society of Black Engineers” t-shirt. This infuriated him because he believed that he should have the same right to wear a similar t-shirt for white people, but he was not allowed to do so. Brad believed a “Society of White Engineers” t-shirt would be unacceptable. His interpretation of this was that it was racist against him for an African American person to wear this t-shirt. Clearly Brad could not attempt to

understand the need for individuals in targeted populations to create safe spaces on campus.

Often the only way that marginalized groups can get attention is to make an issue of how social life is centered on dominant groups...blacks form their own dorms or clubs on college campuses...Drawing attention away from dominant groups often provokes a defensive response that reaffirms the very privilege the trouble is about...perceived shifts can result in howls of protest over the unfairness of giving subordinate groups 'special' attention... (Johnson, 2001, p. 111).

Anne further elucidated this point by discussing her attempt in high school, along with some of her friends, to establish a white student organization. She was met by disapproval by some of her teachers who told her it would not be a good idea.

“...you aren't allowed to make...a white people club. I remember trying at our high school. We wanted to make one where we could talk about our own culture but we weren't allowed because that was discrimination”  
Anne (Interview May 11, 2005, p. 25, lines 545 – 548).

Along the same lines as the previous two quotes, Brad conveyed at several points that white people were not allowed to have or display pride for their race where people of color were allowed to. Earlier, as discussed, he articulated that it was even seen as “cool” to have pride in a “foreign” culture, “foreign” meaning non-white.

“White people can't have pride in their own race, whereas others can”  
Brad (Interview May 2, 2005, p. 9, lines 181 – 182).

**THEME THREE: PERPETUATING RACISM**

**TABLE 4: THEME THREE AND CATEGORIES OF DATA ANALYSIS**

<p><b>THEME THREE: PERPETUATING RACISM</b></p> <p><u>Categories</u></p> <p>Defining Racism</p> <p>Any Race as Racist</p> <p>Perceptions of Others as Non-Racist</p> <p>Individualized Racism</p> <p><u>Subcategories</u></p> <p>Perceptions of Self as Non-racist</p> <p>Organization Membership</p> <p>Friendships with People of Color</p> <p>Students of Color as Teachers</p> <p>Tokenizing</p> <p>Perceptions of People of Color</p> <p>Language</p> <p>Institutionalized Racism</p> <p><u>Subcategories</u></p> <p>Perceptions of Diversity on Campus</p> <p>Faculty/Staff</p> <p>Tradition</p> <p><u>Subcategories</u></p> <p>School Song</p> <p>Campus Incidents</p> <p>Landmarks</p> <p><u>Subcategories</u></p> <p>Buildings</p> <p>Statues</p>
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Examples of racism, defined as a system based on racial prejudices, involving cultural messages and institutional policies and practices as well as the beliefs and actions of individuals (Tatum, 2000), emerged throughout the data. Throughout the course of the interviews the participants displayed many ways that racism is perpetuated. Some of them had rather severe definitions of racism and also believed a person of any race could

be racist. The theme was divided into individualized ways racism is perpetuated and institutional ways racism is perpetuated.

For the individual ways of perpetuating racism, none of the participants saw themselves as racist, nor did they have people with whom they were friends they considered as racist. Their organizations perpetuate racism by maintaining a predominantly white membership and placing the blame on students of color for not applying to be members of the organizations. Racist notions were visible through relationships with people of color where many times people of color were either placed in a position where they had to educate the white students, tokenized, or used as the butt of jokes. Some participants also displayed racism by their depictions of people of color and the language used to describe people of color. Institutionalized racism was displayed through the participants' comments regarding a perceived diverse campus, even though it is predominantly white, an overwhelmingly white faculty/staff, and racist traditions that continue to exist including the school song, racist campus incidents, and the existence of statues and buildings in honor of people with racist histories.

### **Defining Racism**

When asked to explain what racism meant to the participants, many of them struggled to answer the question. Several participants drew upon the definition as framed by stereotypes.

“...[a racist is] somebody who perpetuates stereotypes and other things like that” Meredith (Interview May 3, 2005, p. 22, line 476).

“...it’s just judging someone on the stereotype that goes along with the culture...making a snap judgment off of someone...looking at someone,

seeing their group rather than just seeing that someone” Molly (Interview April 20, 2005, p. 25, lines 529 – 531).

Jack felt that racists were people who had negative intentions, not wanting to think outside of themselves:

“They [racists] don’t care enough to even try to understand or to think outside of themselves and they just say...Bob’s not white so therefore...he’s obviously stupid or all these stereotypes...” Jack (Interview May 9, 2005, p. 13, lines 272 – 274).

Molly’s definition was similar to Jack’s in that she was basing her definition on exposure and later made the link to education.

“...if you don’t get out and if you don’t go...and break that kind of chain and if you don’t go somewhere or expose yourself to different kinds of cultures and you don’t see that diversity by coming to school or getting an education anywhere, then you are just set in your ways and you basically are comfortable is what it boils down to. So racism, I think now for some reason I’ve started to compare it to education” Molly (Interview April 13, 2005, p. 24, lines 514 – 521).

Meredith and Molly both connected the word ignorance to racism.

“...I think there is a lot more ignorance on campus than there is racism, they are kind of different I would say...racism, it’s like you’re informed and you choose to be racist. Whereas I think there is a lot of ignorant people on campus from small towns...where the first time they even saw an African American was when they came to UT...” Meredith (Interview May 3, 2005, p. 15, lines 329 – 334).

“I think its ignorance, above all its just ignorance...” Molly (Interview April 20, 2005, p. 25, line 544).

Allen was the only participant to discuss the idea of institutionalized racism. His statement explained that there are people who have good intentions yet are ignorant.

“...most people...participate in institutionalized racism and racism that is less obvious and a lot of people make jokes, make stereotypes. It doesn’t necessarily mean they are racist by nature or don’t have good intentions,

they just don't know that joke or that word or that characterization might offend someone else. Some of their actions are racist but their heart is not" Allen (Interview May 4, 2005, p. 16, lines 435 – 439).

Susan shared this outlook when she discussed witnessing racism, and her belief that the individuals still were not racist.

"I've seen things that I think are racist actions, but I don't think the people that were doing them really thought anything of it" Susan (Interview June 16, 2005, p. 34, lines 727 – 728).

Anne tried to infer a difference between racism and what she called "off comments." One could assume that she was setting up a continuum where racism was at one end and "off" or racist comments were at the other.

"...there is so much gray area between racism and just like off comments" Anne (Interview May 11, 2005, p. 13, lines 272 – 273).

Brad and Anne equated racism with bias.

"Racism is a form of biasness and there is always bias in everything you do...A racist is somebody who is biased against a particular race" Brad (Interview May 2, 2005, p. 18, line 390).

"[racism is] definitely forming biases about people's race." Anne (Interview May 11, 2005, p. 13, line 277).

All participants were a bit uneasy when asked to describe racism. Most of them tried to utilize other words, like bias or ignorance, rather than focusing on racism. Not one student identified the power dynamic that exists with racism. Even by their own definitions, they would all be considered racist, although none of the participants identified as such. According to Johnson (2001) most white people in the United States are racist not because they exhibit racist behaviors based on hostility but simply, according to Kovel (1970), because they go along with the large system which perpetuates racism.

### **Any Race as Racist**

Without their acknowledgment of the component of power in the definition of racism, it is easy to see how most of the participants believed that any individual of any race can be racist. This would express the misnomer that people of color can be racist against white people. If the notion of power existed in the definition of racism, this would clearly be an impossibility since white people comprise the dominant population with power in our society. Lauren, Meredith, Susan, Anne, and Jack all emphasized this point.

“I personally think that anyone has the ability to be racist because it’s the person that makes you racist, it’s not the color of your skin” Lauren (Interview June 1, 2005, p. 20, lines 425 – 427).

“I wouldn’t want to say racists are predominantly white because I think racism is throughout all cultures” Meredith (Interview May 3, 2005, p. 21, lines 473 – 474).

“...purple, green, yellow, brown, yeah, they can all be racist.” Susan (Interview June 16, 2005, p. 34, line 742).

“I do [think racism still exists] whether it’s whites against minorities or the other way around...” Anne (Interview May 11, 2005, p. 12, line 269).

“...in a way I think everyone has a little bit of racist tendencies in them...” Jack (Interview May 9, 2005, p. 14, lines 301 – 302).

“[on people of any race being racist]...yeah, and I don’t think it’s more prevalent with either one...” Jack (Interview May 9, 2005, p. 15, line 321).

Even though they at times contradicted themselves, their definitions of racism were simplistic and communicate that all white people would be racist by the definitions provided. When asked if they knew anyone who was racist, though, they again struggled with answers.

### **Perceptions of Others as Non-Racist**

If definitions of racism given by the participants meant that racists were ignorant or people that did not know something was offensive, wouldn't more participants know many people who were racist? Instead, participants could not think of anyone, particularly anyone they knew well.

"I think I can only think of one person on campus that is flat out racist and that's just against Asian people and he just doesn't like them, no matter what" Meredith (Interview May 3, 2005, p. 21, lines 464 – 466).

"Well, there are some [overt racists on campus], but not too many. It's a very, very small number" Allen (Interview May 4, 2005, p. 116, line 429).

"I don't know anybody openly...I don't think I know anybody who is openly racist" Susan (Interview June 16, 2005, p. 34, lines 723 – 726).

"I don't think racists are common...I've never met someone who is truly racist" Molly (Interview April 20, 2005, p. 25, lines 536 – 543).

"There are some kids in [my organization] that are racist. That's just the way it is. That's how they've grown up..." Brad (Interview May 2, 2005, p. 20, lines 415 – 416).

"[people here are tolerant]...just because you don't hear a lot about hate crimes or any kind of abuse on any level about racial or ethnicity" Anne (Interview May 11, 2005, p. 8, lines 168 – 169).

None of the participants wanted to identify anyone as a racist, let alone her/himself; in fact, many participants seemed nervous to even say the word "racist." The participants associated the word "racist" with someone who is so extreme, or by example in Anne's last statement above, it must be someone who commits hate crimes or abuse.

The word *racism* is a red flag to most white Americans, who apply it only to self-proclaimed white supremacists...the term has a broader meaning than merely a label for overt racial extremism. We must learn to use it not as a swearword but as an analytic term, and not as an explanation but as a description. Thus, the term should cause us to grow thoughtful rather than defensive (Loewen, 1998, p. 42).

## **Individualized Racism**

Within the category of Individualized Racism, several subcategories emerged. The self-assessment of the participants as non-racist was particularly significant.

### ***Perceptions of Self as Non-racist***

Several of the participants said that they did not even contribute to racism, although by the researcher's definition of racism, all of the participants were in fact racist and thus contribute to racism. Because some of the participants felt that they were open-minded and tried not to offend people, they also felt they were not to be categorized as racist. Knowing that the participants would potentially negatively react to the question asking them if they were racist, and knowing that most of them would say "no" as a defense mechanism, the researcher did not ask this question directly. The researcher asked for the participants' definitions of racism, to describe what a racist person looks like in terms of behavior and if the participants felt that they contributed to racism in some way. Only one participant, Brad, admitted to categorizing people by race, which he said was not racist. He also admitted to potentially offending people with things he said, but he stated this was also not racist. The researcher believes that since the participants felt they were all good people with good intentions they felt they could not possibly be racist or contribute to racism. This was clearly represented when Susan discussed an interaction she had with a friend of hers who believed that all white people were racist. Susan took this personally and took great offense to the accusation.

“...She is like, yeah, I think all white people are racist. I was like really, you think I'm racist? She was like, what? What, you're going to tell me that being white hasn't helped you? I said, no, I'm not going to tell you that I don't believe it's been a little bit easier for me, you're right...But,

you just called me racist. That hurts...I have never in my entire life insulted anyone for anything that they couldn't control..." Susan (Interview June 16, 2005, p. 28, lines 598 – 610).

Susan believed that this was hypocritical. She was also frustrated with her feeling that she was not able to say something in response to her friend.

"So I understand where it's coming from but it bothered me that I wasn't able to say anything that would kind of make her reevaluate her position...But you can't open other people's eyes. You just do the best you can" Susan (Interview June 16, 2005, p. 30, lines 646 – 650).

Susan's friend's comment left Susan hurt, frustrated, and defensive. Because of this Susan did not engage her friend in the discussion or attempt to understand her friend's perspective. Her friend's belief that all white people were racist left Susan feeling like she had been grouped into the greater population of white racists, which she did not want to be associated with. Susan struggled to even define what a racist was, particularly if she was potentially a racist, when she surprisingly admitted that she tries not to be a racist, even though she reacted so fervently to her friend's comment prior.

"No, I try not to be [racist]. It's one of those words that I try not to use because what does it mean?" Susan (Interview June 16, 2005, p. 30, lines 653 – 654).

Susan, as well as many of the other participants, displayed apprehension with the word "racist." Susan also created some excuses for racist thoughts or behaviors when she later was asked to answer the question of what she considers to be racist.

"...I don't think we should be too hard on ourselves for our thoughts because anybody who's ever been in a dark parking garage late at night and saw anybody coming at them, you know, your mind will play tricks on you if you've ever seen a horror movie. I don't think we should hold ourselves accountable for questioning our thoughts, or too accountable" Susan (Interview, June 16, 2005, p. 32, lines 688 – 693).

This example represents how white people, who really try not to be racist, are still, in affect, a product of the racist societal messages received.

“I really try and be open and hopefully everyone else will be that same way to me” Molly (Interview April 13, 2005, p. 20, lines 425 – 426).

“I try not to categorize people by race as much as possible, but it does happen” Brad (Interview May 2, 2005, p. 4, lines 80 – 81).

“No, I don’t [contribute to racism]...I try to be pretty aware of stuff like that, little things can hurt” Meredith (Interview May 3, 2005, p. 17, lines 374 – 375).

“...you just don’t want to offend anyone because everyone is on their toes, like you don’t want to offend anyone with anything you say” Molly (Interview April 20, 2005, p. 1, lines 13 – 15).

“If I say something that may offend you, I’m sorry, but I’m not a racist” Brad (Interview May 2, 2005, p. 18, lines 370 – 371).

This reluctance to self-identify as contributing to racism or as racist is an example of what Johnson (2001) identifies as the individualistic perspective. “...if you aren’t consciously or openly prejudiced or hurtful, then you aren’t part of the problem...If your feelings and thoughts and outward behavior are good, then *you* are good, and that’s all that matters” (p. 90). Like Johnson states, none of the participants identified themselves as part of the problem, or on a larger scale, many of the participants did not identify that a problem even exists.

### ***Organization Membership***

Of the participants who spoke about their spirit organization membership, most referred to the organization membership makeup as being predominantly white. Some of the participants placed the blame, indirectly, on students of color for not wanting to join

the organizations or not remaining in the organizations once accepted. Allen had quite a lot to say regarding the student organization makeup. He also had the most awareness regarding perceptions of why students of color do not join the spirit groups.

“So students of color...don’t feel welcome, a lot of times...and so while you may have half the class as people of color, they don’t stick around very long” Allen (Interview May 4, 2005, p. 77, lines 172 – 174).

“...I can’t imagine that they [students of color] feel very welcome [in spirit organizations]...some of it is the culture of the organizations...” Allen (Interview May 5, 2005, p. 99, lines 251 – 252).

“...I don’t know if it’s a problem with membership. I think it’s a problem of the culture, which most white organizations on campus, that is the problem...is the culture geared toward diversity? That’s kind of the question” Allen (Interview May 4, 2005, p. 77, lines 175 – 178).

Regarding students of color feeling welcome in predominantly white spirit organizations, Susan had this to say:

“I’m not sure that it would be easy to walk into a room and see a disproportionate number of faces that don’t look like you...” Susan (Interview June 16, 2005, p. 13, lines 273 – 275).

Susan also expressed that students of color were potentially not drawn to the predominantly white spirit groups, not that her organization did not want members who were students of color.

“...it’s definitely not that we’re cutting girls of color. I honestly think that the people that want to get involved have so many choices and that a lot of people of color are choosing organizations that identify with their background, which is great...they feel comfortable there” Susan (Interview June 16, 2005, p. 12, lines 255 – 258).

“...the [student organization] do events that are inclusive but don’t have, and the other thing is they don’t have leaders from communities of color...they will have African Americans who are not active in the community...” Allen (Interview May 4, 2005, p. 99, lines 234 – 236).

Allen's last point was of particular consequence. Many of the participants discussed that their organizations were diverse because they had several students of color. This brings up the question of what is actually considered to be a diverse organization. According to the participants, organizations were diverse just by having a few students of color as members, regardless if 80% of the organization was still white.

"I think that [the organization] does a really good job recruiting to make sure that the mix of girls that they have in the organization is very similar to what we have at UT...I would say that there are a majority of white girls there...minority type race and white would be about fifty/fifty...the minority races are all very different" Molly (Interview April 13, 2005, p. 18, lines 391 – 396).

"It's real diverse. I think racially we have...three or four Black kids. It's mainly white kids. That's just how people apply to it. I think there was one incident where we had an Indian kid...we never heard from him. He got real fed up that we weren't accepting any Indian kids...it's not that we're racist or anything" Brad (Interview May 2, 2005, p. 4, lines 70 – 76).

Brad's comment was similar to Susan's experience when dealing with members of her spirit organization.

"...somebody was talking about how diverse [organization name] were. I got really mad...I was like, how are we diverse? Well, we've got one or two Black girls and we've got a bunch of Asian girls and we have some Hispanic girls too" Susan (Interview June 16, 2005, pp. 8 – 9, lines 175 – 179).

Allen's statement also brings up the issue of involving students of color who are not active in their respective communities. Both of these issues suggest some of the tokenization of students of color.

### ***Tokenizing***

Along with the tokenizing of students of color in predominantly white organizations, many of the participants referenced examples of tokenizing a student of

color by asking that person to answer a question or discuss an issue and represent all students of color with their response. None of the participants realized this was occurring because one of the privileges they have as white students is never being asked to represent the entire white population.

Molly talked about a specific situation where she asked one of the few students of color in her spirit organization about something she had read in a class.

“...I really have no idea what they have thought and I asked one of my friends, one of my [organization] friends that last semester...I was reading...white people will never understand what it’s like to be discriminated or be a minority because we wouldn’t ever think that minorities felt that way. I asked her...do you really feel like this...you are really a minority, although she’s here at a predominantly white university, she melded, you know, just fine. She’s just like anybody else here” Molly (Interview April 13, 2005, pp. 19 – 20, lines 413 – 421).

Once Molly’s friend agreed with the statement Molly was astonished. She not only did not see her friend as a “minority” because in Molly’s opinion her friend had “melded” and was “like anybody else” (anybody else who was white) but she was asking this person if what Molly had read in her book was correct. Molly’s perspective of her friend was that since her friend had assimilated well into the white organization, white culture, then it was almost as if she were no longer a person of color. Yet, Molly still identified her friend as such by asking her the question. The position that Molly placed her friend in is not a unique position for a student of color at a predominantly white institution. This person may be one of only a few students of color Molly interacts with, so Molly has to ask her friend’s opinion to determine what the entire population of all students of color believe about a particular issue.

Brad not only tokenized one of the students of color in his organization, but actually suggested that this friend was one of the “good” people of color, as though most people of color are unacceptable and his friend is an exception to the rule.

“One of my real good friends [in my organization]...he’s a Black kid...one of the most impressive people that I’ve ever met in my life...why can’t they all be like that?” Brad (Interview May 2, 2005, p. 15, lines 325 – 328).

Was Brad surprised that his friend, a person of color, was impressive? Was the assumption that his friend, because he was African American, would be unimpressive? His question of “why can’t they all be like that” implies that the entire population, now being referred to as “they,” again articulating a “we” versus “them” mentality, is mediocre at best and this person, Brad’s friend, is, in Brad’s opinion, going against the depiction of the entire African American population. This is a common response held by white people. “Whites can draw on a rich supply of negative cultural stereotypes, for example, to satisfy themselves that if people of color were different – if they were more like whites supposedly are – there wouldn’t be so much trouble” (Johnson, 2001, p. 119).

Molly, like Brad, described a situation where one of her friends did not meet the stereotypes she held of Asian American people. Molly also tokenized this friend of hers, by assuming that he, as an Asian American male, should not have been muscular, played football, or been able to country line dance.

“This one guy, one of my good friends...he is very...just looking at him, very Asian, but at the same time he was in high school, on the football team, he was this really buff, like buff, Asian guy and you don’t want to, don’t typically see buff Asian guys...and he took ballroom dance classes and he was the best country dancer I’ve seen and he’s this, you know like, Asian guy and I just think it’s funny” Molly (Interview April 13, 2005, p. 8, lines 166 – 172).

Molly's statement imparts a lack of understanding about the individuality of people, specific to Asian American people. Like Brad's example, Molly's friend did not meet the stereotypes she had placed on an entire population. Molly's belief that this situation was "funny" was substantiated by another situation she described where students of color were tokenized as the butt of jokes.

"I've never heard a racial joke on campus or probably my whole life that was really directed toward someone to make someone feel bad...we have...there is one Asian guy and there is one Jewish Mexican so they are the butt of, not jokes, but joking play. But...they also...poke at themselves and poke at everyone else just as much as everyone does...But I've never heard a joke that did not have a happy kind of like friendly tone in it..." Molly (Interview April 20, 2005, pp. 2 – 3, lines 39 – 47).

"...our friend who is Jewish, it's like, everyone is always calling him Jew. Like that's it's just always calling him a Jew and talking about what is kosher, like, ha ha, is that kosher?" Molly (Interview April 20, 2005, p. 3, lines 60 – 62).

These examples point toward the notion of white people as well-intentioned, therefore not racist. When Molly said she has never heard a racial joke or comment that was directed to make someone feel bad, this extrapolates that people are good and nice, not racist. The idea of it all being in "good fun," really means it is fun for everyone except the student of color who is the target of racism. This explanation, however, confirms the belief that since it is "in fun" no one is really racist, although that is clearly what has taken place. Because she points to the students of color as going along with the jokes or even making jokes themselves, she is enabling the white people to continue this behavior. This is a way to place the blame on the students of color and to act as though the reactions of the students of color make it acceptable. This also speaks to the element of choice, which is a privilege of white students on a predominantly white campus and is

discussed later. How much choice do the students of color in the situations described here actually have? What choice do students of color have other than to go along with jokes or even collude with jokes of their own? If students of color are in an environment where there are mostly white students and even their white friends make jokes concerning the race of students of color, what options do students of color really have? Brad described a similar example of joking.

“...we always joke, my roommates, I’ll walk in the door and my Asian roommate...is that the Mexican or is that the Jew?” Brad (Interview May 2, 2005, p. 13, lines 281 – 282).

Brad later referenced that in his living situation he is part of the joke too, as he is referred to as “the Catholic.” Of course if we examine the power dynamic between an Asian or Asian American person, a Mexican or Mexican American person, a Jewish person, and a Catholic person we can see that a white Catholic person is not the recipient of oppression that the other populations are. So even though Brad’s identity is incorporated into the joke, it does not have the same impact.

### ***Students of Color as Teachers***

Several participants expressed a heightened sense of awareness regarding the realities for students of color at a predominantly white institution, or a heightened sense of awareness around issues of race in general. There seemed to exist a parallel between these participants and the fact that they had close relationships with students of color. Students of color are often put in the position of teacher, particularly at a predominantly white institution. This was conveyed through the voices of the participants. Allen, for

example, mentioned that he developed relationships with students of color who were passionate about diversity issues later in his educational career:

“I really didn’t have close communication or have close friends, people of color that actually were passionate about the issues of diversity and institutional racism on campus ...until my sophomore year” Allen (Interview May 4, 2005, p. 33, lines 60 – 62).

“...I don’t think those are issues that most white students have to deal with. I wouldn’t have if I hadn’t had some really close friends that, people of color, that actually dealt with those issues...” Allen (Interview May 4, 2005, p. 33, lines 70 – 72).

Earlier Susan’s interaction with her friend who told her she thought all white people were racist was discussed. Susan also talked about another example of a student of color bringing racism to her attention, this time regarding Susan’s spirit organization.

“But she was like I would never join that organization because of your role models. Your role models are all white and I don’t appreciate it. We had an alumni dinner and we invited a lot of cool faculty to come...and I brought her. She was just like, I’m not even going. He was like...look around and see, tell me about these women that you brought in to talk to other women about what it’s like to be a woman on campus in a career. They are almost all white” Susan (Interview June 16, 2005, p. 41, lines 892 – 898).

Susan became aware but did not accept accountability for the event. Even though she felt somewhat responsible

“I was like, I cannot believe that I let this happen” Susan (Interview June 16, 2005, p. 42, lines 900 – 901).

Susan was also quick to designate the cause of the error

“It was not my job to pick out the names” Susan (Interview June 16, 2005, p. 42, line 901).

### *Perceptions of People of Color*

Many of the participants had negative stereotypical views of people of color that were expressed during the interviews. Molly communicated her assumption that looking at a person, she would assume someone had a particular accent.

“We come from all different backgrounds and you don’t know where a person is from by just looking at them and because I think of talking to so many people who you would assume would have one kind of accent and then don’t like just have whatever kind of speech...” Molly (Interview April 13, 2005, p. 7, lines 141 – 144).

Her assertion here is that she would expect someone who is “Hispanic” to have a particular accent and was surprised that they did not.

“Still meeting people of different race, definitely a lot of Hispanic people who you know would typically think because they are on campus, you see so many Hispanic people who have Hispanic accents...” Molly (Interview April 13, 2005, p. 9, lines 177 – 179).

Meredith articulated another assumption based on a stereotype. She admitted to at times assuming that African American students on campus were athletes.

“I have been guilty of...you see...an African American student on campus...he happens to be really tall and you’re like, I wonder if it’s a football player. I wonder what basketball player that is” Meredith (Interview May 3, 2005, p. 29, lines 649 – 652).

“I think that there is an assumption that if you are African American on campus you are here to play a sport, which is kind of sad. And then that leads to if you are only here on scholarship or to play a sport that means nobody really got here by brain power, which then leaves the assumption that African Americans aren’t smart” Meredith (Interview May 3, 2005, pp. 29 – 30, lines 653 – 657).

That Meredith can identify these assumptions as wrong and is willing to admit that she makes these assumptions speaks to her level of awareness.

Brad also conveyed an assumption, that “Black” people are not cultured, educated, or intelligent, generally speaking. His supposition here is that “Black” people at the University are somehow better than those “Black” people who are not students at the University. He also made the generalization that most “Black” people steal and commit crimes.

“There’s a difference between, I hate to say cultured Black people, the educated, intelligent Black people who go to major Universities and become something of themselves, other than just having their hand out demanding out just because they are Black, who steal and all these heinous crimes” Brad (Interview May 2, 2005, p. 15, lines 318 – 323).

Anne shared this misperception about African American and Latino people.

“...African Americans and Hispanic people and about their tendency, well, not their tendency, but how they are often the instigators like theft and robberies and rape too actually” Anne (Interview May 12, 2005, pp. 9 – 10, lines 194 – 197).

It is not clear where Brad and Anne gathered these misconceptions and generalizations about African American and Latino people. These ideas may perhaps come from the media, parents, or friends. Since we live in a white privileged society, people of color are usually depicted in negative representations. Meredith also had a negative perception of African Americans.

“...not a large portion of African Americans really apply for college and so out of the percent that do...they can’t let everyone in. They have to really look at who is qualified...” Meredith (Interview May 3, 2005, pp. 3 – 4, lines 68 – 71).

A few participants shared the perspective that people of color were too focused on racial issues, should be less sensitive to issues around racism and be more optimistic. This is an easy perspective to have as a white person because white people do not have to

recognize the importance of race or the daily oppression and racism affecting people of color in our society. Brad and Anne felt particularly strongly about this issue.

“They [people of color] are just too sensitive about it. Tone it down” Brad (Interview May 2, 2005, p. 18, line 370).

“I think some people do tend to over emphasize the negative aspects of either university or American in terms of racism and discrimination...we had the end of all these bad things against minorities and yet they are still trying to yell about it and get even more rights, which is fine but I think they need to be more tactful about it” Anne (Interview May 12, 2005, p. 18, lines 373 – 379).

“Everyone says diversity is the big issue here on campus...I’ve never really thought about it” Molly (Interview April 13, 2005, p. 20, lines 431 – 433).

The need for people of color to be more “tactful” or to “tone it down” exposes Brad and Anne’s discomfort with being made aware of racial injustices that exist. This again refers back to their privilege that they are able to exist without having to consider this. It is evidence of the entitlement they hold that they feel like not only do they not have to be aware of racism, but they feel entitled to stating that people of color should not bring these issues to their attention. “When it comes to the problem of privilege and oppression, privileged groups don’t want to hear about it at all because it disturbs the luxury of obliviousness that comes with privilege” (Johnson, 2001, p. 133). Anne continued.

“I just think that instead of getting angry about it they should be more optimistic and not accusatory of white people trying to oppress them...you can’t please everyone all the time” Anne (Interview May 12, 2005, p. 18, lines 381 – 384).

From Anne’s perspective, it is easy to suggest that people of color should not get angry. Anne cannot possibly understand what it means to be a person of color in a racist

society. When she states “you can’t please everyone all the time” perhaps she means that when you can only please white people, you should do so, and people of color should neither “accuse” white people of oppressing people of color, nor feel angry about the oppression that undoubtedly exists.

...most whites insist that minorities (especially blacks) are the ones responsible for whatever ‘race problem’ we have in this country. They publicly denounce blacks for ‘playing the race card,’ for demanding the maintenance of unnecessary and divisive race-based programs, such as affirmative action, and for crying ‘racism’ whenever they are criticized by whites (Bonilla-Silva, 2003, p. 1).

Brad mentioned something he called the “race card” or “racial card” several times.

“I’m sure that there is racist and biased but why are we forcing that? Why are we forcing the racial card?” Brad (Interview May 2, 2005, p. 7, lines 143 – 144).

“Race card” has developed into a jargon phrase, which utilizing an encyclopedia definition, means: “...an allegation often raised against a person who the accuser feels has unnecessarily brought the issue of race or racism into a debate so as to obfuscate the truth” (“Wikipedia,” 2005).

Brad referenced this “card” several times throughout our interview. The “race card” he believed, was something people of color had the advantage of “playing” when an issue of discrimination or racism arose. Brad also believed that it was not “fair” that he was unable, as a white person, to “play” the “race card.”

“But they are playing the race card. I can’t play the race card” Brad (Interview May 2, 2005, p. 13, lines 263 – 364).

In the context the phrase was used in, it is clear that Brad used “race card” to describe a way that people of color benefit from being people of color. His exact reference was in regard to college admissions.

“So why wouldn’t they play that card? I’m not sitting on the admissions boards or anything like that but if they have two people exactly equal and you have a whole lot of white people and you don’t have very many Black people, the Black person is going to get it because he’s Black...He’s Black so he gets it. I don’t think that’s fair” Brad (Interview May 2, 2005, p. 7, lines 153 – 159).

Molly also discussed how it is generally the people of color that bring up issues of diversity.

“But I know that a lot of people feel that there is a big diversity problem and I know that it comes from the minority students, like pose the problem and everything like that” Molly (Interview April 13, 2005, p. 21, lines 449 – 451).

This represents, again, the privilege of being unaware of racial issues.

### ***Language***

Within the category of “perceptions of people of color,” the subcategory of “language” emerged. In this instance, “language” means the words chosen by the participants to identify people of color. Traces of racism were evident through the language utilized by the participants to name or describe people of color. Almost all participants stumbled at least slightly when trying to convey a category or descriptor for people of color. The hesitation was evident. Differing opinions exist ubiquitously on how to appropriately refer to a person of color. It is the researcher’s belief that the way to refer to any person is how they personally identify and wish to be referred to. Molly and Jack

conveyed feelings of nervousness regarding their anxiety with choosing words to refer to people of color that would not be offensive.

“I grew up saying African American so now when African Americans say that they want to be called Black, it’s kind of like, oh I don’t know if I can do that because I don’t want to offend you or anything like that” Molly (Interview April 20, 2005, p. 2, lines 26 – 29).

“I mean there’s about a million different things you can say...and people take offense to different ones. I have friends that...if I were to call Hispanic, they would take it as extremely wrong and be very mad at me...” Jack (Interview May 9, 2005, p. 12, lines 246 – 249).

“It’s extremely confusing because...I don’t want to piss anyone off...but I know if I say Hispanic or Latino, the first thing they think of me is he doesn’t know about me, he doesn’t know about this culture, he doesn’t care. I feel like I might be racist if I say it wrong” Jack (Interview May 9, 2005, p. 12, lines 255 – 258).

It is of interest that when participants discussed other people throughout the interview who were assumed to be white, no racial designation was provided. For example, when participants were describing their friend groups they might say they had several friends, one of whom was African American and one of whom was Latino. The assumption then, is that the remaining friends were white and not requiring a racial description. The researcher assumed that the participants utilized descriptors that were indicative of how their friends who were people of color self-identified. For example, if someone identified her or his friend as “Mexican” the researcher assumed that is how the friend would self-identify. It is not acceptable for the researcher to presume that the individual would like to be referred to as Mexican American without discussing this with the individual. Identifying people racially is complex. Since race is a social construction, even using the terminology “people of color” is a massive generalization created by society as an expeditious way to group anyone who is “not white” into one vast category,

ignoring the many distinctions and intricacies of very different races. Further evidence of white privilege is the term “non-white” which is consistently utilized, even in the literature. The term “non-person of color” consequently, is not utilized.

Participants mainly utilized language to describe races that are commonly accepted in today’s society. Examples of these terms include: African American, Black, Hispanic, Latino, Asian, or Asian American. There were many occasions where participants utilized words that were either offensive to the researcher or no longer widely accepted. For some of the words this is due to a historically negative and oppressive origination. Other words are determined to be questionable by the researcher. One example of this is the word “minority.” One could argue that the word “minority” is widely accepted today by people of color and white people to depict the underrepresented portion of the population according to race, which currently is people of color, thus people of color are in the minority population of the United States. In the researcher’s opinion, however, the word “minority” has many negative connotations associated with it. “*Minority* is a term that has come under a great deal of fire in recent years...Nevertheless, in today’s politically charged climate on campuses, many students of color believe the term to be denigrating in the extreme and reject its use” (Danigelis, 1998, p. 107). Many dictionary entries for “minor” use descriptors such as “lesser,” “inferior,” “unimportant,” or “not serious.” These descriptions have negative implications, particularly when referring to a portion of the population that already has relatively little to no social or political power. Nevertheless, most participants used the word “minority” to describe people of color or students of color. “Minority” is still much more widely accepted than the antiquated term “colored,” which a couple of participants

still used. The word “colored” has absolutely no place of use by white people in the year 2005 considering its history. According to Yancy (2004)

After all, the institution of American and European slavery, with its disciplinary strategies and practices, was designed to instill in Africans a sense of inferiority and ontological servitude, to deracinate any sense of African pride, cultural identity, and home. This motif of ‘home’ has been a rich trope for Black folk in America; for in their various stages of identity formation (African, Colored, Negro, Black, African American) they have sought ways of negotiating a sense of themselves and a sense of *place* and *reality* (p. 283).

According to an encyclopedia definition, the term “colored” often referred to African Americans, Black people, and other people of color as well. “The term ‘colored’ in particular... largely has fallen out of popular usage in the United States, diminishing in frequency in the last third of the 20th century. Despite the negative connotations it may have today...” (Wikipedia, 2005). The two participants who used the word “colored” to refer to people of color were Meredith and Brad. Meredith used “colored” despite the diversity training she had been a part of and despite her self reported commitment to social justice issues.

“...high schools of predominantly colored areas are really bad...”  
Meredith (Interview May 3, 2005, p. 16, lines 358 – 359).

“I had always tried to think about social justice from a colored person’s perspective...” Meredith (Interview May 9, 2005, p. 15, lines 317 – 318).

The word “colored” was perhaps more expected coming from Brad as opposed to Meredith. Although the two participants appeared to be in different places in terms of racial awareness, neither student reacted verbally or non-verbally when they uttered the word “colored.” Based on the interviews the researcher perceived that Meredith might be caught off guard or apologetic by her own use of the word. She was not. This is

significant because Meredith presented herself in such a way that she appeared to be quite knowledgeable about the historical oppression and racism against people of color. Yet, she used an antiquated and offensive term to refer to people of color at two different points in our interviews with no reaction whatsoever. Brad used the term “colored” at one point during the interview, also with no reaction.

“Advantages to being colored, you can join the various organizations that you want to. You will be accepted...” Brad (Interview May 2, 2005, p. 20, lines 434 – 436).

This word was much less offensive than the odious and appalling racial slurs used by Brad when quoting Chris Rock, an African American comedian known for his controversial performances. Chris Rock often uses the word “nigger,” a word that is extremely offensive to many people and is widely viewed as a racial slur against African American people.

After a period of relative dormancy, the word nigger has been reborn in popular culture. It is hard-edged, streetwise, and it has crossed over into movies like *Pulp Fiction* (1994) and *Jackie Brown* (1997), where it became a symbol of "street authenticity" and hipness. Denzel Washington's character in *Training Day* (2001) uses nigger frequently and harshly.

Richard Pryor long ago disavowed the use of the word in his comedy act, but Chris Rock and Chris Tucker, the new black male comedy kings, use nigger regularly – and not affectionately. Justin Driver, a social critic, argued persuasively that both Rock and Tucker are modern minstrels... (“Jim Crow,” 2005).

Brad’s paraphrasing from comedian Chris Rock also included the racial epithet “spics” as a characterization of Latino people.

The epithet *spic*, on the other hand, dates to the early days of the 20th century...*Spic* is a clipping of the adjective *spiggoty* which was applied to immigrants from Central and South America because they did not "spiggoty English" (speak the English). The term probably arose among Americans in Panama during the building of the canal. The abbreviated *spic* was in use by 1913 (“Etymologies,” 2005).

“...there’s a difference between Black people and niggers. There is a difference between Hispanics and spics. There’s just a total, total difference” Brad (Interview May 2, 2005, p. 15, lines 318 – 319).

Before Brad made this statement he asked the researcher if it was “okay to curse.” This indicated his acknowledgement that the words “niggers” and “spics” were unacceptable. Yet, he still made the statement, which he was agreeing with. Brad may have felt it was acceptable to make this statement because he was quoting an African American comedian. Perhaps this made Brad feel that it was also suitable for him to use these words. The essence of Brad’s statement is significant. The statement is essentially communicating that characteristics exist that separate people within the same racial categories, contributing to their overall worth as people. This is not only a racist perspective but also classist, among other issues.

### **Institutionalized Racism**

Much of the data provided by the participants made reference to examples of institutionalized racism. One of the ways racism is represented at The University of Texas at Austin is through the impact of having a predominantly white student population. The participants offered their perspectives on the diversity or lack of diversity within the student population at UT.

### ***Perceptions of Diversity on Campus***

Many of the participants conveyed noticing the absence of people of color on campus. Earlier Molly and Anne talked about noticing they were in the racial minority in

one situation, since this was not the case typically. Many of them commented on the lack of students of color in their classes. Meredith had two comments concerning this.

“I don’t think I have a single Black person in my classes this semester” Meredith (Interview May 3, 2005, p. 3, line 56).

“The only time I ever see like, predominantly African American groups of people on campus is around bus stops where the bus drivers are. Or maybe see them around Jester because they live...a lot of the athletes do or around the gym” Meredith (Interview May 3, 2005, p. 3, lines 49 – 53).

More than the absence of students of color on campus, Meredith expressed the idea that the University only was concerned with “Black” students who were athletes.

“...if you’re Black and you are not an athlete, UT is really isn’t very interested in you. They don’t really want you, which is sad, but true” Meredith (Interview May 3, 2005, p. 4, lines 86 – 88).

### ***Faculty/Staff***

Having a predominantly white faculty and staff further contributes to the atmosphere of the campus environment and perpetuates the privilege for white students. This was one area that all participants were not only able to recognize, but also communicate.

“I think...most of my professors, racial-wise...have been my same race and so, my first semester here...definitely all my professors, all four or five of them were my same race and so I think that makes it a lot easier to make me feel like I fit in...” Molly (Interview April 13, 2005, p. 10, lines 198 – 201).

“There are not a lot of tenured professors of color or of different backgrounds, way, way, under-proportionately represented. More under-proportionately represented, I think, than the student body” Susan (Interview June 16, 2005, p. 27, lines 586 – 589).

“Most of my, most, if not all of my professors have been white” Brad (Interview May 2, 2005, p. 22, lines 463 – 464).

“...if you look at the professors here at UT, extremely small percentage of them are even just not white in general” Meredith (Interview May 3, 2005, p. 5, lines 94 – 95).

“Most of the professors and all the faculty on campus are white” Anne (Interview May 11, 2005, p. 17, line 355).

“Most all positions, especially at the University are held by a white person...” Molly (Interview April 13, 2005, p. 18, lines 392 – 393).

“Most of our administration is white...” Jack (Interview May 9, 2005, p. 11, lines 236 – 237).

Meredith was able to impart one portion of the significance of having a predominantly white faculty/staff on campus.

“...if you are a student of color and the professor is white then you don’t really feel like you can relate to them as easy” Meredith (Interview May 3, 2005, p. 12, lines 260 – 262).

Meredith was also able to assert some of the responsibility on the part of the University, noting the importance of recruitment of faculty and staff of color by the University.

“I think also UT just needs to be a little more competitive in recruiting professors of color...we have plenty of money to, we can be competitive and get these people to UT.” Meredith (Interview May 9, 2005, p. 9, lines 185 – 191).

Even though several students were aware to acknowledge the disproportionate number of white faculty or staff members, they still were not able or willing to admit that this contributes to the privilege for white students on campus. Other privileges are discussed later in this chapter.

### ***Tradition***

Since tradition is directly tied to spirit organizations it was relevant to discuss the role of tradition at the institution. Participants routinely mentioned the importance of

tradition at the University. Molly even went so far as to say that tradition is likely to be why most students attend the institution and stay at the institution.

“Well, it’s here...I think we’re all here, probably for the traditions” Molly (Interview April 13, 2005, p. 3, line 64).

“...everyone who takes advantage of all the other kind of like tradition-wise things and...really gets into the school spirit. I would say that’s what probably would keep everybody here...” Molly (Interview April 13, 2005, p. 4, lines 72 – 74).

“I think that the tradition here...is one of the strongest in the state because...if people see Texas any other place they will think of UT. And that I think is something really special that we have...I think tradition like that wise, I just think...it’s really fun. Everything about all the traditions that we have here is really fun...” Molly (Interview April 13, 2005, pp. 12 – 13, lines 253 – 263).

Several of the participants discussed the racist history behind many of the traditions currently practiced at The University of Texas at Austin today. Some of these traditions will be discussed in the next section. Allen made mention of this racist history but explained that he still continued to celebrate some of the traditions, based on what the tradition has come to represent in its current form.

“...it’s not that every tradition has a hint of racism. It’s more a matter of the spirit in which it is today regardless of it’s history. I can still celebrate that and still know the history” Allen (Interview May 4, 2005, p. 7, lines 192 – 194).

Molly indicated the degree of indoctrination that many of the traditions had.

“This has been going on for over 100 years and nothing has changed...” Molly (Interview April 13, 2005, p. 13, line 279).

“...the longer you are in the spirit and traditions type stuff, the more you like it” Molly (Interview April 13, 2005, p. 13, line 283).

“[my organization] it’s something that has been on campus for so long that it is in itself, like the institution...” Molly (Interview April 13, 2005, p. 16, lines 328 – 329).

“I really don’t know how, it makes me want to find out. I really don’t know how, I’m sure it’s all on the internet too. That’s stuff that I should know” Molly (Interview April 13, 2005, p. 16, lines 331 – 333).

“They don’t really remind us that it is a tradition or why we do things, it’s just that we do them” Molly (Interview April 13, 2005, p. 15, lines 328 – 329).

These last two comments by Molly represent the lack of awareness about the histories of traditions. Rather, they are perpetuated without evaluating or acknowledging the foundations behind them.

Allen had a more discerning perspective surrounding the traditions at UT. First, he acknowledged the fundamental issue relating to the traditions by explaining the reason why traditions may have been racist in the first place. He then correlates that information with speculation as to why students of color may not be invested in UT traditions.

“All these traditions were made by white people” Allen (Interview May 4, 2005, p. 9, lines 256 – 257).

“...so I think a lot of times students of color aren’t really interested in participating in spirit organizations because they don’t feel a vested interest in the traditions...” Allen (Interview May 4, 2005, p. 10, lines 259 – 261).

Jack pointed out that some organizations, which have cultural foci, also have traditions.

“...cultural organizations have their own traditions” Jack (Interview May 9, 2005, p. 8, lines 157 – 158).

What is interesting is how Jack phrased this. He said that cultural organizations have “their own” traditions. This would relate to Allen’s statement in that traditions are seen as white traditions. That students of color have to create or maintain “their own” traditions indicates that the white traditions are normalized into “traditions,” where cultural organizations’ traditions are outside of the norm or specialized.

## School Song

Within the subcategory of “tradition,” the “school song” developed as an additional subcategory.

“I think tradition means singing ‘The Eyes of Texas’...” Jack (Interview May 9, 2005, p. 6, line 128).

Many participants discussed the history of the school song, “The Eyes of Texas.” “The Eyes of Texas” was established in the early 1900’s for a minstrel show. “ ‘The Eyes of Texas’ is the official Alma Mater of the University of Texas. It was written in 1903 by John Sinclair, in response to a request that a song be written for the Cowboy Minstrel Show...Sinclair, dressed in minstrel attire with a black face, sang the song...” (“History of School,” 2005). “The Eyes of Texas” is “played prior to the start and at the close of all Texas sporting events and at all other official University of Texas functions” (History of School,” 2005). Over one hundred years later the school song is still a racist remembrance for students, faculty, and staff who are aware of the establishment of the song. Some of the participants in this study did have knowledge of the racist history of the school song. Allen and Susan both discussed not only the racist history but also the current impact of the school song.

“Like the fact that people don’t realize that the ‘The Eyes of Texas’ is a racist song. We don’t talk about it. We just don’t talk about it...you just put your hands in the air at football games” Allen (Interview May 4, 2005, p. 3, lines 66 – 68).

“ ‘The Eyes of Texas’ was apparently about slavery at one point. Or it was some sort of slave song” Susan (Interview June 16, 2005, p. 17, lines 351 – 352).

“...it was more of like, Southern pride, pre-civil war, southern pride. When it was first sung and written, it was a song by someone in blackface at a minstrel show, basically making fun of black railroad workers...every time it was performed it was performed by men in blackface” Allen (Interview May 4, 2005, pp. 4 – 5, lines 112 – 121).

Susan went on to share a story about one of her friends first educating Susan about the history of the school song:

“We’re standing up singing ‘The Eyes of Texas’ and my friend wasn’t. I was like [name], come on...She was like, glared at me...But it turns out that it’s something that she takes offense to. She is Latina...this song has a history that is not something to be proud of...” Susan (Interview June 16, 2005, p. 19, lines 396 – 404).

Molly talked about being interested in the origin of traditions but that she really did not know where the school song came from. The school song was among other traditions she wanted to know more about, even though she participates fully in many of those traditions.

“I don’t really know why we have ‘The Eyes of Texas’...I think that’s another good one too [tradition]...I don’t know. That makes me really want to find out though” Molly (Interview April 13, 2005, p. 16, lines 341 – 345).

### **Campus Incidents**

The University of Texas at Austin has been plagued by racism and insensitivity for many years. In the last several years there have been multiple racially-motivated incidents that have occurred on the University’s campus. Some of the participants of this study had knowledge of these events, while others did not. The most recent large-scale incident, occurring in the Spring 2005 semester, was a student organization’s plan to host an “Immigrant Hunt” on campus. The idea behind this event was for individuals to dress in costume as illegal Immigrants. Once people hunted down the “immigrants” and returned them to the organization’s table, the individuals would receive a reward. This

kind of event has been hosted on various college campuses within the last few years. One such event, called “Capture an Illegal Immigrant Day,” was hosted by the University of North Texas’ Young Conservatives organization. The “group's demonstration, in which students who captured people posing as illegal immigrants received a candy bar reward, angered some on campus...Some members of the group wore orange shirts that said ‘Illegal Immigrant’ on the front and ‘Catch me if U can’ on the back” (Zabel, 2005, n.p.). The “Immigrant Hunt” never officially took place on UT’s campus, however, some students organized a silent protest on the day the “hunt” was supposed to occur. Organizers of similar events have argued that the events are not based on race, but immigration reform. Still many students of color and white students were disturbed by the rumored event, including Meredith. Meredith believed that the potential for the “Immigrant Hunt” was tangible evidence of racism on campus.

“The so-called immigrant hunt that never went on but got publicized like crazy...that’s still alive on campus...obviously shows that racism is still present” Meredith (Interview May 3, 2005, p. 14, lines 300 – 302).

Meredith also mentioned other incidents such as an act of anti-semitism.

“...a few years [ago] a swastika was painted on one of the Jewish organization houses...” Meredith (Interview May 3, 2005, p. 15, 320 – 321).

Other incidents of similar nature included a swastika that was spray-painted, along with the words “White Power,” inside a secured custodial closet of the campus Union in September of 2002. Also discovered in the campus Union one month earlier was a two and one half foot swastika carved into a wooden door. Other anti-semitic hate crimes that have occurred on campus in the last few years include a Jewish student being attacked at his fraternity house as recent as May 2005. A similar occurrence transpired in

2003 at a different fraternity house where another Jewish student was badly injured to the extent of needing to have a metal plate put inside his skull (Bordelon, 2005). In 1999 posters and fliers were displayed on campus advertising lectures on neo-nazis with the “National Alliance” organization’s information (“Anti-Defamation League,” 2005). According to the Anti-Defamation League, the “National Alliance” is “currently the largest and most active neo-Nazi organization in the nation. In the past several years, dozens of violent crimes, including murders, bombings and robberies, have been traced to NA members of appear to have been inspired by the group’s propaganda” (“Anti-Defamation League,” 2005). Though not mentioned by any of the participants, the National Alliance had a few showings on UT’s campus in the last few years, as recent as 2003. The fliers, distributed throughout the campus, “stated that black men are more likely to have AIDS and want to spread it to others” (Fitzsimmons, 2003, n.p.).

Several students mentioned the Greek system as problematic. Their comments mostly referenced that the organizations are all white, have a significant amount of power, have a history of racism, and have antiquated practices based on very old histories.

“...fraternities and sororities are all white...these fraternities and sororities that were a byproduct of the system that excluded people of color are still around and as long as you have that history and as long as you have those organizations...you are never going to have a Greek system that is integrated, never” Allen (Interview May 4, 2005, p. 13, lines 342 – 352).

“...all of the...Greek mansions are kind of modeled after southern plantations...” Allen (Interview May 4, 2005, p. 13, line 360).

“I think a lot of the organizations that are predominantly white are through Greek life...Greek life has really, really old history...I know that Greek life has been making some effort toward making them more diverse but really it’s just like new sororities and fraternities have been started to let minorities participate in Greek life” Meredith (Interview May 3, 2005, p. 28, lines 616 – 624).

Even though a few of the participants had knowledge of sororities and fraternities and related issues, none of them referenced significant racial incidents initiated by Greek organizations at UT. One of the most well-known fraternity incidents occurred in 1990. A predominantly white fraternity, Phi Gamma Delta, created a t-shirt that depicted a “Sambo” caricature on the body of Michael Jordan. During that same week a car used in a University sponsored event appeared spray-painted with racial epithets near Delta Tau Delta, another predominantly white fraternity (“History of Resistance,” 2005). This event garnered national attention for the University and resulted in protests and faculty resignations. More recent fraternity-sponsored incidents were reported. In 2002 students discovered photos from two different fraternity events, held by Phi Gamma Delta and Kappa Alpha, where party attendees appeared in blackface and other racially offensive costumes (Reinlie, 2003). According to one student quoted in the campus newspaper, ‘The bigger issue is not that the party occurred and people were doing this, but that everybody thinks it’s OK...this is obvious proof that racism and stereotypes still occur on campus on a daily basis’ (Reinlie, 2003, n.p.). The student continued with a sentiment that articulates the state of the University at the time ‘As a black student, it makes me feel that I do not want to be here and that I am not welcome here...I would not really recommend this school to any black student. Why should we come? Why should any minority student come?’ (Reinlie, 2003, n.p.).

Meredith and Jack both made mention of the vandalism of the Martin Luther King, Jr. statue located on campus.

“...the MLK statue being defaced last year...” Meredith (Interview May 3, 2005, p. 15, lines 321 – 322).

The statue has been the target of repeated attacks. As reported in the campus newspaper the statue was spray-painted in 2004 and egged in 2002. The year the statue was erected on campus, 1999, the Malcolm X Lounge, a study and social area used mostly by African American students was vandalized with racial epithets, causing video cameras to be installed near the new MLK statue (“History of Resistance,” 2005). The MLK statue while certainly considered a major landmark on campus, was not mentioned as such by any of the participants. The participants who referenced the statue were mentioning it in regard to the vandalism.

Following several of these racially-motivated incidents the President of the University conferred a University-wide committee to examine the racial climate on campus. The Task Force on Racial Respect and Fairness was established in 2003 to investigate institutional processes. In early 2003 Kevin Curry, then a UT business honors senior and student government representative, was racially-profiled by a University police officer in the Texas Union. Curry was “stopped by a UTPD officer for ‘looking furtive’ while playing the piano in the Texas Union” (Morris, 2003, n.p.). Several town hall meetings took place at the time where administrators responded to questions and concerns around race relations. At one town hall meeting the president of the University responded to the question of whether racism exists at UT or not. “Faulkner said: ‘This place is a reflection of Texas. Does racism exist in Texas? Sure. And it exists here’” (Jayson, 2003). In January of 2004 the report from the task force appointed by Faulkner was released. Some of the recommendations included a new position of vice president for diversity and equity, new programs to enhance the relationships between students and the university police department, and stressed the importance of recruiting of underrepresented students, staff, and faculty. The four overarching goals guiding the report were:

Widely articulate the university's commitment to diversity and inclusiveness...create the position of 'vice president for diversity and equity' whose role would be to promote and enhance diversity and inclusiveness throughout the university.

Implement structural and institutional mechanisms for interpersonal and cultural change...creation of a comprehensive 'honor code' that addresses interpersonal as well as academic behavior. It would recognize Greek and other student organizations that endorse and abide by the proposed 'honor code' and demonstrate their commitment to diversity. It also would encourage entering students to postpone pledging to Greek organizations until the end of their freshman year to allow them an opportunity to develop a broader range of experiences and contacts that may otherwise be limited by their participation in fraternities or sororities...development of a required course on 'a non-U.S. culture, a sub-national ethno-racial culture of the U.S. or a course that explores issues related to gender, race and class.'

Increase recruitment, retention and advancement of historically underrepresented students, faculty and staff...important that initiatives be put into place to retain and successfully advance students, faculty and staff of color...

Increase the University of Texas Police Department's skill in negotiating diversity and inclusion issues...recommended that the department include 'diversity and inclusiveness' as an individual core value of the department's mission statement...the police department's definition of 'racial profiling' be reviewed, as well as the steps the department is taking to eradicate such practices ("Report of the Task Force," 2004).

## **Landmarks**

"Landmarks" was another subcategory that developed throughout the interviews as a subcategory of "institutionalized racism." When asked about landmarks on campus most of the participants identified landmarks such as the football stadium and the Tower, the building where the upper-level administration was located. They also mentioned the histories of several other buildings and statues.

## **Buildings**

“Buildings” was one of the examples participants gave as a subcategory of “landmarks” on campus. Meredith and Allen, who seemed to have a greater amount of knowledge of some of the historically racist components of the University, discussed the naming of buildings on campus.

“...also the RLM building...he was like an insane racist...I heard it from a reliable source...he wouldn’t let people of color into his classes. They had to change professors. The...building is named after him...” Meredith (Interview May 3, 2005, p. 24, lines 536 – 540).

“...you’ve got...named after somebody who started a chapter of the Klan... and it was built as a black dorm and it was named after a confederate person because it was going to be a black dorm...” Allen (Interview May 4, 2005, p. 14, lines 365 – 368).

“...you have the monument...an entire library...he was also a pretty racist guy most of the time” Allen (Interview May 4, 2005, p. 14, lines 369 – 370).

The repeated naming of buildings on campus after known racist white individuals contributes to the notion of racism on campus.

## **Statues**

Almost all of the participants had knowledge of the existence of Southern civil war leader statues on campus. “Seven statues of Confederate and Union leaders are scattered throughout...They’ve been that way since the 1920s” (Keith, 2004, n.p.)

“...the fact that there are civil war leaders on campus...I’m sure would make some African American students feel pretty uncomfortable walking around...”

“...and then Woodrow Wilson up there, he was a closet racist” Meredith (Interview May 3, 2005, p. 15, lines 322 – 326).

“I don’t know, for me... great, great grandparents that fought in the civil war for the South and I still don’t think that we need those...I think...personally, if it makes someone uncomfortable then we need to do away with it because that is understandable” Jack (Interview May 9, 2005, p. 4, lines 78 – 80).

“It’s weird that you walk across the main mall and you see all these statues of old, white, confederate leaders. Why is that? ...it makes me wonder kind of what we stand for...if you ask [the] president...he is going to tell you it’s a number one priority right now for the University is increasing diversity and reaching out to different students. But then when you invite them to come here to campus this is what they see” Susan (Interview June 16, 2005, pp. 14 – 15, lines 304 – 308).

Meredith, Allen, Susan, and Jack all were in agreement about the lack of necessity in having the statues on campus. Molly had a different perspective. Since she thought the statues were acceptable to be there, she thought everyone else should feel this way too.

“...I don’t think, what they stand for is not, it’s not Southern pride, it’s just history...maybe because I don’t take it so personally I don’t think that other people should I guess” Molly (Interview April 20, 2005, p. 6, lines 123 – 127).

What Molly potentially fails to acknowledge is that she, as a white person, cannot expect a student of color to not take something personally just because she does not, since she can never understand what it is like to be a student of color on this campus. Clearly the statues would not have the same impact on Molly as they might for students of color. Molly’s failure to notice this disparity again alludes to her privilege.

## THEME FOUR: HIGHLIGHTING PRIVILEGE

TABLE 5: THEME FOUR AND CATEGORIES OF DATA ANALYSIS

<p><b>THEME FOUR: HIGHLIGHTING PRIVILEGE</b></p> <p><u>Categories</u></p> <p>Identifying Privilege</p> <p>Denying Privilege</p> <p>Choice</p>
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### Identifying Privilege

White privilege is defined as a set of unearned privileges and benefits afforded to white people in our society based solely on the color of their skin (McIntosh, 1988).

Many of the students identified privileges they experience as white people. Most of them did not articulate these statements directly, however they were interpreted by the researcher as such. Several of the participants alluded to the notions of ease or comfort that they experience, compared to a presumed difficulty or discomfort experienced by students of color.

“I’ll never understand as a white person going through what people of color go through especially on this campus” Allen (Interview May 4, 2005, p. 2, lines 45 – 46).

“It just seems, since I feel like I’m, I guess I’m with the majority race it still makes me feel comfortable. I would feel comfortable no matter what” Molly (Interview April 13, 2005, p. 10, lines 203 – 205).

“I definitely feel like I didn’t have as many obstacles to overcome to come here” Susan (Interview June 16, 2005, p. 25, lines 526 – 527).

“...if you are the only person of color in a class...there is still like that, oh god, I stand out. Everyone knows me as that Black kid or that Asian kid or whatever. I think that would be intimidating for me personally...” Meredith (Interview May 3, 2005, p. 6, lines 114 – 115).

Molly pointed toward a subconscious feeling of well-being.

“...when I walk down the streets I still do see predominantly white people passing by so I guess it makes me feel more comfortable, like underlying without thinking about it” Molly (Interview April 13, 2005, p. 21, lines 456 – 458).

“It’s a pretty easy life, I think, being white in America” Meredith (Interview May 3, 2005, p. 9, lines 193 – 194).

“If you are white obviously you are in the majority, which automatically is a huge benefit. You don’t ever stand out. You don’t have any of the problems...” Meredith (Interview May 3, 2005, p. 13, lines 275 – 277).

For Anne the feelings of ease and comfort correlated with confidence.

“I kind of think it’s fun because, since it is a predominantly white school you are a little bit more confident with yourself” Anne (Interview May 11, 2005, p. 5, lines 98 – 99).

Jack first discussed the state of the campus in relation to power and then explained that the privilege extends outside of campus to the geographical region where the University is located.

“I think white culture, white students, white community members, white people are currently running our campus. I think that’s what, there might be a little bit of privilege and there might be a little bit extra that white students would get a little bit more attention” Jack (Interview May 9, 2005, p. 15, lines 351 – 354).

“...if you are born white in Texas you probably have a better chance than anyone else...they get more privileges than other students and...I think it’s the subtle little things that really make the difference” Jack (Interview May 9, 2005, p. 16, 329 – 332).

“I think if we can help people to better understand like the fact that some people do get a head start in life and some people do start out really

behind...then maybe we can help change the world a little bit” Meredith (Interview May 3, 2005, p. 10, lines 213 – 216).

Meredith, Susan, and Allen all indicated their own individual difficulties but then were able to specify that their challenges were insignificant in comparison to the difficulties faced by people of color.

“I had to work my butt off to find stuff [scholarships]...you might have to work a little harder but you know, minorities had to work a little harder their whole life” Meredith (Interview May 3, 2005, p. 13, lines 294 - 296).

“But I don’t know that those benefits [for people of color] outweigh all the things that those kids have to go through and I would almost say no, they probably don’t” Susan (Interview June 16, 2005, p. 39, lines 839 – 841).

“...affirmative action, a lot of times it’s the white student that gets the shaft. They don’t realize that the person of color has been getting the shaft their entire life...” Allen (Interview May 4, 2005, p. 15, lines 416 – 417).

Molly noted that she found it interesting that although she was in the racial minority in one of her classes she did not feel like the “minority.” This elucidates the privilege she experiences and perhaps is connected to the notion that she is aware, even on a subconscious level, that once she walks out of the door of her classroom she will once again be in the company of people who look like her and so she does not have the experience comparable to a student of color at a predominantly white institution where there is no escape from whiteness.

“Right now, especially, I’m in a chemistry lab where I’m one of three white students and everyone else is Asian or Indian or some, quote, quote, minority, yet, like I’m white is minority in that class. I think that’s just really interesting yet in that like I don’t even, I don’t feel like I’m the minority in the class, which is weird” Molly (Interview April 13, 2005, p. 7, lines 145 – 149).

Many of the participants were at ease when expressing their perceived stereotypes of white people. Even though all of the stereotypes they listed were positive or beneficial, they still communicated them in a way that they perceived them to be negative. Allen identified this dichotomy.

“I would say that stereotypes of white people are in general better than stereotypes of people of color...in general people stereotype white people as having more money and better educated...” Allen (Interview May 4, 2005, p. 15, lines 406 – 410).

“...it usually goes back to somehow white...our university...and it’s unfortunate but maybe they feel they [faculty] can relate better to you or, even the person at the checkout line at the Co-op...they treat you a little bit differently...or the president, I don’t think that his main agenda is Latino students on our campus. He’s not Latino so why would it be? Jack (Interview May 9, 2005, p. 16, lines 343 – 348).

Molly’s only perceived challenge as a student on this campus was the “liberal” atmosphere of campus.

“What else could be challenging? I don’t know that there is anything really like, maybe times around the liberal kind of feel that everyone says that UT has.” Molly (Interview April 13, 2005, p. 4, lines 78 – 80).

### **Denying Privilege**

“Ignoring privilege keeps us in a state of unreality, by promoting the illusion that difference by itself is the problem” (Johnson, 2001, p. 16).

Despite Meredith’s acknowledgement of privilege in several situations, when asked if there were any advantages to being white she could not state any of them. She paused and hesitated.

“No, I can’t really think of a situation where I would be chosen over a person of color for any reason” Meredith (Interview May 3, 2005, p. 25, lines 547 – 549).

Brad similarly did not see advantage.

“I don’t see any race as an advantage” Brad (Interview May 2, 2005, p. 13, lines 266 – 267).

This is, of course, contradictory. Brad was able to specify many advantages that people of color have when applying for admission or scholarships or when celebrating their culture, but did not respond when asked the question directly.

### **Choice**

Perhaps one of the greatest privileges white people in our society benefit from is the privilege of choice. White people indeed have more choices than people of color in our society. White people also have the privilege of choice when confronting racism. Because white people are not the targets of racism, they can choose when, how and if they will interrupt racism.

All white men who begin to understand the implications of their favorable social positioning have a choice to stand up, take on their responsibility to the rest of the world, and work to make our society more egalitarian. White men also have a choice to close their eyes, suppress their guilt from their inactivity and complacency, hide behind piles of homework, and derive racist and sexist rationalizations of their privilege (Casoy, 2005, n.p.).

It can be argued that people of color also have a choice when it comes to confronting racism. The difference is that white people have much less at stake. Specific examples of this privilege of choice were conveyed by Allen and Susan. Both participants identified their knowledge of the racist history of the school song and both participants justified why they choose to continue participating in it.

“I sing “The Eyes of Texas” but I think of it in a modern spirit, knowing full well...what it originally meant and was written and how it’s evolved over the years...” Allen (Interview May 4, 2005, p. 3, lines 68 – 70).

“Yes, I do [still sing “The Eyes of Texas”]. I think for a couple of days I mumbled it. I really thought about it and...means more to me than just, I found out this one thing, I’m going to stop singing my school song. You can’t erase our past but you can still be proud of what we are doing right now...” Susan (Interview June 16, 2005, p. 23, lines 490 – 493).

“I’m okay with singing it because I think they know that I know that I care, I guess” Susan (Interview June 16, 2005, p. 23, lines 514 – 515).

Several participants noted their conscious considerations of when and how to interrupt something they believe is offensive. All of these examples indicate a choice the white individuals have. The choice is to intervene or to do nothing since nothing is personally at stake. This choice is also a privilege.

[on becoming aware of diversity issues] “You have to make the commitment to not blow it off and look around and say, like, well maybe there is some more to this picture” Allen (Interview May 4, 2005, p. 3, lines 63 – 64).

“It’s just, it’s that whole cycle, breaking that cycle of thought in my mind and over and over again.” Molly (Interview April 13, 2005, p. 9, lines 180 – 181).

Some participants were able to articulate that they balanced their desire to interrupt the racist behavior with their desire to still be seen in a positive sense by their friends.

“Usually I try not to say something unless it like gets really bad to where I’m offended. If its just people going out to eat and even it it’s somebody I don’t know too well. I’ll try to say something but I don’t want to be rude or feel like I’m lecturing someone” Meredith (Interview May 9, 2005, pp. 2 – 3, lines 44 – 47).

“...the thing about social justice is it’s a thing that you have to work on and educate yourself with all the time and not just like you do it for a month...” Meredith (Interview May 9, 2005, p. 6, lines 121 – 122).

It is easy, a privilege, to laugh or go along with a joke or statement that you know is wrong.

“I don’t know, I definitely didn’t agree with it but at the same time you chuckle, oh it’s funny” Anne (Interview May 12, 2005, p. 12, lines 252 – 253).

And, it is easy, a privilege, to do nothing at all.

“I haven’t really sat and thought about this stuff in a while and it was cool...it’s really easy to get out of it, which I realize I had after our last meeting. Man, what have I been doing lately? Nothing” Meredith (Interview May 9, 2005, p. 15, lines 305 – 311).

**THEME FIVE: CONTRIBUTING CAMPUS ELEMENTS**

**TABLE 6: THEME FIVE AND CATEGORIES OF DATA ANALYSIS**

<p><b>THEME FIVE: CONTRIBUTING CAMPUS ELEMENTS</b></p> <p><u>Categories</u></p> <p>Free Speech Area</p> <p>Diversity Education</p> <p><u>Subcategories</u></p> <p>Classes</p> <p>Orientation</p> <p>Multicultural Information Center</p> <p>Programs</p>
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Despite the challenges presented by some of the traditions that exist and some of the campus incidents that have occurred, some of the participants also mentioned other components of the campus environment, which play a role in establishing the campus culture and climate. The following landmarks, events, or offices were mentioned as elements of the campus that contribute to diversity awareness on campus.

**Free Speech Area**

Even though most participants referred to the campus as being a place where they mostly see white people, a few participants did mention a particular area of campus where they saw a diverse population of students. This particular area of campus is designated as one of the campus' free speech areas, the West Mall. It is also an area where student organizations gather daily to promote their organizations, activities, and events.

“But, going to the West Mall and seeing that crowd of types of people that are on the West Mall...Then there are tons of different cultural type

groups that are there” Molly (Interview April 13, 2005, pp. 4 – 5, lines 81 – 106).

“...the West Mall when all the organizations are out, Jewish kids and Asian kids and all that kind of stuff” Brad (Interview May 2, 2005, p. 12, lines 240 – 241).

It is possible that the participants were aware of a diverse representation of students because they were not used to seeing students of color on campus. In this particular area it becomes apparent because they are reminded of their whiteness, like in Meredith’s case.

“Like on the free speech area they are open to multicultural groups or social justice groups that hand out flyers and they will be handing them out... and then a white person passes and they stop, then they start handing them out again” Meredith (Interview May 9, 2005, p. 12, lines 240 – 243).

As discussed previously Meredith notices her race when she feels that she is being discriminated against in some way.

### **Diversity Education**

Several of the participants expressed their views around various diversity education classes or programs offered on campus.

#### ***Classes***

As described earlier, the president of the University recently appointed a committee to examine the racial climate on campus following a surge of racist incidents that occurred on campus. One of the recommendations from this committee was to consider a curricular requirement for a class with a diversity component. Several of the

participants, mostly the same participants who had not participated in diversity trainings, felt that they either did not need the course or did not want to take a course such as this.

“I would not want to take a diversity class just because I already feel like I am accepting and that is what that class would kind of lead towards” Molly (Interview April 13, 2005, p. 437 – 439).

“I don’t know that I would need any, per se” Anne (Interview May 11, 2005, p. 17, line 363).

“I think it’s [a class on diversity] ridiculous, forcing people to come together...I think they should just allow us to be students...if I’m a science major I should take science classes” Brad (Interview May 2, 2005, p. 27, lines 572 – 574).

Susan had already taken a class that had a diversity component and revealed throughout the interview that she had learned a great deal through the experience.

“...I took a history class my freshman year that talked a lot about public institutions and the ways that they hide racism and so I’m sure that a lot of those ideas came out of that class because I just know that I read about them but I don’t really remember which ones” Susan (Interview June 16, 2005, p. 16, lines 337 – 340).

Meredith had not taken a class that had any kind of focus on diversity but felt that the University should offer more options in this arena.

“...I think there needs to be more classes in general that are available to talk about some issues and talk about other historical movements in the past that are still affecting us today that people don’t really think about” Meredith (Interview May 9, 2005, p. 5, lines 101 – 104).

From Jack’s candid perspective, given the current state and level of ignorance on campus, a class may not be enough of an education tool.

“If you have kids throwing eggs at the MLK statue, a class isn’t going to do crap” Jack (Interview May 9, 2005, p. 21, lines 451 – 452).

Jack’s statement communicates the gravity of the problem of racism on the University’s campus.

## ***Orientation***

A couple of the participants referenced the diversity education component of the University's new student orientation program. Allen had several comments regarding this program.

“It's hard in a three-day session to really open someone's eyes and maybe they are not ready for it, considering who comes in. I think that the goal of orientation sometimes is to change the views overnight. Really, all you can expect to do is to open doors for people to walk through” Allen (Interview May 4, 2005, p. 7, lines 198 – 201).

“...my orientation...it went over the heads of a lot of students because they came from communities...they had never, ever seen some people of certain races, let alone be with them...”Allen (Interview May 4, 2005, p. 7, lines 198 – 201).

## ***Multicultural Information Center***

The Multicultural Information Center, in the Division of Student Affairs at the University, was mentioned several times throughout the course of the participant interviews. Some of the comments were discussed earlier in the chapter when participants were discussing the apprehension they felt by being around or going into the office. Some of the participants also commented on the Multicultural Information Center's attempts at diversity education.

“...they all have great intentions of what they are trying to do but at the same time they can't hold these exact, like, opposite, just reflect whatever they feel is being put on them like right back onto white people because that isn't really fair for the few of us trying to do something about it” Meredith (Interview May 9, 2005, p. 10, lines 201 – 205).

“...there is no way that I can go and use that computer [in the Multicultural Information Center],...it seems like because I am not of a minority race that I would not really be accepted in that kind of setting...” Molly (Interview April 20, 2005, p. 27, lines 572 – 574).

“I’ve had multiple heated conversations with the Multicultural Information Center and students that work there and staff and everything else. It’s always been interesting. I think you always take something away” Jack (Interview May 9, 2005, p. 8, lines 165 – 168).

### ***Campus Programs***

Several students mentioned programs on campus that were instrumental for educating students on issues of diversity. Campus Fusion is a week-long event sponsored by the Multicultural Information Center and Student Government. “Through different programs during the ‘Week of Dialogue,’ we recognize the importance of talking about diversity issues, and we end the week with a celebration of the variety of cultures and ethnicities present on this campus” (“Campus Fusion,” 2005). The CHANGE Institute is an institute sponsored by Greek Life and Education in the Office of the Dean of Students. Sorority and fraternity members apply to attend this three-day institute dedicated to examining issues relating to racism, heterosexism, and sexism. Some of the participants referenced these specific programs.

“...I think that it needs to be more of a priority to get these resources out and like to get people, like the Fusion thing...The Campus Fusion week, that’s good because it’s really publicized and even if you don’t go to anything ...at least it makes you think about it...” Meredith (Interview May 9, 2005, p. 92 – 97).

“Campus Fusion week is just like...a week of awareness and it’s just like all the multicultural clubs, organizations on campus, they will set up booths and promote whatever it is their organization does...it’s a chance to get involved and be more aware of the issues” Meredith (Interview May 9, 2005, p. 11, lines 224 – 228).

“...I guess the CHANGE program...deal with some of these issues. I’ve never been through something like that...nothing that hard” Allen (Interview May 4, 2005, p. 34, lines 93 – 95).

“I think a lot of times for predominantly white organizations or university sponsored things, is that the diversity training is so watered down. People don’t want anybody to get pissed off” Allen (Interview May 4, 2005, p. 4, lines 93 – 97).

Allen also mentioned two large campus-wide events that he considered to be well-known events on campus.

“Forty Acres Fest and Texas Revue...are generally accepted as kind of white” Allen (Interview May 4, 2005, p. 8, lines 219 – 220).

Forty Acres Fest is a student organization festival that includes attractions, student organizations and musical performances. Texas Revue has been called the largest and official talent showcase at The University of Texas at Austin. Allen’s statement that these events are white is indicative of the perception that they are not inclusive of students of color. This refers back to the concept that what are perceived as institutional traditions on campus are also perceived as white traditions.

Brad’s only diversity training was part of a co-curricular experience that he was a part of for a couple of years. He had a negative opinion of the diversity portion of the training.

“We thought it [diversity component of training] was the most boring, unimportant, time wasting ordeal...and it was so unneeded” Brad (Interview May 2, 2005, p. 26, lines 548 – 551).

## **Summary**

The themes that emerged from this study, 1) Normalizing Whiteness, 2) Jeopardizing Entitlement, 3) Perpetuating Racism, 4) Highlighting Privilege, and 5) Contributing Campus Elements, are diametrically tied to each of the categories and subcategories discussed. All of these themes address the original research questions for

the study. This study is meaningful and significant in many ways. As a result of the study, the researcher recommends that administrators at predominantly white institutions should consider their roles to ensure the responsible education of community members in a multiracial society. This study displays the ignorance, racism, perpetuation of privilege, and lack of racial awareness by the white participants of the study. It also brings to light the divisiveness of a predominantly white institution and the ability afforded to white students that may allow them to maintain existence in a bubble of heterogeneity. Elements of student affairs practice such as educating the “whole” student and preparing students for the “real world” may be lost on students attending predominantly white institutions, as the research suggests. Not only are white students at predominantly white institutions not receiving an education for how to interact in a respectful and meaningful manner with students of varying races, but white students are not being challenged around issues of race. The following chapter will discuss, more specifically, the implications of the study.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This qualitative study examined the perceptions of race and racial identity and perceptions of privilege for white college students at a predominantly white institution, in addition to examining how the campus climate and campus culture contribute to these perceptions. The research questions that guided the study were:

1. What are the perceptions of white students regarding their race and racial identity?
2. What are the perceptions of white students regarding their racial privilege?
3. How do the campus climate and culture of the institution impact these perceptions?

Through this interview research study the researcher engaged in individual interviews with eight white students attending a predominantly white institution and engaged them in a conversation that most of them had never participated in. Yet, this conversation was one that many of the participants were anxious to begin – a conversation about race.

The themes that emerged from the interviews were 1) Normalizing Whiteness, 2) Jeopardizing Entitlement, 3) Perpetuating Racism, 4) Highlighting Privilege, and 5) Contributing Campus Elements. This final chapter reveals conclusions based on the data analysis and responses to the research questions, as well as implications and recommendations for future research and practice.

### **Conclusions**

The participants for this study shared certain common perspectives regarding perceptions of racial identity and privilege. Their perspectives of the campus environment and campus culture were in certain ways similar as well. Each of the research questions

was visited and revisited throughout each phase of this qualitative study. Following is an explanation of the participant responses based on the original research questions.

**Research Question One: What are the perceptions of white students regarding their race and racial identity?**

Most of the participants did not have a considerable awareness of their race. Participants identified themselves as either white, Anglo-Saxon, or Caucasian but many of them reported feeling “normal” or just like “any other” student, and by “any other” they meant white. Some of the participants were not even capable of articulating what their ethnicity was while others were confused by the question. This indicates that some participants have not thought very much, if at all, of themselves in a racial context. This notion is echoed in the literature regarding white identity. As Terry (1981) states, “To be white in America means not having to think about it” (p. 120).

Those participants who did have an awareness of their race conveyed that the knowledge was a result of education by friends or peers who were students of color. Several of the participants had an awareness of their race only when they were in the racial minority of a given situation. “...it is only when Whites come in contact with the idea of Blacks (or other visible racial/ethnic groups) that Whiteness becomes a potential issue” (Helms, 1990, p. 54). Several of the participants also shared that they were aware of their race when filling out demographic information for an application or scholarship. In this instance they were aware of their race because they felt that their race was a disadvantage when applying for scholarships or admission. This is consistent with what Thompson and Carter (1997) characterize as race manifestations in contemporary society.

People of all races, but primarily Whites, are often eager to dismiss race as irrelevant to any issue, to profess their color blindness, and to contend that race and racism are the preoccupations of Blacks and other visible racial-ethnic group

members who want to garner rewards and resources without putting forth the work necessary to earn them (p. 9).

Many of the participants in this study believed that white was synonymous with American. This erases the notions of race and nationality. “Because privileged groups are assumed to represent society as a whole, ‘American,’ for example, is culturally defined as white, in spite of the diversity of the population” (Johnson, 2001, p. 103).

“...but, it’s always talked about white and American is this way and everything else is that way...” Peer Debiefer (August 1, 2005, p. 2, lines 29 – 30).

“...if you say whiteness is American. American is the norm and somehow whiteness encapsulates that and that everything else is abnormal or other or different from...so that language seems to come out a lot even when people were identifying themselves, they felt, yes, I’m white but that means yes, I’m American and yes, I’m the norm...” (Peer Debiefer Interview, August 1, 2005, pp. 2 – 3, lines 44 – 49).

None of the participants could clearly articulate what it meant to be part of the white culture and many needed further clarification on the question. Since race is a human invention (Thompson & Carter, 1997) race “is often confused for culture and ethnicity” (p. 4).

The denial of race for white students contributes to the denial of racism as well. “...Whites do not readily perceive themselves as members of a racial group, nor as responsible for perpetuating racism” (Thompson & Carter, 1997, p. 10). The idea of racism, as depicted by several of the participants correlates to what Pettigrew and Martin (1987) have called *modern racism*. “...a racism that replaces the images of angry, violent mobs with assorted tactics that mask racism’s existence” (Thompson & Carter, 1997, p. 9).

None of the participants felt that they were racist; most of them felt that they did not know any racists and that racism was rare. This highlights a lack of knowledge

regarding the definition of racism. The participants felt that racism was an extreme form of hatred that was not often expressed and expressed only by a small portion of the population.

“It seems like there was a real struggle or lack of a clear understanding of race, ethnicity, racism, discrimination, prejudice, the basic language...How do you understand what it means to identify yourself as being racist or non-racist or another group as being racist or non-racist if you are not really clear on how prejudice and discrimination play into that...” (Peer Debriefing Interview, August 1, 2005, p. 3, lines 60 – 65).

For the most part, the white students who participated in the study were generally not aware of their race, nor did they think about their race often. Many of them wanted to remain as individuals, not grouped as part of the white population. “...we [white people] want people to see and judge us as individuals, not as members of a social category...the fact is that we *do* want people to treat us as members of social categories whenever it works to our advantage” (Johnson, 2001, p. 129).

### **Research Question Two: What are the perceptions of white students regarding their racial privilege?**

Drawing upon the results of research question one, many of the participants were not aware of their racial privilege. To a greater extent many of the participants were in denial of their racial privilege. This is significant in regard to the normalization of the white race and the lack of necessity in thinking about race. The normalization of whiteness, which also ties to the concept of white as synonymous with American, points to one of the primary privileges white people experience. That white has become “normal” is like saying that people of color are abnormal. Likewise, that American has become synonymous with white also implies that people of color are not American.

Most of the participants found it easy to describe ways in which they perceived they are disadvantaged by their race or ways that people of color are advantaged by their

races but could not articulate the massive privileges white people benefit from. In fact, most of the participants were stunned when trying to respond to the question of there being any benefits to being a particular race. Most of the participants, when asked that question, began to speak of the benefits of being a person of color.

“...white privilege versus disadvantage...I also heard a lot of language...not only did they not necessarily think that they were at a significant advantage, but that in many instances they were at a disadvantage” (Peer Debriefing Interview, August 1, 2005, p. 7, lines 140 – 143).

Even though, at times, participants would make some comments about how it may be easier to be a white student on this campus, rather than being a student of color, they still could not articulate the benefits or advantages they experience. The fact that they have not thought critically about any of this information is, of course, in and of itself a privilege. “The ease of not being aware of privilege is an aspect of privilege itself, what some call ‘the luxury of obliviousness’ (or what philosophers call ‘epistemic privilege’)” (Johnson, 1997, p. 24).

Many of the participants denied any racial privilege. According to Johnson (2001) this is a common perspective of dominant group members. “Dominant groups don’t see privilege as a problem *because they don’t know it exists in the first place*. They’re oblivious to it. The reality of privilege does not occur to them because they don’t go out of their way to see it or ask about it and because no one dares bring it up for fear of making things worse” (p. 74). And, the denial of this privilege is a tactic used by many white people to deny racism and the system of advantage from which they benefit. If white people do not have to admit that they have privileges, they do not have to admit that they have received benefits not by their own merit, and thus they do not have to admit that other people have suffered as a result of their own privileges. Likewise, white people can remain with the privilege that they do not have to commit to any

responsibility for the system or commit to a dedication to change the system. “Denying that privilege exists is a serious barrier to change...” (Johnson, 2001, p. 23).

Much of the conversations regarding perceived advantages for people of color were centered around scholarships and affirmative action. Almost every participant referenced this. This example points again to the lack of awareness of privilege for the participants.

**Research Question Three: How do the campus climate and culture of the institution impact these perceptions?**

The campus climate and culture of the institution have a great impact on the perceptions of white students regarding their perceptions of their racial identity and racial privilege. Many of the participants referenced aspects of the campus that perpetuate the ideals of white privilege and of racism. Elements of the campus environment such as lack of diversity among the student population, lack of diversity among the faculty/staff population, traditional monuments and landmarks that have racist histories and campus traditions that have racist histories all contribute to the perpetuation of an unwelcoming campus climate for students of color. Most of the participants did not have a diversity educational component to their experience at the Institution. None of the participants felt that they needed a diversity educational component, however in examining the participants’ responses, all participants would benefit from diversity education. Most of the participants had little or no interactions while a student at the institution, which challenged their opinions or perspectives about race or privilege. A few participants were exceptions to this. These participants had friends or peers who were students of color who challenged the participants’ views and opinions particularly regarding race and privilege. Most of the participants were able to exist at the Institution without ever thinking much about race, privilege, or racism. Since many of the participants espoused

racist or stereotypical views about people of color, it is clear that the University has had no significant impact on the participants in challenging these views.

Additionally, based on the results of this study, the climate of the Institution is one where those individuals who bring issues of racism to the table are seen as being angry or over-emotional, as evidenced by participant responses. Many of the participants referenced hearing that diversity was an issue from students of color, but that the participants still did not see that race was an issue on campus. “One byproduct of these dismissive strategies is a climate where race has become a sensitive topic...people who talk about racial matters are often silenced” (Thompson & Carter, 1997, p. 9).

Based on the responses of the participants, the researcher maintains that the institution is one where, although many contributing campus elements perpetuate racism and although the administration says these issues are of importance, little is done in terms of policy modification. Thompson and Carter (1997) convey that this is somewhat typical of predominantly white institutions.

## **Implications**

There are meaningful implications for the results of this study both in the contexts of research and practice for higher education administration.

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

1. Based on the results of this single institution study, the need for predominantly white institutions of higher education to become more diverse is critical. It is imperative to not only diversify the student body but the faculty and staff as well. Students of color at predominantly white institutions often feel isolated (Lucas, 2003). Having a diverse student body will facilitate white students’ better understanding their own racial identities, thus

recognizing themselves in a greater sense of race, not just as individuals or as the norm. It is not enough to say the administration is trying to recruit students of color and faculty/staff of color to the Institution in order to diversify. If the racial climate is one that is steeped in antiquated traditions, among other things, students and faculty/staff of color will not want to attend nor feel comfortable on campus.

2. Many archaic and exclusionary traditions continue to exist on predominantly white campuses today. Predominantly white institutions, particularly those with long histories of segregation and racism, should reconsider the landmarks, customs, and traditions followed to assess if these historical traditions have a place in an inclusive environment. Many times the histories and origins have not evolved nor metamorphosized and the original intent may continue to have an impact on the campus climate.
3. Predominantly white institutions should provide diversity education for all students. This diversity education must explore white as a race, rather than presenting information that others people of color. “And in the social context where white people have too often viewed themselves as nonracial or racially neutral, it is crucial to look at the ‘racialness’ of white experience” (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 1). With the acknowledgement of white as a race education should also include exploring white privilege and the tie to the perpetuation of racism. “To be an effective part of the solution, we have to realize that privilege and oppression are not a thing of the past...The greatest barrier to change is that dominant groups do not see the trouble as *their* trouble, which means they do not feel obliged to do something about it” (Johnson, 2001, p. 140). Some of the participants in this study reported

diversity education as having a critical impact on their development. However, these programs were voluntary programs that the students became involved in as a result of co-curricular involvement. There should be a basic learning experience where students should be equipped to understand racism as a system of oppression that all white people contribute to, rather than the common misperception that racism is something demonstrated by only a handful of people, regardless of race, that results in hate crimes. The researcher recommends employing what Helms (1990) calls Racial Identity Interventions. “Interventions based on racial identity models examine the role of the trainee’s own identity resolutions on the quality of her or his interracial or intercultural competence” (p. 210). This emphasis enables the proposal of interventions that consider the different racial experiences of students of color and of white students. A specific program example is J. Katz’s (1976) white awareness workshop which involves the “systematic attempt to aid White people in recognizing their racist attitudes and behaviors” (Helms, 1990, p. 211). Likewise, Universities should employ student affairs practitioners who have explored their own issues relating to race and racism. “...effective racial identity training requires a trainer who has addressed her or his own racial identity conflicts” (p. 218).

### **Researcher Reflection**

The researcher’s personal journey throughout this research process is critical to the foundational elements of the conclusions and recommendations of this study. The researcher sought this topic for research based on the gap in literature regarding privilege and college students. In the program of study in higher education, the researcher was

taught neither the theoretical base nor the implications of racial identity development for white college students. If racial identity is considered in student development theory, it is considered only for students of color. White racial identity development for college students is an area of college student development that is largely ignored. Bringing an awareness to white racial identity is critical for examining the conditional effects of privilege and racism. The researcher began this study with the intention of garnering an understanding of how white college students perceived themselves racially. The researcher also intended to discern if the participants' recognized the privilege they experienced. It was not the researcher's intention to generalize the study results to the entire population of white college students at predominantly white institutions. Rather, the researcher sought to garner a snapshot of several white students' perspectives about race, privilege, and campus climate. The researcher gained an understanding that even those white participants who elected to participate in diversity trainings or classes, which educated them about privilege and racism still expressed notions of racism. The researcher also learned that none of the participants believed herself or himself to be racist. Even though the participants ranged in their level of awareness of race and privilege, all participants expressed racism.

Although the researcher had previously engaged in dialogues with white students regarding race and racism, there were still some surprises that arose from the interviews. The most profound surprise was in the blatant racism and denial of racism by some of the participants. None of the participants were willing to accept accountability for their individual contributions to racism. This in and of itself was not surprising but the researcher was taken aback when the example such as the comparison of the KKK to the NAACP was shared.

Another important component reinforced by this study is the power of silence in the discussion on race. Though the participants shared a great deal of information, some participants were more concise than others. There were times of silence during the interviews. There was also mention of the participants' opportunities to interrupt racism in their peer groups when they also fell silent. There is a great deal of power in choosing to be silent. First, not everyone has this choice. The choice to be silent rather than respond or confront is a privilege shared by white people in racial discourse.

What makes white students silent or hesitant in regard to race? A lot of them don't want to speak because they feel like they don't have anything to say...they are comfortable relying upon others [people of color] to run conversations on race... (Researcher Journal, May 24, 2005).

The lens of the researcher as a white person had a considerable impact on the entire study, but namely the data analysis process. The interpretation of themes and categorization of data were limited by the researcher's own white privilege. There is undoubtedly much that was missed by the researcher in characterizing white privilege and interpreting white voices in relation to race and racism.

## **Recommendations for Future Research**

Based on the limitations of the current research, there is need for additional research in the following areas:

1. The dichotomy that developed in conversations where race was only a Black/white issue was prevalent throughout the literature and this study. Throughout the course of this study when the white participants would discuss people of color, they almost always alluded to African American people versus white people. The history of oppression of African American individuals in our society is extensive and horrific.

“...there seems to be a Black, White dichotomy that jumps out. There is some reference to examples using other ethnic and racial groups but there is still this larger overtone of white identity or white privilege and seeing African Americans and Black that is other or different from” (Peer Debriefing Interview, August 1, 2005, p. 1, lines 7 – 11).

The histories of oppression for Latina/o, Asian American, and Native American individuals are also extensive. Further research is necessary with regard to these populations. There is an important question regarding why white people when asked about racial issues presume the conversation becomes about African Americans as the only people of color.

For much of North American history, the group that has been most denigrated in terms of race has been Black people. This circumstance exists in part because Blacks were held in legal bondage and segregation. Asians were restricted with respect to immigration, types of work, and residence. Native Americans' status in the country has varied from sovereign nations to tense agreements, but their history has been different enough for them not to be the center of racial myths and societal stereotypes (Thompson & Carter, 1997, p. 22).

Accordingly, in a recent conversation about race with a diverse group of undergraduate students, I witnessed an African American female student ask an East Asian American female student, in front of the entire class, if she considered herself a person of color. By asking her this question, the African American student implied that the Asian American student was not a person of color. That exchange was illuminated by the data collected in this study and should be explored further. Consequently, much of the literature discusses race relations in regard to African Americans and white people.

2. The link between heterosexism, anti-semitism, sexism, classism, and racism should be explored. Many times throughout the course of this study participants linked incidents of heterosexism or homophobia to a conversation

about racism. When asked if they contributed to racism one student in particular began a story about how she used the phrase “that’s so gay” to describe when something occurred that she considered to be unintelligent. It was clear that the student felt guilty about using this phrase and once a friend of hers pointed this out she began to shift her language. It is clear that all of the isms that exist in our society are interrelated in some manner. Accordingly, several students voiced issues relating to anti-semitism. Hate crimes against Jewish individuals are closely tied to racism since anti-semitism is also a system of oppression against a particular culture. That Jewish individuals are seen as white in our society further confounds the issue but does not dismiss the discrimination and stereotypical views that continue to exist. Several of the female participants indicated issues of sexism throughout the course of the interviews. With a traditional campus culture and a male dominated administration, staff, and faculty issues of sexism are exacerbated. This issue, too, should be considered for further study. Classism is another issue that arose through the interviews of the participants. Though white people in all of the preceding identity groups all experience white privilege, they do not all experience white privilege in the same ways. Sexual orientation, religion, gender and socioeconomic status all affect the manner in which white people benefit from privilege.

3. Privilege in sororities and fraternities should be explored. Several of the participants discussed the Greek community as one which holds a great deal of history, tradition, and power. In a system that was based on the denial of access to certain individuals, first all white women and people of color, then all people of color, the Greek community has evolved to now appear diverse.

However, within the Greek system there is heightened evidence of exclusion, elitism, and privilege. Further research is necessary examining privilege in the Greek system.

4. That there may be a connection between white students feeling that they do not have a culture and the association of white students to spirit organizations is an issue that should be considered. All of the participants of this study were members of spirit organizations which aim to support the tradition and spirit of the institution. Students in spirit organizations often feel loyal to their institution and identify with the culture of the university. Most of the participants did not feel that they had a culture as white people. It is possible that a link exists between the presumed lack of racial culture and the identification with the culture of the institution.
5. Further research is necessary for the researcher including work by Thomas S. Popkewitz and Michel Foucault, as this literature was not included in this research for this study. Foucault's work regarding the politics of identity, "as witnessed in the theoretical and historical work within the feminist movement, is one such example" of his "concern with how the subject is constituted in power relations" and "has been taken up in various projects across multiple settings, with particular implications for interdisciplinary work" (Popkewitz & Brennan, 1998, p. 3).

## **Summary**

This study has implications for administrators at predominantly white institutions. Likewise, there are implications for all student affairs practitioners who work with college students, especially around issues related to diversity. In the population of white

students studied it became clear that most of the participants had not considered their race or the implications of being white. Without acknowledging white privilege, they also did not acknowledge their contributions to the perpetuation of racism. Based on the literature and the results of this single institution study, predominantly white institutions of higher education should reevaluate their practices and diversify the student, staff, and faculty population. Traditions, landmarks, and customs should be examined and changed to establish an inclusive environment. Additionally there should be an emphasis on diversity education for all students at the institution. Evaluating all of these practices is a crucial step in initiating change in the campus climate and campus culture.

## APPENDIX A: INTRODUCTORY LETTERS FOR PARTICIPATION

Dear:

I am a doctoral student in Educational Administration and am conducting research at this institution. I am interested in obtaining information regarding white students' experiences at a predominantly white institution. I would greatly appreciate your participation. Each volunteer will participate in a maximum total of three individual interviews with the researcher for one hour per interview. The interviews will be audiotape-recorded and confidentiality will be assured by assigning pseudonyms to the participants. I am specifically interested in interviewing students who have been involved with spirit and traditions. Please contact me at (XXX) XXX-XXXX or [XXXXX](#) if you would like to participate in this study or if you have further questions regarding the study. No compensation will be provided other than having your input and voice represented in this important study. Thank you.

Sincerely,  
*Betty J. Wolfe*

## APPENDIX A: INTRODUCTORY LETTERS FOR PARTICIPATION

**You have been selected for participation in a study about The University of Texas at Austin. Participation will only require 1 - 3 hours and you will be compensated \$10 per hour. Interviews will occur in the next couple of months depending upon convenient times for you.**

I am a doctoral student in Higher Education Administration and am conducting research at The University of Texas at Austin. I am interested in hearing about white college students' experiences at a predominantly white institution. I would greatly appreciate your participation. Each volunteer will participate in a maximum total of three individual interviews with the researcher for a maximum of one hour per interview. The interviews will be audiotape-recorded and confidentiality will be assured by assigning pseudonyms to the participants. Participants will have the option of withdrawing from the study at any time. I am specifically interested in interviewing students who have been involved in some way with spirit and traditions at The University of Texas at Austin. If you know of any other students who may wish to participate, please share this email with them. Please contact me at (XXX) XXX-XXXX or [XXXXXX](mailto:XXXXXX) if you would like to participate in this study or at any time if you have questions regarding the study. Participants will be compensated \$10 per hour in addition to having your input and voice represented in this important study. Thank you.

Sincerely,  
*Betty J. Wolfe*

## APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FORMS

### SHORT CONSENT FORM

#### Title **Perceptions of Racial Identity and Privilege for White College Students at a Predominantly White Institution**

IRB PROTOCOL #

Conducted By: Betty Jeanne Wolfe Of University of Texas at Austin, *Educational Administration*, 293-0572; Dr. Marilyn Kameen, 471-7255.

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. The person in charge of this research will also describe this study to you and answer all of your questions. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you don't understand before deciding whether or not to take part. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefit to which you are otherwise entitled. You can stop your participation at any time by simply telling the researcher.

3. *The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of white students' experiences at a predominantly white institution. Approximately ten students will participate in individual interviews detailing their perspective, specifically related to the campus climate and environment.*

#### If you agree to be in this study, we will ask you to do the following things:

- Participate in individual interviews with researcher

Total estimated time to participate in study is 3 hours total.

#### Risks and Benefits of being in the study

- Other than risks associated with everyday life may be participants' expressions of racism.

#### Compensation:

- There are no benefits for participation in this study.

#### Confidentiality:

interviews or sessions will be audiotaped;

- tapes will be coded so that no personally identifying information is visible on them;*
- tapes will be kept in a secure place (e.g., in the investigator's residence);*
- tapes will be heard or viewed only for research purposes by the investigator and his or her associates;*
- that recordings will be retained for possible future analysis.*

The records of this study will be stored securely and kept private. Authorized persons from The University of Texas at Austin, members of the Institutional Review Board, and (study sponsors, if any) have the legal right to review your research records and will protect the confidentiality of those records to the extent permitted by law. All publications will exclude any information that will make it possible to identify you as a subject.

#### Contacts and Questions:

If you have any questions about the study please ask now. If you have questions later or want additional information, call the researchers conducting the study. Their names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses are at the top of this page.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Clarke A. Burnham, Ph.D., Chair, The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, (512) 232-4383.

*You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.*

#### Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and have sufficient information to make a decision about participating in this study. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

The University of Texas at Austin  
Institutional Review Board  
has approved this consent form

Approved: 02/24/2005  
Expires: 02/24/2006

## APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FORMS

**APPROVED BY IRB ON: 04/25/2005**

**EXPIRES ON: 02/24/2006**

### SHORT CONSENT FORM

Title **Perceptions of Racial Identity for White College Students at a Predominantly White Institution** IRB PROTOCOL #  
Conducted By: Betty Jeanne Wolfe Of University of Texas at Austin, *Educational Administration, 293-0572*; Dr. Marilyn Kameen, *471-7255*.

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. The person in charge of this research will also describe this study to you and answer all of your questions. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you don't understand before deciding whether or not to take part. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefit to which you are otherwise entitled. You can stop your participation at any time by simply telling the researcher.

3. *The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of white students' experiences at a predominantly white institution. Approximately ten students will participate in individual interviews detailing their perspective, specifically related to the campus climate and environment.*

**If you agree to be in this study, we will ask you to do the following things:**

- Participate in individual interviews with researcher

**Total estimated time to participate** in study is 3 hours total, which will be through three, one-hour interviews.

**Risks and Benefits** of being in the study

- Other than risks associated with everyday life may be participants' expressions of racism. Anything said by the subjects may be struck from the record and/or any such remarks may be deleted from the audiotapes thus, not included in the transcripts or writings.

**Compensation:**

- Participants will be compensated with \$10 per hour for interview time.

**Confidentiality:**

interviews or sessions will be audiotaped;

- (a) tapes will be coded so that no personally identifying information is visible on them;*
- (b) tapes will be kept in a secure place (e.g., in the investigator's residence);*
- (c) tapes will be heard or viewed only for research purposes by the investigator and his or her associates;*
- (d) that recordings will be retained for possible future analysis, for a maximum period of three years.*

The **records** of this study will be stored securely and kept private. Authorized persons from The University of Texas at Austin, members of the Institutional Review Board, and (study sponsors, if any) have the legal right to review your research records and will protect the **confidentiality** of those records to the extent permitted by law. All publications will exclude any information that will make it possible to identify you as a subject.

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If you have any questions about the study please ask now. If you have questions later or want additional information, call the researchers conducting the study. Their names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses are at the top of this page.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Clarke A. Burnham, Ph.D., Chair, The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, (512) 232-4383.

*You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.*

**Statement of Consent:**

## APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FORMS

**APPROVED BY IRB ON: 07/22/2005**

**EXPIRES ON: 02/24/2006**

Title: Perceptions of Racial Identity for White Students at a Predominantly White Institution  
IRB PROTOCOL #2004-11-0124

Conducted By: Betty Jeanne Wolfe  
Of University of Texas at Austin *Education Administration*; 293-0572, Dr. Marilyn Kameen; 471-7255

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. The person in charge of this research will also describe this study to you and answer all of your questions. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you don't understand before deciding whether or not to take part. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefit to which you are otherwise entitled. You can stop your participation at any time by simply telling the researcher.

**The purpose of this study is to** gain an understanding of white students' experiences at a predominantly white institution.

**If you agree to be in this study, we will ask you to do the following things:**

- Participate in dialogue with the researcher to discuss the transcripts of participants in the study.

**Total estimated time to participate** in study is a maximum of 10 hours total.

**Risks and Benefits** of being in the study

- The risk associated with this study is no greater than everyday life.
- There are no benefits for participation in this study.

**Compensation:**

- No compensation will be provided.

The **records** of this study will be stored securely and kept private. Authorized persons from The University of Texas at Austin, members of the Institutional Review Board, and (study sponsors, if any) have the legal right to review your research records and will protect the **confidentiality** of those records to the extent permitted by law. All publications will exclude any information that will make it possible to identify you as a subject.

- interviews or sessions will be audiotaped;*
- tapes will be kept in a secure place (e.g., a locked file cabinet in the investigator's office);*
- tapes will be heard or viewed only for research purposes by the investigator and his or her associates;*
- recordings will be retained for possible future analysis.*

**Contacts and Questions:**

If you have any questions about the study please ask now. If you have questions later or want additional information, call the researchers conducting the study. Their names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses are at the top of this page.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Clarke A. Burnham, Ph.D., Chair, The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, (512) 232-4383.

**You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.**

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information and have sufficient information to make a decision about participating in this study. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*PUT PI UTEID HERE*

## APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTION GUIDE

### **Sample questions for interviews:**

1. Please describe your experience at The University of Texas at Austin.
2. What are some ways you would describe the campus environment?
3. Have you ever felt that the campus environment was challenging? If so, how?
4. Do you think other people perceive the campus environment as challenging? If so, how?
5. How do you perceive tradition on The University of Texas at Austin campus?
6. How does your organization perpetuate traditions of the University?
7. Why did you want to join your organization?
8. What are some of the practices of your organization?
9. What impact do these practices have on the campus community?
10. What is the history of how and/or why these practices were developed?
11. Please describe the make-up of your organization's membership.
12. What are the major differences between the members?
13. What is your organization looking for in its new members?
14. What is it like to be a white student at The University of Texas at Austin?
15. What does your race mean to you?
16. What are some major issues affecting you personally at the institution?
17. Do you feel that The University of Texas at Austin is a diverse institution?
18. Do you think diversity is important? Why or why not?

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19. What do you think it would be like to be a student of color at The University of Texas at Austin?
20. Do you think there are differences in how students of color experience the University as opposed to how white students experience the University? If so, please explain the differences.
21. How often would you say you interact with students of color?
22. How often would you say you interact with faculty/staff of color?
23. Do you think there are any benefits to being white? If so, what are they?
24. Do you think there are any disadvantages to being a student of color? If so, what are they?
25. Do you think that racism still exists? Why or why not?
26. What does a racist look like? Describe a racist person's behavior.
27. Do you know anyone who is a racist? Describe what that person is like.
28. Do you think that you contribute to racism? Why or why not?
29. What have been some major events on campus in the last year?
30. What have been some major issues on campus in the last year?
31. What are the major landmarks on U.T.'s campus?
32. What do they mean to you?
33. What has your experience been with diversity education at The University of Texas at Austin?
34. Do you feel that there is a need for diversity education? Why or why not?
35. How have your experiences affected you or, if you haven't had diversity education experiences, what do you think would have been the advantages/disadvantages?

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## **Vita**

Betty Jeanne Wolfe Taylor was born Betty Jeanne Wolfe in Queens, New York on November 15, 1975 to her parents, Joseph George and Judith Therese Wolfe. She has one sister, Joanne Therese (Wolfe) Elfring. Betty Jeanne attended St. John Lutheran High School and Central Florida Community College in Ocala, Florida. She received a Bachelor of Science in Communication from The Florida State University in 1997. In 1999 she received a Master of Science in Higher Education from The Florida State University. From 1997 – 1999 Betty Jeanne worked as a graduate assistant for Student Campus Entertainment in the Oglesby Union at The Florida State University. Betty Jeanne was employed at The University of Texas at Austin as a student affairs administrator in Greek Life and Education in the Office of the Dean of Students from 1999 – 2002. In 2002 Betty Jeanne began her current employment as Director of Greek Life and Education in the Office of the Dean of Students at The University of Texas at Austin.

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