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Confluences of Student Leadership and White Privilege: Exploring Consciousness-of-Self With White Student Leaders

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CONFLUENCES OF STUDENT LEADERSHIP AND WHITE PRIVILEGE: EXPLORING CONSCIOUSNESS-OF-SELF WITH WHITE STUDENT LEADERS

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ABSTRACT

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There is a growing body of literature signaling the relevance of race in leadership development, but many conventional models do not prompt exploration of this social identity. The omission of race in leadership curriculum is disadvantageous for all college students, but among White student leaders, it may be a continuance of White privilege. The purpose of this constructivist study was to explore how White student leaders make meaning of their racial identity, and corresponding privilege, through a relevant leadership framework. Racial caucusing was employed as a method to prompt discussion and gather narratives from four White student leaders. Findings from this narrative inquiry indicate how the confluences of race and leadership can advance self-awareness among White student leaders.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

College students will likely need skills beyond those found in an academic program for future careers in a diverse society. Employers are identifying qualities, specifically leadership and cultural proficiency, as necessities within college graduates (National Association of Colleges and Employers [NACE], 2018). As society continues to diversify, the ability to engage in social complexity will become increasingly relevant. A holistic education experience must prepare college students for membership in a diversity society, not just a job. In this regard, a confluence of leadership skills and cultural awareness may boost employability of college students while also providing critical skills for success in a larger social context.

The role of social identity within leadership development of college students is an emerging inquiry (Andenoro et al., 2013). New research has uncovered the relevance of race in leadership, but also exposed prominent limitations of leadership development (Kodama & Laylo, 2017). Well-known leadership texts often encourage self-exploration to become a better leader, but rarely prompt an examination of social identities (Kouzes & Posner, 2014; Ostick & Wall, 2011). How is a fundamental component of one's existence, such as race, missing from the self-awareness prompts? The omission makes sense when examined in a historical context. Foundational works were modeled on the research of mostly White college students (Cabrera, 2018).

Racial homogeneity in the foundation of leadership models represent a significant impediment to developing critical skills needed by employers. Students of color might struggle to grow in a framework that is not racially relevant (Ostick & Wall, 2011). Equally, White students may not acquire important skills when racial awareness is not part of leadership education. To navigate a diverse world successfully, White student leaders need the opportunity to process how White privilege influences their leadership. Existing leadership models contain promising applications to help White student leaders make meaning of their racial and leadership identities.

Background to the Topic

Higher education plays an important role in cultivating leadership in college students (Dugan & Komives, 2010). Interest in leadership development materialized in the United States as early as the 1970s when educators collaborated to create academic programs and experiential opportunities for college students (Komives, 2011). Over the last few decades, it has become an expectation of higher education in the United States to provide leadership programs (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education [CAS], 2015). Often part of mission statements and goals, institutions embraced this responsibility of developing future leaders (Chunoo & Osteen, 2016). As a result, higher education offers unique opportunities for leadership development in both curricular and cocurricular formats (Guthrie & Rodriguez, 2018).

Leadership education and cocurricular programs meet this demand, but are structured on a variety of different frameworks. While there are plenty of models to choose, most of the pedagogy for leadership education includes a reflective priority accompanied by an emphasis on creating change (Kouzes & Posner, 2014; Shankman, et al., 2015). These two concepts are inextricably linked; one must understand their self in order to generate change in a larger social

context (Early & Fincher, 2017). In fact, scholars have noted the dangers of thrusting students into a community or workplace, when they are developmentally unprepared to engage (Dugan et al., 2014).

Social identity is one of many critical components to understand self (Early & Cooney, 2017; Kodama & Laylo, 2017). Strangely, it can be absent from many leadership models. This deficit is so pronounced, the Association of Leadership Educators identified social identity as a priority in research and practice (Andenoro et al., 2013). The charge sought to understand how social identity influences leadership development, especially focused on racial identity. There is growing amount of literature examining leadership development and empowerment for marginalized racial populations (Bordas, 2016; Dugan et al., 2012; Pendakur & Furr, 2016). However, there is scant literature designed for White students to explore the implications of White privilege in leadership.

Although there is a growing diversity among populations in higher education, White students still compose the majority of students enrolled (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2015). As evident in research, White students do not often perceive themselves to have a culture (Dalton, 2015; Smith, 2014). Rather, White culture is described as being neutral or only relevant when compared to other cultures (Hardiman & Keehn, 2012). Seeing Whiteness as a void, White student leaders may be missing critical components when forming their leadership identity. A leadership framework that encourages reflections on one's own racial identity, or even privilege, may advance their understanding of self and others.

The social change model of leadership contains prospects to help White students understand the influence of their race in leadership. Within the model there is a concept labeled as *consciousness-of-self,* encouraging students to explore aspects of their social identity (Early &

Cooney, 2017). Consciousness-of-self has been suggested by scholars to be a predictive factor of developing socially responsible leadership (Dugan et al., 2014). Narrowing the application of this framework to a privileged identity, such as race, revealed new ways to engage White students.

Statement of the Problem

Leadership development encourages college students to explore themselves to become better leaders (Early & Fincher, 2017). Social identity, and in particular racial identity, are critical components of a student's sense of self (Kodama & Laylo, 2017). Leadership educators identified issues of race and leadership as a critical need in scholarship. Specifically, there is a need to explore racial identity in leadership development (Andenoro et al., 2013). In response to these calls for action, new research and models have emerged to make meaning of leadership within marginalized racial identities (Pendakur & Furr, 2016).

Conventional leadership models have yet to address this need of racial identity exploration (Foste, 2019; Ostick & Wall, 2011). Many prominent leadership models omit or ignore race altogether (Ostick & Wall, 2011). These shortcomings are disadvantageous to all college students, but especially White students (Boatright-Horowitz et al., 2013). There are no leadership development models for White students, likely because foundational models were established by exclusively studying White students (Cabrera, 2018). The omission of race in leadership curriculum is a manifestation of White privilege which needs to be addressed through scholarship (Boatright-Horowitz et al., 2013).

White students need to learn about how their race influences their leadership. In particular, there is a need for White student leaders to process concepts of White privilege and Whiteness. Integration of these concepts into student leadership can equip White student leaders

with a critical awareness of how they may be perceived by people of color. This self-awareness, and corresponding cultural fluency, can provide guidance on how to lead in an increasingly diverse workplace and society.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of my study was to explore how White student leaders make meaning of their leadership and racial identities. Specifically, the study introduced concepts to challenge students to consider the confluences of both identities. The focus of the study considered how White student leaders process this information, rather than a measurement of identity development progression. Viewed in this way, the study articulated how a group of White student leaders made meaning of their identities in a relevant framework.

Consciousness-of-self served as the framework to promote self-awareness; prompting a deeper examination of race within a traditional leadership model. In this leadership framework, participants explored and challenged their beliefs during a series of three specialized meetings. Concepts of Whiteness and White Privilege were introduced through this leadership framework to prompt racial identity exploration. Through the leadership and racial framework, this study sheds insight on the development of White student leaders as they critically examined the confluences of race and leadership.

Research Design

The purpose of this study was optimized by the research design. The study employed a narrative methodology, focused on construction of identity, to share how students progressed through the series of three meetings. Narrative inquiry created generalized themes built through participants' stories and the connections between stories (Clandinin, 2006). The study focused on how participants made meaning of their experiences and emphasized each participants' voice in

the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Narrative construction is a specialization involving more than reporting stories, but it invites tensions and contradictions to a dominant social script (Daiute, 2013). Particularly well suited for identity development, narrative construction offered participants the opportunity to examine and even create their identity through telling stories (Daiute, 2013).

This study also used a *caucus* as a group interview method to explore race within leadership. A caucus is a group based on a single social identity, such as being White (Obear & martinez, 2013). Use of caucusing and narrative construction was powerful to highlight the nuanced internal transformation when exploring White privilege among student leaders. Their stories can transcend measurements to infuse emotion into the findings. Even when the students displayed defensiveness or frustration, the results exhibited the emotions associated with minimization and defense of Whiteness. A deep understanding of these complex emotions revealed why students resist exploring Whiteness. The internal deliberations experienced by participants provided insight for recommendations and future research.

Caucuses are utilized by researchers and instructors to facilitate conversations on a singular privileged or marginalized identity (Giles & Rivers, 2009; Obear & martinez, 2013). Even though a participant may hold multiple intersecting identities, a caucus maintains the focus on a specific chosen identity. For example, a White woman may be more interested in telling her story about being discriminated as a woman rather than confronting her privilege afforded from race (Obear & martinez, 2013). The exclusive focus of a caucus enables a facilitator to redirect conversation towards the more difficult topics when participants might shy away.

Caucusing is philosophically different from common research methods such as focus groups. Generally, focus groups embrace a non-directive facilitation principle characterized by

seemingly natural conversation among participants (Liamputtong, 2011). Focus groups examine topics in an exploratory, explanatory, or evaluative manner; they are not well suited to explore sensitive topics or challenge participants (Hennink, 2014). In contrast to focus groups, caucusing may involve confrontation or challenging participant's beliefs when discussing power and privilege of social identity (Obear & martinez, 2013). Consequently, caucusing would require a researcher to assume a greater role in the group than traditional focus groups.

A constructivist design required me to become part of the caucus. In this paradigm, interactions between a researcher and participant are necessity. A constructivist researcher is considered a passionate participant who facilitates the interactions to create knowledge (Lincoln et al., 2017). Consequently, bias is not a relevant concept in constructivism. This paradigm purports knowledge is socially constructed by individuals together in a subjective manner (Crotty, 1998). As a participant-researcher, and someone who identifies as White, I was primarily responsible for facilitating conversations.

My role within the caucus included establishing the agenda for each of the three meetings and leading discussion. This study also used a cofacilitator to assist with discussion and group management during the caucuses. Since caucusing is a directed conversation, the knowledge generated does not come from level of racial awareness obtained by each individual. Instead, this study focused on how student leaders make meaning of their racial identity during caucusing. In other words, the emphasis is on the process rather than an outcome of the method.

This study was designed for four to six students to participate in the caucusing. Recruitment efforts produced four students who participated in all three meetings. As the identity caucus was based on the White racial identity, participation criteria required students who self-identified as White. Additional criteria, such as age and leadership experience, was also

established to purposefully select participants. Greater detail for participant selection criteria is provided in Chapter III. Recruitment of a wide array of student leaders enriched conversations and shed insight into the confluences of race and leadership.

Significance

Prospective employers of college graduates are looking for candidates who can lead. According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers, 68% of employers are seeking college graduates with leadership skills (NACE, 2018). These expectations elevate the need for effective leadership programs and experiences in higher education. Additionally, among these same employers surveyed, 31% are seeking college graduates with "intercultural fluency" (NACE, 2018). While intercultural fluency is an ambiguous term, it suggests employers need individuals who can navigate an increasingly diverse workplace. If employers are signaling the need for these skills, higher education must respond to remain relevant.

A variety of methods currently exists to help White students explore racial identity. Many of these instructional or experiential activities have been shown to reduce bias (Denson, 2009). Some of these activities also foster action against racial inequality (Boatright-Horowitz et al., 2013). Unfortunately, these activities are often structured in a manner that places the burden of teaching upon students of color (Niehuis, 2005; Seider et al., 2013). After hearing first-person accounts of oppression from students of color, White students are likely to embrace racial difference and deconstruct Whiteness (Boatright-Horowitz et al., 2013). However, Critical Race Theory (CRT) scholars have questioned why students of color must be teachers for their White peers (Cabrera, 2014). There is a need to explore racial difference without relying heavily on students of color. A leadership framework, such as consciousness-of-self, may assist White students to explore their identity without burdening students of color.

Leadership educators have formally identified the need to understand social identity, especially race, in the context of leadership. Delineated in a series of priorities, the Association of Leadership Educators communicate a gap in existing research and charge scholars to examine social identity (Andenoro et al., 2013). More attention must be dedicated to crafting models which are relevant to marginalized students. However, there is also the need to assist dominant identities in learning about awareness of power and privilege in leadership.

Some scholars have also acknowledged the paradox in researching White privilege; providing special attention to a privileged group who already receives adequate attention (Boatright-Horowitz et al., 2013). Most of the research in higher education, including foundational works in student affairs, are already skewed towards White male participants (Cabrera, 2018). Even, the concept of "leadership" is a loaded term with a strong association with a White male identity (Kodama & Laylo, 2017; Ostick & Wall, 2011). While these are convincing arguments to produce leadership models for students of color, it also warrants a reexamination of existing models. Race has a strong role in leadership development (Dugan et al., 2012; Kodama & Dugan, 2013).

There may be resistance among scholars about providing White students additional attention when they are already privileged. However, to omit conversations about privileged identities in leadership development is another representation of privilege. Since White students still constitute the majority of racial identities in higher education in the United States, this paradox should not be used to discourage examining Whiteness in leadership. Rather than create another model and give undue attention to privilege, this paradox could be addressed by using an existing leadership model to explore White privilege. When concepts of power and privilege are couched in a heavily used leadership model, it can be communicated that effective leaders need

to acquire these skills. The use of this common model bypasses initial barriers of minimization and hostility White students display when discussing White privilege.

White students need to understand what it means to be a leader with White privilege. The repurposing of existing leadership concepts, such as consciousness-of-self, can meet this need. As a synthesis between leadership and identity development, it may provide privileged students with socially responsible leadership skills employers are seeking. It also has the potential to yield these skills without causing harm to students of color. As a new take on leadership development, the use of consciousness-of-self significantly advances the conversation around inclusive student leadership.

Significance to the Researcher

When I reflect back on my own undergraduate experience, I realize my journey did not have a purposeful confluence of leadership and White privilege. Admittedly, I lacked the awareness to comprehend how my racial identity was significant to my leadership. It took me more than a decade to develop an operable understanding of White privilege. An introduction to a model integrating leadership and White privilege may have accelerated my development.

My journey in leadership and White privilege began with a conglomerate of several out-of-classroom experiences during undergrad. These cocurricular roles, usually on-campus employment, provided me short and periodic opportunities to explore these topics. As a traditionally-aged undergraduate student, I would talk about cocurricular experiences with my parents. When discussing leadership, they were encouraging and suggested I always had a natural propensity for leadership. In many ways, I was socialized to believe leadership was inherent in my character and just waiting to be developed. Parents, mentors, and peers told me to

seek out these opportunities. Their messaging implied I would become a better person and enhance my career through leadership development.

Similarly, these cocurricular opportunities also featured diversity trainings. Sharing my informal lessons about diversity with family, peers, and mentors yielded a different outcome than talking about leadership. Social diversity is often rooted in inequity and history, so talking about privilege was not as uplifting as leadership. There was also sensitivity surrounding social identity, especially among my privileged peers who did not attend higher education. I was dismissed or labeled as too politically correct. Even the utility of learning about social diversity was explicitly questioned. When I expressed interest in general education, such as sociology or religious studies, the people closest to me conveyed it to be a waste of time. It was evident there was little encouragement to learn or dialogue about social difference during my undergraduate experience.

I recognize the sociocultural context has changed in the two decades since my undergrad experience and White students may be more willing to explore their privilege. Yet, recent research indicates race is frustratingly difficult to discuss with White students (Cabrera, 2018). White privilege continues to be endemic and problematic in higher education (Brunsma et al., 2012). As a White researcher and higher education administrator, I am motivated to explore innovative approaches to generate knowledge and change. Through my own personal experiences in matriculation, I have observed missed opportunities to match uplifting concepts of leadership with heavy discussions of White privilege. There is personal significance to the confluence of these topics; I feel a sense of responsibility to advance our collective understanding on White privilege.

Research Questions

This study was intended to shed insight into how White students process privilege and used the following research questions in qualitative inquiry. These questions served as a road map for caucusing and guideposts for analysis. Framed in a constructivist paradigm, the research questions explored the storied lives of four White student leaders.

Q1 What narratives do White student leaders tell about their leadership identity?

Q2 What narratives do White student leaders tell regarding their racial identity?

Q3 How do White student leaders make meaning of White privilege through a leadership framework?

Each research question corresponded with a caucus meeting, creating a scaffolding for increasingly complex discussions. Through narrative construction, these stories were linked together to generate knowledge about the confluence between leadership and race.

Leadership Identity Narrative

The first research question sought to define the meaning of leadership identity for White student leaders. This inquiry was the main feature of the first caucus and utilized leadership education activities to construct a narrative about leadership. These activities, adapted from existing instruments, intentionally elicited stories about leadership identity. For example, participants were asked to discuss the messaging they received about leadership development. Additionally, participants were asked to share a story about a leader they personally knew and admired. Data was obtained by video recording conversations and collecting the activity handouts for analysis.

Their stories were insightful to determine how White student leaders pictured leadership development. Analysis gave special attention to aspects of identity, as these stories were suggestive of larger themes in a social context. Discussion also signaled what aspects were

included and excluded from their narrative about leadership. Our conversations in the first caucus resurfaced in subsequent meetings providing powerful meaning-making opportunities for students as they reflected on their values. Answering this research question was important to establish a baseline definition of leadership, but purposely foreshadowed future discussions about leadership and race.

Racial Identity Narrative

The second research question, and corresponding caucus session, gathered stories White student leaders constructed around racial identity. Data was collected by asking participants to share about their upbringing or socialization, especially regarding race. For example, participants were asked to share the messaging they received regarding their White identity. Additionally, participants were asked to recount stories about someone who might have encouraged exploring their racial identity.

Collecting White student leaders' stories regarding racial awareness helped establish a social script regarding race. In narrative inquiry, a social script is considered the basis for our perception and action (Daiute, 2013). The social scripts of these White student leaders were compared to existing literature regarding White college students to indicate similarities and departures within racial awareness. Understanding the social script of these White student leaders was insightful to embark on difficult conversations around privilege.

White Privilege and Leadership

The final question sought to know how White student leaders make meaning of privilege through a leadership framework. During the third caucus session, participants were guided through educational activities intended to foster awareness about White privilege. Group reflection during the session prompted participants to make connections about how White

privilege interfaced with their leadership roles. Similar to the previous meetings, data was collected by video recording the discussions.

The third research question represents the culmination of the previous caucus meetings. This research question was designed to understand how White student leaders reconcile leadership and racial privilege. Their narratives provided insight into why they were reluctant to make personal connections with privilege. More important, it demonstrated how caucusing can help overcome these barriers. Telling their stories through this research offers insights into fostering racial awareness and applications in higher education.

Overview

This study is composed of five different chapters each designed to guide the reader through the research. This chapter, the introduction, is intended to concisely inform the reader about the topic and significance. Personal reflections are selectively included in the initial chapter to enhance the importance of the topic. These reflections are limited to the significance of the study; a full account of positionality is provided in the research design and post-study reflections are offered in the final chapter. As a constructivist inquiry, my positionality is germane to the discussion of methodology and methods. The first chapter concludes with an unambiguous presentation of the research questions.

Chapter II provides a comprehensive synthesis and analysis of relevant literature. The review covers leadership models applicable to college students and examines pairings with White privilege education. Analysis highlights the potential shortcomings or advantages in application to the topic. The literature review, through synthesis of concepts, establishes the rationale for a theoretical grounding.

The third chapter presents the research design and discernment of the methods. In this chapter, I outline my epistemological paradigm, methodology, and corresponding methods. In particular, I provide extensive rationale for using caucusing as a research method. Data analysis and research rigor are established to ensure quality of work. Chapter III also features positionality to understand how my social identities and experience in social justice work shape this study. These discussions are prerequisite to the nature of this inquiry, but also shed insight into my qualifications to facilitate conversation on White privilege.

Chapter IV presents the data collected from the three caucus meetings. The chapter begins with a rich description of the four student leaders who participated in the study. The chapter then advances to the stories elicited during our three meetings. A thematic presentation of the data mirrors the structure of the research questions to provide familiarity. The presentation of data in this manner also establishes scaffolding of narratives to understand the confluences between race and leadership. Quotes transform data into captivating conversations portraying deeply held beliefs. These stories weave together to form narratives to foreground deeper analysis in the final chapter.

Chapter V is the culmination of literature, design, data, and analysis. The analysis of data, and subsequent meaning, provides insight into White student leaders. Discoveries from analysis help inform recommendations for relevant stakeholders such as students and educators. Discussion also features considerations for future research. As a capstone to the constructivist study, the chapter concludes with research reflections.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Synthesizing literature from areas of leadership education, White privilege, and cocurricular diversity education provides guidance for exploring the confluences of student leaders and White privilege. This review briefly surveys relevant leadership models for college students and highlight their lack of focus on social identity. Review of recent research on studies of White college students lead to poignant considerations for this study. The literature review concludes with an in-depth exploration of the social change model of leadership development. As a tool of merging social identity and leadership development, the consciousness-of-self component from the model is provided to explore identity with White student leaders.

Student Leadership

Leadership development among college students has evolved over the last half century to become an expectation in higher education (CAS, 2015). College student leadership has become so pronounced, the majority of research studies on leadership utilize college students as their participants (Wagner, 2011). Consequently, a myriad of different models have been created to account for the college student leadership journey. In the interest of brevity, this review will be limited to college student theory and skip other categories such as industrial leadership theory. Key leadership theories pertaining to college student development can be roughly organized into at least five different categories: servant leadership, transformational leadership, relational leadership, racial and cultural models, and social change leadership (Wagner, 2011).

Servant Leadership

Servant leadership, while not a theory created for college students, has been adopted to fit this population (Wagner, 2011). As implied by the name, a leader in this model serves the organization and members. There are strong connections with service and civic engagement, which are often present in cocurricular opportunities on college campuses (Seider et al., 2013). This model has been critiqued as too leader-centric, with possible patriarchal influences, which may be challenging for community-focused engagement efforts (Wagner, 2011).

Transformational Leadership

Popular in works designed for college students, transformational leadership has become well known through works such as The Leadership Challenge. The model was developed by Kouzes and Posner (2014) and promotes five exemplary practices in leadership. Similar to servant leadership, this model helps individual student leaders establish principles, vision, enact change, and encourage others. Scholars have suggested the five practices in this model may be too prescriptive and leader-centric for college students (Northouse, 2016).

The two aforementioned approaches, servant and transformational leadership, only superficially glance concepts pertaining to social identity. The Leadership Challenge encourages personal reflection, but does not specifically recommend reflection on one's social identity. While it provides anecdotal stories to include cultural dimensions, it does not draw explicit connections to leadership development and social identity. Other transformational models include problematic concepts pertaining to social identities, such as leadership skills identified as "managing diversity" (Sessa, 2017). The notion of managing social differences encountered in higher education, similar to a project or task, reduces the potential of these moments to become

learning experiences. Instead, management of diversity implies these opportunities can be controlled, which is inherently suggestive of privilege.

In both leadership categories, awareness of diversity is often described as defining moment and these moment yield skills to navigate difference (Sessa et al., 2014). However, most social justice authors would argue awareness around racial identity and privilege is a journey, not a destination (Bell et al., 2016). With these considerations, servant and transformational leadership models may not be well-suited well to explore the influence of race in leadership development.

Relational Leadership

Relational leadership is a model focused on processes rather than defining experiences (Wagner, 2011). Built upon four core concepts, the relational approach emphasizes mutually beneficial or reciprocal relationships to generate change. This model encourages students to act with purpose in an ethical, inclusive, and empowering manner (Komives et al., 2013). With inclusivity as one of the core tenants, the relational model is conducive to exploring concepts of power and privilege in leadership. Yet, there are still shortcomings in relational leadership texts on the influence race in leadership identity.

Racial and Cultural Models

In recent years there has been an emergence of multicultural or identity-specific leadership models. Leadership educators have advocated for specific attention to be given to social identity influences, mainly among marginalized populations (NCES, 2015). Additionally, some scholars have argued existing leadership models are designed with White perceptions of leadership and omit concepts that resonate with non-dominate cultural identities (Kodama & Laylo, 2017; Pendakur & Furr, 2016). Literature suggests leadership within communities of color

is more collective-based and focused on a process (Bordas, 2016; Lozano, 2015). Yet, not all research on race and leadership are congruent. Haber (2012) found students of color were more likely than White peers to associate leadership with a task rather than a process. Haber asserts these findings are likely an anomaly because the study was focused on perceptions of leadership, not how it is practiced. Research has found race to be highly salient in leadership development (Dugan et al., 2012).

Other studies have disaggregated national survey data by race to find significant variances. Kodama and Dugan (2013) found White students were more likely to develop leadership qualities through off-campus opportunities, while Latinx students were more likely to grow through on-campus opportunities. Some scholars have found when race is not considered in designing leadership opportunities, there was a negative impact on students of color (Dugan et al., 2012). As a result, some have suggested creating leadership opportunities tailored for students of color (Guthrie & Rodriguez, 2018; Pendakur & Furr, 2016). Identity-based student organizations have been suggested as an avenue to cultivate leadership for student of color (Kodama & Laylo, 2017).

Emergent social identity leadership models address a critical need and advance our understanding of leadership development in marginalized populations. The growing body of research suggests race is highly salient in leadership development and should not be ignored. However, there are few existing leadership models that challenge White students to unpack what it means to be White student leader. This literature review concludes with an established model, known as the social change model for leadership, and discusses the applications for White student leaders. In order to understand how this model is well suited to merge racial awareness

and leadership development, this literature review examines the White racial identity and the challenges of exploring Whiteness with college students.

White Racial Identity and Racism

The White racial identity is challenging to examine due to several factors. Most notably, concepts linking the White identity and racism have changed in recent decades. Racism is a historical phenomenon rooted in social, economic, and political structures of the United States (Ryde, 2019). Despite these significant historical roots, racism can be oversimplified to a simple dislike for people of color (DiAngelo, 2018). This reduced view paints racism as immoral acts by hateful individuals, but ignores the subtle systems continuing to elevate all White people (Kendall, 2013). In response to this changing landscape, DiAngelo (2016) declared a "new racism" has emerged in the United States.

This evolution of racism is demonstrated by emerging concepts used to articulate the White identity. Terms such as *Whiteness*, *White privilege,* and *White fragility* help account for how power and privilege continue to manifest in the White identity. Admittedly, these words have the possibility to be interchangeable when discussing the White identity and White supremacy (DiAngelo, 2016). One should refrain from using them synonymously; each concept is distinctly different and contains unique implications. Unpacking these terms can establish an accurate and appropriate vocabulary to understand White college students.

Whiteness

Critical scholars have recently challenged concepts of racism. Katz (2003) notes how racism is traditionally posed as a problem for people of color. This conventional perspective acknowledges the challenges people of color encounter in a historically oppressive system. Yet, viewing racism narrowly ignores the other side of the equation – the role and implications for

White people. Katz (2003, p. 4) calls for Whites to be included in the racism equation: "The task that confronts us all is to develop a way of identifying the issues of racism as they exist in the *white* community and helping *white* people grow and learn about ourselves as whites in this society." Simply put, racism is also problem for White people.

The need to reframe racism exemplifies how racism has evolved. DiAngelo (2018) notes racism is now associated with hate groups or immoral individuals, but ignores the subtle and systematic ways all White people are elevated. For example, White people may assume everyone has basic rights, resources, and privileges, yet these benefits are only available to White people (DiAngelo, 2016). As a racial blind spot, this epistemology ignores or reinforces the systematic benefits of being White (Chandler, 2017). A worldview where all are considered equal, but Whites are still favored, is labeled as *Whiteness*.

Whiteness also assumes being White is normal (DiAngelo, 2016). In this un-racialized perspective, being White is not significant to a person's life (Kendall, 2013). During McKinney's (2005) study on race with students, Whiteness was succinctly captured when one White participant acknowledged "… I could tell my life story without mentioning race". This omission illustrates how White students do not have to think regularly about what it means to be in a racial category. The absence of this daily consideration could be considered a privilege.

White Privilege

For several decades, scholars have been examining the unearned benefits associated with being White (Niehuis, 2005). These benefits are labeled as *White privilege* (McIntosh, 1988). Nevertheless, White privilege continues to be challenging to understand and tricky to differentiate from Whiteness. Kendall (2013, p. 41) explains, "Separating Whiteness from White privilege is a bit like trying to unscramble an egg – pulling apart the yolk and the albumen.

Although different from one another, they are mixed together, inseparable." Whiteness and White privilege are linked, but still different concepts. If Whiteness accounts for the worldview of many White people, White privilege enumerates the specific benefits from this worldview.

McIntosh's (1988) work on the "invisible knapsack" is perhaps the most well-known explanation of White privilege (Niehuis, 2005). With a metaphor of an invisible knapsack laden with privileges only White individuals carry, this seminal work provides a series of scenarios to help illustrate unfair treatment of people of color and exhibit the unseen benefits conferred to White individuals. The invisible knapsack helps White individuals consider how they reap economic benefits, can easily find consumer products for their skin tone, or avoid racial profiling (McIntosh, 1988). The original work has been expanded and improved several times, but the original content remains relevant decades later.

In a modern assessment of White privilege, Ryde (2019) broadly expands on the concept by discussing the origins of White privilege. Ryde asserts colonialism by European powers, especially England, resulted in a dominance of a White culture in our current world. For example, the English language is not the most commonly spoken language in the world, but it is most prevalent in economic and political matters (Kendall, 2013). International business attire for economic or political matters also mirrors western, or Eurocentric, fashion (Ryde, 2019). Sports are another example, as most popular international sports originated in England (Ryde, 2019). The dominance and normalcy of White culture is important: it confers benefits to those who participate.

White Supremacy

The overall dominance of White culture is known as *White supremacy* and encompasses a Whiteness worldview and White privilege benefits. White supremacy is a useful concept to

understand the bigger picture of White dominance in the United States. For example, the United States economically benefited from slavery and post-slavery treatment of Black people. The estimates of lost or depreciated wages number in several trillions of dollars, and scholars contend the depreciation of wages continues among people of color (DiAngelo, 2016; Ryde, 2019).

White supremacy is evident in the current economic and political systems of the United States. DiAngelo (2018) provides a few poignant statistics from 2016:

- The 10 richest Americans are White;
- US Congress is 90% White;
- US governors are 96% White;
- The current president and vice president are White;
- The current US presidential cabinet is 91% White;
- Teachers are 82% White;
- Full time college professors are 84% White;

Source: *White Fragility: Why it's so Hard for White People to Talk about Racism* (p. 31).

The racial composition of our government, economic, and educational institutions are not reflective of the overall U.S. population or current college enrollment (NCES, 2015). This overwhelming tilt towards the White racial identity suggest White supremacy is still active and favoring the White identity (DiAngelo, 2018).

There is apprehension among White people to use the term White supremacy (DiAngelo, 2018). White supremacy is intended to capture the overall social, political, and economic systems of dominance by White people, but is often conflated with individual actions from White supremacist (DiAngelo, 2016). The apprehension of using this term is likely the product of Whiteness and evolving concepts of racism. It is hard for White people to acknowledge the systems providing them an elevated status and benefits (Ryde, 2019).

White Fragility

The aforementioned concepts are helpful to unpack what it means to be White in a racialized society. Whiteness and White privilege insulate White people from race-related stresses in daily existence. When confronted about White racial privilege, White people often display a range of emotional reactions. DiAngelo (2018, p.117) refers to this disequilibrium as *White fragility*, "a state which even a minimum amount of racial stress in the habitus intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves." Many of these emotional responses are unconscious reactions to the challenge of a White worldview.

White fragility is a useful to understand why race is so difficult for White people. DiAngelo's (2018) bestselling text on the topic outlines the feelings, behaviors, and assumptions underlying White fragility. The inward feelings of White fragility often include being singled out, shamed, or judged for having unearned privilege based on race. These feelings can often constitute a barrier because most White people do not want to be a racist. Racism is seen as morally bad and Whites seek distance from racism. When racism becomes a moral issue, White people are reluctant to identify how they personally benefit from White supremacy. White fragility reveals how White people distance themselves from racism, and consequently, struggle to discuss race (DiAngelo, 2018).

The outward behaviors associated with White fragility also constitute a barrier to having conversations about race. These can often include crying, denial, emotional withdrawal, arguing, and seeking forgiveness (DiAngelo, 2018). Many of these behaviors are unconsciously produced when Whiteness is confronted. Some scholars note how these emotions change the dynamic of discussing race, especially when White participants expect these emotions to absolve guilt (Foste, 2019; Obear & martinez, 2013). In study with White college students, Foste (2019)

critiqued how Whites expect to “confess their sins and transform into racially enlightened individuals”. While conversations about race can be cathartic and involve emotions, these behaviors do not excuse a White individual from conversations about White supremacy.

DiAngelo’s (2018) book on White fragility also contains useful recommendations for facilitating dialogue on race. For instance, social justice educators often design activities to build comfort among participants to discuss race (Katz, 2003). DiAngelo (2018) dissuades facilitators from focusing on the concept of “trust”; contending trust is a pretense sought by White people to avoid being labeled as a racist. While some relationship building is warranted to provide depth in conversations, the topic of trust should be interrogated or avoided altogether.

Guidelines for discussion are also a practice critiqued by DiAngelo (2018). Often social justice educators employ guidelines to maintain civility and constructive exchange (Bell et al., 2016). If these guidelines are poorly designed, they can establish rules of engagement which reinforce Whiteness. Rules such as “don’t judge”, “assume good intentions”, and “respect” are fraught with Whiteness norms (DiAngelo, 2018). These guidelines serve to insulate and protect White people’s feelings in dialogue. A study of White college students may be better served by abandoning guidelines designed for White safety, instead embracing feedback and candor.

White Privilege and College Students

The goal of educating college students about White privilege is fraught with several challenges. Perceptions of racism have become nuanced in recent decades; shifting away from overt acts to subtle concepts reinforcing White superiority (Hardiman & Keehn, 2012). White college students envision bias as despicable acts committed by racist groups and individuals, often overlooking White enclaves in higher education or the systematic advantages of being White (Brunsma et al., 2012; Foste, 2019). In this regard, it is difficult to foster awareness

around White privilege since the very concept implicates all White people and requires them to take personal responsibility (Cabrera, 2018).

Studies of White College Students

Concepts around the White identity have changed in recent decades, prompting scholars to critique original White identity models (Hardiman & Keehn, 2012). As a result of new research, scholars assert these models are no longer appropriate to name Whiteness (Foste & Jones, 2020). These recent studies have employ qualitative methods to obtain a deeper understanding of White students. Through examining White students' perceptions of race, researchers have arrived at a new understanding of their White identity.

In a qualitative study, Hardiman and Keehn (2012) interviewed 10 White college students in New England to understand how they perceived their own race. Their participant interviews lasted for an hour and a half and consisted of semi-structured questions to understand their perceptions. This study revealed how these White students were largely unaware of their cultural heritage and racial identity. They no longer had connections to their various European ancestry, instead highlighting other elements of diversity. Some White student participants chose to distance themselves from identifying as White and cited a Native American heritage, even though they did not have any cultural connections to a tribe or group.

The most noteworthy aspect of the Hardiman and Keehn (2012) study was regarding the normalcy of Whiteness. Most students in their study perceived White as being as "neutral" or "ordinary". Any other racial identity was considered an alternative to the normalcy of Whiteness. As a dominant identity in society, these White students could not see themselves has having a distinct ethnicity. Instead, they simply considered themselves individuals.

Hardiman and Keehn's (2012) study was an attempt to shift conversations about racism. It advanced conversations of Whiteness beyond overt racism and existing development models, instead revealing the more subtle phenomenon's of being a White student. In their final thoughts of analysis, they suggest racist language is embedded into White student views. They found "codes" of racism to be present in perspectives about crime, welfare, and urban areas. This conclusion about coded racist language is presented towards the end, but not unpacked by the authors. The lack of discussion on the racism among White students is a limitation of the study.

Location and Whiteness

Another limitation within the Hardiman and Keehn (2012) study is exhibited by the location of the research. The researchers selected a predominantly White, rural institution in the northeast United States. The belief systems explored by the researchers may have been regional, evident by how White students seemed to focus on racial binaries of Black and White. When these White students referenced other non-White identities, the discussions centered on urban, hip-hop culture – which the authors suggest was code for the African American identity. If this study was located in another part of the United States, there would different concepts and codes about non-White identities.

Despite these limitations of Hardiman and Keehn (2012), their findings mirror other qualitative and have the same implications for location. In a constructivist study for a dissertation, Smith (2014) interviewed fifteen students at a predominantly White institution and came across similar sentiments. Smith's research design featured a constructivist approach using multiple interviews to develop a portrait of each study. Through the use of portraiture, this study illustrated how White students struggled to describe their own White identity. Again, the White students in the study normalized Whiteness as the standard which everything else was compared.

Smith's (2014) examination of Whiteness was also impacted by the location of the study. Although the author does not disclose the location or the region of the study, it is articulated as an overwhelming White, land-grant institution. At the time of the study, over 90% of the student body was White and 85% of undergraduate students were in-state students. Beyond the ethical considerations of disclosing too much identifiable information, limitations might also exist in this setting as well. Comparable to Hardiman and Keehn (2012), White students focused strongly on the White and Black racial binary.

Location of a study may be a variable to understanding racism and Whiteness. Cabrera (2018) conducted two research studies in the southwest and west coast region of the United States. In his critical race theory study, he interviewed a total 29 White males in semi-structured 45 minute interviews. In this large study, the interview with White males did not exist in a Black and White racial binary. While discussions most certainly featured racist beliefs about African Americans, they also contained prominent beliefs regarding Latinx identities.

The focus on Latinx identities was likely due to the location and the researcher's identity. Cabrera (2018) supplied a questionnaire in the appendix which illustrates this focus. Among many questions, the inventory asks participants if they dated someone who was Black or Latinx. It does not feature other racial category such Native American, Middle-Eastern, or Asian identities. Cabrera's design of this instrument indicates how location is relevant when discussion Whiteness of students. The racial diversity of the location where the study is situated will yield different responses when talking about non-White identities.

Methods and Researcher Identities

Cabrera's (2018) study is helpful to understand how location is a factor when researching Whiteness, but it also contains insights about designing methods. As previously indicated, the

data collection began with a questionnaire. Following the questionnaire, 45 minute interviews were conducted. While Cabrera interviewed 29 participants at two different institutions, is it possible to critically examine someone's racial beliefs in only a 45 minute interview? As previous literature indicates, whiteness and racist comments may be coded in language used by white students. These codes may be hard to recognize, or even elicit, within a 45 minute period with white students.

This limitation of Cabrera's (2018) methods might be compounded by researcher positionality. Cabrera (2014, 2018) acknowledged his own racial identity, being a biracial person, as a limitation in his research of interrogating Whiteness. In defense of this concern, Cabrera claims White male participants were still honest in interviews – often sharing offensive content. Cabrera also suggested his lighter complexion and speaking English a certain way minimized his racial identity. In contrast to minimizing identity, Cabrera also acknowledged being unabashedly critical in the interviews. Despite review of methodology in previous articles, there are still questions about how Cabrera's identities may have influenced interviews.

Issues in Whiteness

In all three studies, White college students described their White identity as race rather than an ethnicity. Unlike ethnicity, which is defined by cultural traditions, race cannot exist unless it is juxtaposed against another race. As Dalton (2015) asserted, "race would be meaningless if it were not a fault line in which power, prestige, and respect were distributed… White ethnicity determines culture, race determines social position." The delineation between ethnicity and race illustrate how some White students' perspectives about the normalcy of Whiteness can become problematic. Race is simultaneously perceived as nothing, but laden with power.

The perceptions of White students found in these studies minimize the socially constructed nature of being White. In a narrative inquiry study among 10 White college students, Foste (2019) observed how participants downplayed acts of discrimination and viewed their campus as racial harmonious. The participants were specifically recruited for the study because they were recommended as White students who were reflective about Whiteness. Yet, Foste (2019) identified patterns of White privilege in their narratives. Participants expressed annoyance at racial protests which disrupted their campus and viewed their campus environment as more progressive than others.

Some researchers have even encountered hostility from White students when discussing race. Cabrera (2018) came across white males who felt targeted due to their identity. The White males in this study expressed concern about *reverse discrimination*, where their compounded privileged identities made them a target in a progressive society. Cabrera (2018) labeled this fear as *White victimization*. These sentiments were not isolated to this study. Hardiman and Keehn (2012) also noticed how students were concerned about affirmative action. White students in both studies expressed how affirmative action policies may hurt their prospects in life (Cabrera, 2018).

Minimization and White victimization by White students may be an impediment to understanding their own race (Boatright-Horowitz et al., 2013; Brunsma et al., 2012). Even though these perspectives of White participants are authentic, scholars claim they represent defenses to uphold White privilege and prevent progress towards equality. Brunsma et al. (2012) assert the absence of an affirmative action policy is inherently racist and further strengthens a "white wall" around higher education.

It is important to note, not all White students in these studies displayed a minimization or defense of White privilege. Some students engaged in cross-racial relationships and developed anti-racist identities (Cabrera, 2018). Hardiman and Keehn (2012) met students who were aware of the advantages they received from White privilege, but felt powerless or hesitant to take action. Students even expressed a reluctance to stand up when witnessing instances of oppression as they did not feel the act bias crossed a threshold to warrant action. In a different study, White students were able to learn about privilege and reduce their racial biases, but only if they believed they could make a difference (Steward et al., 2012). Students who did not believe they possessed the ability to make social change did not have a reduction in racial bias. These studies demonstrate awareness of White privilege may not be enough to generate change; they must be coupled with a concept of self-efficacy.

Previous studies on White college students serves as a guide to designing research. The findings from previous studies illustrate how Whiteness is presented by students and manifested in behaviors. Additionally, the limitations can also provide insights on research design. In-depth analysis of these studies suggest appropriate pathways to examine the confluence of race and leadership among White college students.

Fostering Awareness of White Privilege

Cocurricular and curricular efforts to educate students on diversity are effective in reducing racial bias (Denson, 2009). Many activities, and their corresponding research studies, were designed on the foundational work by McIntosh (1988). As the statements about the invisible knapsack are easy to access and understand, it is a widely used tool for education around White privilege (Niehuis, 2005). During these activities, White students usually gain the most from diversity education (Denson, 2009; Steward et al., 2012).

Conversations with peers on sociocultural topics such as race have been a helpful tool to enable students to embrace different viewpoints (Dugan & Komives, 2010; Johnson & Mincer, 2017). Unfortunately, students of color do not gain as much, if anything from these conversations (Steward et al., 2012). Seider et al. (2013) noticed students of color were apprehensive of engaging in conversations with White peers due to their inaccurate or naive views on race. Other studies have suggested these activities and conversations place students of color in the role of a teacher (Cabrera, 2014). Even utilizing McIntosh's statements as an activity to prompt discussions, these activities still rely on students of color to further White students' awareness on racial bias (Boatright-Horowitz et al., 2013).

Sociocultural conversations are effective in developing awareness around White privilege (Kodama & Dugan, 2013). McIntosh's original work on White privilege is a starting place for reflections on race, but would be more productive when coupled with sociocultural conversations. Yet, the burden should not come at the expense of students of color (Boatright-Horowitz et al., 2013; Cabrera, 2014). There needs to be a shift from interpersonal learning methods, which rely too heavily on peers of color, to a new approach. The social change model for leadership provides a framework useful for this purpose.

Social Change Model of Leadership

The social change model for leadership is the most widely used leadership theory in student affairs (Wagner, 2011). The model contains eight values divided into three domains. The first domain is considered to be individual values: consciousness-of-self, congruence, and commitment. In the second domain, there are group values of collaboration, common purpose, and controversy with civility. The third domain is comprised of societal values such as citizenship and change (Wagner, 2011).

Unlike some development models, these domains are not sequential in which one level must be completed before the next. Each domain can concurrently influence the development of the other (Wagner, 2011). As students interact in a group setting, it may impact their individual values. For example, the aforementioned research studies suggests sociocultural conversations with peers may change individual values and reduce racial bias (Kodama & Dugan, 2013). However, this may cause uneasiness among some students as group settings may prompt them to reconsider previously established individual values (Wagner, 2011). Individual values can be continuously examined and revisited. Since development of domains are simultaneous, there are potential applications for exploring race and leadership in different settings.

Consciousness-of-Self

Consciousness-of-self is an individual value of the social change model centered on a complex self-awareness. It is not to be confused with self-consciousness, which is a worry about what others think. Rather, consciousness-of-self is an attentiveness to one's presence in leadership. This is a self-awareness, cognizant of a greater social environment. It is built by self-exploration and monitoring behavior (Early & Fincher, 2017).

Consciousness-of-self is further broken down into sub-concepts of identifying core values, empathy, mindfulness, self-efficacy, social perspective taking, and social identity exploration (Early & Cooney, 2017). Identifying core values is exploring the tenets that make someone who they are. Empathy is an appreciation for differing life experiences and circumstances. Mindfulness is being present in the moment and self-efficacy is defined as being able to accomplish a particular task (Early & Fincher, 2017). While all these sub-categories are important to consciousness-of-self, social perspective taking and social identity exploration have the strongest applications for assisting White students explore race and leadership.

Social perspective taking involves considering someone else's point of view. It provides individuals the ability to empathize with another, yet still maintain core values without conflict (Early & Cooney, 2017). Social perspective taking exists in an individual value domain, yet researchers have found social perspective taking to be linked with leadership development in group domains (Dugan et al., 2014). In simpler terms, it can serve as a connection between individual and group leadership. Social perspective taking is not only important to the development of leadership abilities, it is arguably relevant in fostering awareness of White privilege. McIntosh's (1988) concept of unpacking White privilege is almost exclusively based on statements to prompt social perspective taking. Within consciousness-of-self concept, social perspective taking has strong utility to explore race with White student leaders.

Social identity exploration is also relevant for discussions around racial and leadership identities. This component of consciousness-of-self encourages awareness regarding different dimensions of identity such as gender, race, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, religion, and other identities. As a result, it welcomes examinations of power and privilege as they pertain to leadership identity development (Early & Cooney, 2017). These concepts, as presented in books for college students, is a general invitation to explore social identity.

Critics have signaled an invitation to explore social identity is not sufficient; the social change model does not call for the development of cultural competency (Wagner, 2011). The absence of cultural components is evident in an inventory used by Dugan and Komives (2010) to measure the value domains in the social change model. Factors for social perspective taking and social identity exploration were not present in the evaluation of consciousness-of-self. Questions relating to this matter were in another category of sociocultural conversations with peers. This category probed factors such as lifestyle, religious beliefs, multiculturalism, and political views.

There were no factors which explicitly addressed race in a leadership context, especially of one's own race.

Consciousness-of-Self in White Student Leaders

Despite the criticism, the examination of social identity through consciousness-of-self makes the social change model one of the more progressive leadership models. Most leadership models omit examining the influence of social identity on leadership development or superficially glance the topic (Ostick & Wall, 2011). Few encourage self-examination of social identities and even fewer examine the impact of race (Guthrie & Rodriguez, 2018). Scholars have suggested the omission of race is a manifestation of White privilege in student leadership (Ostick & Wall, 2011). New approaches are needed to examine how privilege and leadership can be infused together in a model.

Without creating a new model, consciousness-of-self may be the most appropriate model for White students to develop leadership skills while cultivating an awareness of privilege. As an individual value domain, consciousness-of-self is primarily an intrapersonal process. Yet, it does not need to be fully reflective because social perspective taking can prompt development in group value domains. For example, White students are a demographic who generally believe they do not have culture (Smith, 2014). The irony is their culture is so pervasive, they cannot see it unless it is relation to another (Dalton, 2015). Perhaps, consciousness-of-self may be able to generate an awareness of cultural values in a White ethnic culture. And through social perspective taking and social identity exploration, White students can begin to explore the privileges associated with being White before engaging in an environment.

Conclusions of Synthesized Literature

Through the framework of the social change model, White students in higher education may be able to develop awareness of their racial identity before fully engaging in a social context. Dugan et al. (2014) were concerned about the potential negative impact on communities when student leaders are unprepared to engage in a social context. Consciousness-of-self, a component of the social change model, provides a bridge from individual value development to socially responsible group leadership. This is especially relevant as literature suggests activities designed to foster awareness of White privilege have a negative impact on students of color (Boatright-Horowitz et al., 2013; Fox, 2017). Exploring racial identity and privileges through consciousness-of-self, before engaging in a larger social context, may prepare White student leaders for cross-racial interactions. With a sensitivity, they can engage in group domain values to foster further development, without causing harm. Consciousness-of-self provides a leadership framework for White student leaders to explore how their racial identity influences their leadership development.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the research design for this study. Explanation of the design begins with a discussion of how the constructivist paradigm pairs with the topic. As the constructivist paradigm is epistemologically-situated in researcher positionality, this section discloses relevant information about myself. The chapter progresses to explain how a narrative methodological approach is easily nested within the constructivist paradigm and well-suited for studying social identity. Methodology transitions to methods for further exploration of caucusing as a relatively nascent, but demonstrated method. The chapter concludes with fundamental components of the research such as data collection and assurances of quality. The elements of this chapter form the compact agreement for conducting research on the three research questions of this study.

Paradigm

Constructivism is one of many theoretical research perspectives used to study the nature of knowledge (Lincoln et al., 2017). The constructivism paradigm purports knowledge is socially constructed by individuals in a subjective manner (Crotty, 1998). This social construction of knowledge is termed as “coconstruction” and happens through interactivity (Grundmann, 2019). In other words, the way people see the world can change based on their interactions with other people. Consequently, some scholars argue constructivism is uniquely fashioned to examine human interactions (Denicolo et al., 2016).

Multiple Realities

An easy way to comprehend constructivism is through *ontology*, or the nature of reality. The ontology of constructivism is based in relativity, and unlike traditional approaches to research, there can be multiple forms of truth (Lincoln et al., 2017). In constructivism, no one person's sense of reality is exactly like another's. Denicolo et al. (2016) present a hypothetical situation of a traffic accident to illustrate the existence of multiple realities. Two people may witness a traffic accident in the street, but come to divergent conclusions about who caused the wreck. Their differing interpretations are not based on a physical vantage point, but informed by personal beliefs or experiences.

Multiple realities are also evident in the literature regarding racial awareness. As previously discussed, White students have trouble articulating what it means to be White (Hardiman & Keehn, 2012). While White students might struggle to define their racial identity, there are likely differences within the White identity. For instance, if two students were asked the about their views on racism, they may have divergent responses. Some White students may have attended a workshop on racism or had a transformative experience to prompt awareness. Other White students may have never thoughtfully considered matters of race. Whiteness may mean different things based on lived experiences within a race. These multiple realities on race demonstrates the utility of using constructivism to study Whiteness.

Constructs

In constructivism, beliefs or patterns are considered to be *constructs*. They make up our sense-of-self and help us interpret the world (Denicolo et al., 2016). Constructs are not just cognitive, but are composed of emotional and physical behaviors too. Each person uses constructs to make an individual model, or system of beliefs, of the world. Constructs are fluid

and temporary; they only reflect an individual's belief at the current moment. A constructivist researcher cannot assume they will remain static through a study.

Just the act of eliciting a construct during research can cause reflection and prompt revision. For example, Smith (2014) asked White students to share about when they first learned they were White. For many participants, it was likely they had not given this question much consideration and could only vaguely articulate a response. Through questioning, constructs began to appear in discussion. Smith (2014) noted, "In some cases, their perspective on race evolved between writing and interviews… Race was a confusing and evolving topic for them." This previous constructivist study on Whiteness captures the fluid nature of constructs, especially on race, and how they changed by just asking a question.

A single question about a construct has the power to prompt awareness. For example, McIntosh's (1988) work regarding the invisible knapsack poses questions to stimulate reflection. Through simply asking questions about everyday occurrences, and evaluating them based on lived experiences, constructs can be exposed. For example, having someone reflect about what races are present in main characters of their popular TV shows. This simple question may begin to have someone become aware of existing constructs around race. Interactivity, and even just a question, can cause an individual to revise their set of constructs (Denicolo et al., 2016).

Reconsidering constructs aligns with the existing literature on leadership development. Research on the social change model highlights the importance of exchange, especially between peers, in the development of social perspective taking. As previously mentioned, this interaction of social-perspective-taking prompts student leaders to consider the beliefs of others when developing their own leadership identity. Ultimately, a student may choose to keep, change, or

discard their belief based on the interaction. Social perspective taking and evaluating constructs are corresponding concepts; contributing to the development of consciousness-of-self.

Constructivism and Racial Identity

The constructivist paradigm is useful to explore diversity. Alt (2017) took a unique approach of studying the constructivist paradigm with quantitative methods. This research measured the impact of a constructivist paradigm when exposing college students to concepts of diversity and challenge. Methods included administering a pre-test before students participated in a 14-week lecture, then retesting them with seven-item scale instrument to measure openness to diversity. The findings linked constructivist social activity to a greater openness to concepts of diversity and challenge.

Alt's (2017) study empirically demonstrates the power of constructivist methods when learning about diversity. The author suggests group level social activities are effective constructivist methods. In particular, social interaction serves as a catalyst to making cognitive and emotional changes among participants (Alt, 2017). Demonstrated knowledge about the effectiveness of group-level constructivist work is strong evidence to support researching white student leaders via constructivism.

The constructivist paradigm is also useful to explore race. Stewart (2015) used constructivism to understand the racial identity and performance of 13 traditionally-aged college Black college students. Through a 75 minute interview, Stewart used semi-structured questions to explore how Black students made meaning of their racial identities. Findings indicated a strong influence within a racial identity of community and pressures from an environment. These results suggest how peer and social influences racial identity – while also providing a greater rationale for using constructivism as a paradigm.

Smith (2014) also utilized constructivism to examine how White college students see race in their everyday life. In this dissertation, data was collected through a variety of methods to understand the perspective of a dominant racial identity. Smith found White college students, in a predominately White campus environment, had constructed a view which normalized being White and minimized race. This form of Whiteness may exist on other campuses, but likely in different ways. Each set of participants uniquely coconstruct a reality that is particular to their campus environment.

Considerations

Some scholars have emphasized a need to respect constructs shared by participants in constructivist research, especially if they differ from one's own beliefs (Denicolo et al., 2016). However, when examining issues laden with power dynamics, other researchers have utilized constructivism with a hybrid framework blending constructivism with a critical cultural paradigm (Kunstman, 2017). A critical stance in constructivism suggests a researcher has agency to challenge power and privilege in an unapologetic manner (Guido et al., 2010). A constructivist researcher has the ability to critically evaluate constructs, such as racist beliefs, and determine how they are problematic.

The divergence among constructivist scholars suggests a potential pitfall in constructivism, especially when discussing topics as emotionally charged as race. The pitfall is how relativism may arise within a framework of multiple realities. On the surface, constructivism paradigm might presume multiple realities are all equally valid. Yet, nuanced application of constructivism would suggest a critical discernment is needed when exploring privileged identities. Even though Smith (2014) used constructivism, the study purposely

interrogated Whiteness and did not shy away from analysis of problematic perceptions. The constructivist paradigm does preclude a critical perspective employed by a researcher.

Positionality

A constructivist researcher has a strong influence in research design and outcomes. Lincoln et al. (2017) characterized a constructivist as "passionate participant" who holds a participant-observer role. As a facilitator in this paradigm, there is a need to understand my background and how it influences the study. A thoughtful disclosure and discussion of positionality should address my social identities and personal experiences informing my worldview. The acknowledgement and contextualization of my positionality provides a richer context to understand the research.

Implications of My Identities

I am a White cis-gender male who engages in social justice research. These dominant and privileged identities have shaped my understanding of the world, but have likely influenced the outcome of my previous research projects. In a study exploring political orientation, a participant with similar identities social disclosed deeply racist beliefs (Davis et al., 2020). When comparing notes with my co-researchers, I discovered I was the only team member to receive these candid comments. My other team members held different racial and gender identities, leading me to wonder how my own identities may have invited the comments. Perhaps participants made assumptions about my visible identities and felt comfortable to disclose unfiltered perspectives? It may have been random luck with participant assignments, but I suspect my identities may have influenced the outcome.

After these experiences, I have become keenly aware of the influence of my gender and racial identity in research. Even when discussing my dissertation topic with others, I have

encountered assumptions about my identities as they relate to the topic of White privilege. When I have mentioned White privilege, some White folks assume I am trying to rebuke the concept. One individual even jumped to the conclusion that I am seeking to defend White males in our society. These interactions baffled me until I read Cabrera's (2018) research entitled *White Guys on Campus.* Cabrera revealed how White males feel particularly beleaguered in the current socio-political context. While I do not feel attacked or targeted as a White male, some of my acquaintances make quick assumptions about my motives based on my social identities. If I were a female person of color researching White privilege, would these same assumptions be made?

Perceptions regarding my two highly visible and dominant social identities have implications for conducting constructivist research. First, I share the racial identity held by the participants in the caucus. In my racial identity, I have experienced similar formative experiences as the participants. This included minimizing the significance of Whiteness or lacking an understanding of my own race. Yet, the experiences around race were not identical. I was much older than the participants, grew up in a different part of the country, and came from a different social class. For example, I witnessed regular acts of racism growing up in Los Angeles. These experiences differ from the rural and predominantly White context of this study. As a participant-observer, I was conscious of these considerations to mitigate premature comparisons.

Another implication is illustrated by my anecdotal stories from conducting research on political identity. My race and gender sometimes invites authentic perspectives on race. There are advantages in this positionality; it provides an accurate look into how White students perceive race. It is also fraught with challenges as a researcher. In a recent conversation with a prominent social justice educator, I was asked how I would respond if my study had attracted a White supremacist (K. Obear, personal communication, May 13, 2019). Ideally, my participant

selection would likely avoid such a predicament through selective recruitment. However, if a White supremacist attended, I would likely had to rely on my cofacilitator to continue the meeting while I spoke with the person outside. It would be important to determine their motivations for participating. This was not needed with the study, but I was prepared to remove a belligerent individual who sought to disrupt the study.

Most importantly, there are implications within my privileged gender and racial identities. Both identities, especially when combined, confer meaning within a social context. When interacting with White student leaders, being an older White male may have implications for how participants view me. When examining concepts of leadership, some scholars have linked perceptions of traditional leadership roles with being a White male (Kodama & Laylo, 2017). I must be cognizant of how these social identities shape the research study.

In previous studies on Whiteness, conducted by White scholars, most researchers make the same acknowledgements. Foste (2019) pointed out how, if he was a researcher of color, just conducting the study could be harmful to his wellbeing. Smith (2014) offers a more detailed account of positionality; outlining why certain language was used in the dissertation. In my writing, I have made some observations when conforming to the 7th edition of the American Psychological Association (APA) publication manual. For example, specific racial identities are considered proper nouns and should be capitalized. Even “Whiteness” or “non-White” is capitalized due to these standards. However, “people of color” is not capitalized because it is considered a phrase, not a proper noun.

Just the simple act of formatting my dissertation provided me a reflection about the power of language as a researcher. APA requires “non-White” to be capitalized, but “people of color” is all lower case. While technically correct, this formatting prompted me to question if

capitalization confers status. What meaning does APA formatting implicitly suggest about race? For the purposes of readability and adhering to professional conventions, I have chosen to keep APA formatting conventions for my dissertation. Yet, Whiteness often hides behind these walls and is perpetuated in the same way.

This simple observation about capitalization is a good example of being cognizant in research. There may not be steps for white researchers to adopt, but previous approaches to acknowledge positionality can be a guide. A general reflexivity is probably the most critical to be white and research whiteness. Additionally, a sound methodology can help establish trust and accountability for the implications of my identities.

Implications of My Experiences

Beyond my social identities, there are other components to my positionality. Specifically, my professional experience influenced the research design and outcomes. I have worked at three different higher education institutions within the rocky mountain region of the United States. At each of these campuses, I have held positions working with student leaders. These connections provide me access to potential participants, but also contain implications which must be disclosed.

One implication may exist in my current position. I am a full-time professional serving in a director-level student affairs role. Responsible for leading a department focused on cocurricular experiences, I am familiar within certain student communities. Even in my previous jobs on other campuses, there may still be vestiges of my presence. It is important for me to be cognizant of the influence of my professional roles in research. I cannot compartmentalize myself as researcher; I am also full-time practitioner. My position may confer positional power and influence participation in the study.

Some constructivist scholars suggest bracketing as a way to address previous experiences (Denicolo et al., 2016). However, bracketing does not address how participants perceive me as researcher. If left unaddressed, these perceptions about my position could have created unspoken power dynamics. While I did not know the participants before the study, I was familiar with their involvement opportunities and knew their bosses. I addressed these concerns by acknowledging my professional role outside the research, but stressing how the caucus is a different space. I also emphasized the ethics found in the participant consent form, such as confidentiality, and stressed use of pseudonyms. It appeared these efforts were effective as participants had candid conversations about their workplaces, peers, and their personal beliefs.

Another implication is associated with my experience in social justice education. In my previous professional role, I was responsible for organizing and executing an annual social justice retreat for faculty, staff, and students. For several years, I was known within the region as the person responsible for this social justice workshop. During these retreats, I had the opportunity to facilitate caucuses on White privilege. Without a doubt, these enlightening experiences with social justice education have strengthened my ability to have difficult conversations.

My skills in facilitating discussion were particularly helpful in this study. I have demonstrated experience with identity caucusing and facilitated several caucuses on White privilege. While I am still making mistakes and learning new skills, these experiences have prepared me to use the nascent research method of caucusing. Due to these previous experiences, I did not use a pilot study in this research design.

Despite my relative confidence in social justice topics, I am still cautious in conversations with participants. Any caucus space must remain focused on the narrative of the participants

rather than my own life experiences. Over contributing, dominating, or referencing my previous experience discourages authentic participation. In this study, I frequently employed silence as a tool to leave space for others. Being conscious of my own contributions ensured I remained focused on the purpose of the study: to understand how White student leaders process White privilege through a leadership framework.

Methodology

The methodology used in this study was narrative inquiry. Utilized by multiple disciplines to tackle subjective topics, narrative inquiry is a tool to examine the human experience (Wells, 2011). Built upon the premise the human experience is individually and socially constructed, narrative inquiry relies on stories as the primary source of data (Clandinin, 2006). This methodology is especially helpful to examine overlooked stories in human development which may obscured by a prevailing narrative (Wells, 2011).

This section introduces narrative inquiry as a compelling methodology to examine the stories of White students. Strong applications exist within narrative inquiry to dive deeper into leadership and racial identities. Foste (2019) utilized this methodology to exhibit narratives of White students when describing a campus climate. While not mentioned in the Foste (2019) study, there are some important methodological considerations when using narrative inquiry to explore a privileged identity. These ethical and evaluative concerns are outlined and addressed in the conclusion of this section.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative methodology emerged from the questioning of traditional scientific inquiry (Loseke, 2019). Scholars found the methodology of investigating natural sciences limiting when applied to the human experience (Wells, 2011). This departure from logic and scientific rationale

is described as the “narrative turn” (Loseke, 2019). Qualitative designs, and narrative inquiry, provide a humanistic approach for investigating social phenomenon (Esin et al., 2014).

Narrative inquiry begins and ends with the ordinary lived experience (Clandinin, 2006). Telling these stories has been an essential part of human existence, representing a way to make sense of the world (Loseke, 2019). Examining stories can reveal the social, cultural, familial, linguistic, and institutional narratives which inform our lives (Clandinin, 2006; Loseke, 2019). Similar to constructs within constructivism, narratives compose our individual existence. Narrative inquiry is not thinking about stories, but it is the revelation of how we think with stories (Clandinin et al., 2018).

A narrative might be the story of one person, or it can be coconstructed between people (Wells, 2011). These stories can be lengthy as a novel or short as an incomplete sentence (Loseke, 2019). Even silence may be suggestive of something meaningful (Bell et al., 2016). Narratives are not static. These stories are temporal and relational; suggesting they may be augmented by time, space, and place. Clandinin et al. (2018) encourages researchers to embrace the temporal and relational nature of narratives as a puzzle emerging through research.

Understanding narratives as a puzzle can be advantageous to examine an emotionally charged topic such as race. When exploring race with White students, Smith (2014) found narratives to be messy and continuously changing. Affording space for participants to change their narratives in a research design invites participants to revisit their constructs of race. It also normalizes the discomfort of reevaluating their constructs. Sharing of narratives in a temporal and relational manner enables participants to coconstruct their own narrative about racial and leadership identities.

Culture and Identity in Narrative

Stories are produced by individuals and embedded in culture. In a cultural context, stories are used to organize and convey meaning in a system. Expectations often exist about who can tell a story and how it is evaluated (Loseke, 2019). Power is manifested through these storytelling conventions (Loseke, 2019). Thankfully, narrative inquiry is a tool to counter dominant narratives and reshape these conventions. Narrative inquiry can give a voice to those who have been pushed to the margins of a culture (Wells, 2011).

Within culture there are also specific words, or *cultural codes*, that carry an embedded story. Loseke (2019) provides the example of the American Dream. This singular phrase is a powerful construct understood by most in the United States. However, based on someone's personal experiences, particularly in socioeconomic class, this cultural code could hold different meanings. It may generate feelings of pride or resentment. This example illustrates how cultural codes might be interpreted differently by a diverse audience.

When considered in a larger context, cultural codes can be helpful to identify broad narratives (Foste, 2019). Sometimes these stories are referred to as a dominant or grand narratives (Clandinin et al., 2018). Foste (2019) sought to determine dominant narrative when studying White students' view of campus climate. This was accomplished by avoiding the analysis of cultural codes in isolation as small and unconnected concepts. Instead, the stories were kept intact and used as complete analytic units to reveal dominant narratives. From cultural codes about diversity efforts, absence of bias, and liberal climate, Foste (2019) found there was a larger narrative about campus racial harmony among White students.

As indicated by the literature, the concept of leadership could be considered as a dominant narrative. Some scholars have noted how students of color associate this term with

Whiteness (Kodama & Laylo, 2017). White privilege is also a cultural code with the potential to invoke a wide array of interpretations. The topic of White privilege produces different feelings among White students such as denial, defensiveness, or minimization (Cabrera, 2018).

Social identity is also viewed as cultural coding (Loseke, 2019). Identities sometimes confer a status to indicate esteem or moral evaluation (Loseke, 2019). For example, the identity of a veteran might contain a cultural narrative. Social identity may also suggests a relative status in society. In the context of race in the United States, these statuses have been given a corresponding amount of power or privilege. These cultural codes might not always align with individual experiences, but still are prevailing narratives in a societal context.

Cultural codes in narrative inquiry present opportunities to examine how White students process privilege through a leadership framework. Through unpacking codes, and corresponding embedded meaning, White students can further an understanding of their own racial and leadership identities. Additionally, their interpretation of these codes evolved through the duration of the study. The examination of these codes in this study provided an opportunity to coconstruct a unique narrative around White privilege and leadership.

Narrative inquiry is a resourceful methodology to understand these complex cultural narratives at multiple levels of interpretation. Use of cultural codes, but also examination of dominant narratives, provides insight on White students' stories about race. Prior to this study, I speculated dominant narratives likely existed in the racial narrative of the participants. For example, I wondered if the White students viewed our society as a "melting pot" or a "post-racial society". These specific narratives did not emerge as expected, but other dominant narratives were apparent in the White student leader's stories.

Methodological Considerations

Narrative inquiry is more practical and powerful than it appears; stories have implications for both individuals and culture (Loseke, 2019). Within these dimensions, Clandinin et al. (2018) outlines three possible justifications for researching stories. First, there are personal justifications. Evident in my own reflections on privilege, my personal stories serve as motivation to study this topic. Second, there are practical justifications such the compatibility with the topic and research design. For this study, narrative inquiry might be the most suitable methodology to study the complexity of race. Finally, there are social justifications. Outlined in the first chapter, there is a concrete significance to exploring the stories of White student leaders. Understanding how White student leaders process privilege may generate social change.

Narratives can be a powerful tool to transform society. Stories are an easily accessible method to convince others, used to transcend scientific truths by established experts (Loseke, 2019). Narratives are not just a different way to present data or supplement facts. Instead, narratives constitute a relational methodology with potential to transform how people think (Clandinin et al., 2018). As an audience interacts with a narrative, their own narrative may change over time and space. As Loseke (2019, pp 13) states, “Stories are not innocent conveyers of meaning”. Narrative inquiry is an effective tool to generate change in a “post-fact” world.

A good story has the potential to be powerful. The narratives are retold because they are both interesting and important (Loseke, 2019). While there is no singular truth in narrative inquiry, narratives are still evaluated based on these components. The ability of a narrative to interest and importance is deemed *believability* (Loseke, 2019). The onus of producing a believable narrative must be done in an ethical manner. This responsibility is shared between a researcher and participant in narrative inquiry (Clandinin et al., 2018).

The ethical production of narratives is steeped in the relationships among participants and a researcher. Clandinin et al. (2018) outlines five dimensions of ethics within narrative inquiry. The most relevant dimension, thematically found in the other four dimensions, is a call to be reflexive in the research. Coined as *wide-awakeness* this ethical dimension emphasizes being open to the multiple layers of a narrative. There may be a dominant narrative found in cultural codes, but also an individual narrative beneath. Wide-awakeness encourages researchers to be perceptive to these possible layers within participants. It also calls for a researcher to tend to these layers within themselves and understand how they might interface with participants.

In Foste's (2019) examination of White students evaluating their racial climate, there were multiple narratives present. Many of the White students articulated their campus racial climate in vaguely positive terms. This dominant narrative suggested the campus was "all about diversity and inclusion" efforts. In this regard, diversity and inclusion was a cultural code White students adopted. Despite personally witnessing acts of bias against students of color, these White students embraced a racial harmonious narrative.

In this study, Foste (2019) used narrative inquiry to reveal the individual stories beneath the dominant narrative of racial harmony. When asked about recent racial protests on campus, the White students expressed indifference or even annoyance about how these events were disruptive to class. These students were unable to recognize how the protests aligned with their harmonious perception of campus. In critical analysis of these underlying narratives, Foste found these behaviors maintained a narrative of Whiteness on campus.

As illustrated by Foste's examination of layers of narratives, this methodology is well suited to explore the topic. There may be assumed narratives or cultural codes among White student leaders. A researcher must tend to possible underlying individual narratives obscured by

a prevailing story. These narratives are unknown unless explored through an ethical narratives inquiry and appropriate research methods.

Methods

The research method used in this study was caucusing. Often used by social justice educators, caucusing gathers participants to explore power, privilege, and oppression associated with an identity (Walls et al., 2010). Unlike other group interview methods, caucusing provides researchers the ability to tackle sensitive subjects and maintain focus on the topic. In this research setting, a caucus is not primarily intended to advance understanding of privilege to a certain level. Rather, the use of the caucus is a method to capture the stories when discussing White privilege. Through reviewing all possible group interview methods, caucusing emerges as a nascent, yet promising method to research racial privilege among White student leaders.

Group Interview Methods

Interviews conducted with groups are more than a sum of individual perspectives. Through dynamic interactions, group interviews yield a complex data unlike multiple individual interviews (Hennink, 2014). Group interviews create a common narrative rather than individual accounts. Consequently, they pair well with the paradigm of constructivism and the methodology of narrative inquiry.

Among the different type of group interviews, focus groups are the most common method. In the social sciences alone, there were nearly 6,000 studies with focus groups conducted in the early 2000s (Wilkinson, 2011). Yet, focus groups are not the only group interview method available to researchers. Emergent group interview methods, such as World Café or caucusing, offer new ways to explore certain inquiries (Morgan, 2017). Understanding

the format and frequency of each group can help determine the suitability for studies on race and leadership.

Focus Groups

Ideal for social sciences, focus groups emerged as a fashionable trend in the 1920s (Hennink, 2014). The group is composed of about six to eight individuals, although some formats approach 10 participants (Hennink, 2014). The purpose of a focus group is to explore a topic through seemingly natural conversation among participants. The facilitator is a non-directive force, who encourages interaction between participants (Hennink, 2014). Participants in focus groups come from various backgrounds, but have enough common ground to discuss a selected topic (Morgan, 2017). Comfort is important for participants to feel like they can openly express their views on a topic (Hennink, 2014).

Focus groups reduce or mitigate the influence of the facilitator (Liamputtong, 2011). Even specifically phrased questions might restrict or guide responses. While focus groups are extremely common in research, the principles of this method may present a significant limitation to exploring White privilege. Discussions around privilege often require challenge to reconsider a previously accepted narrative. In discussing privilege, conversation may become awkward or even silent. Natural conversation often strays from these sensitive matters of identity (Obear & martinez, 2013). In my study on White student leaders, the focus was maintained on race and White privilege which not in alignment with the non-directive principles of focus groups.

The frequency of focus groups are a limitation as well. Focus groups are often completed in one meeting, but sometimes can reoccur with participants (Hennink, 2014). Some scholars are rethinking the use of focus groups in research to address this limitation. For example, a *reconvened group* meets multiple times and may have different discussions. The membership of

these groups can remain consistent or might involve a new set of participants. For groups asking members to return, there may be attrition among who returns (Morgan, 2017). Challenges in membership associated with these reconvened groups are not ideal for this study. It would be preferable to hold multiple meetings without any change in participant membership.

World Café

Another group interview method is the World Café model. Designed for groups of 25 or more, this model can helpful to obtain large amounts of data in short period of time (Morgan, 2017). It breaks up a large group into smaller groups of four or five people around a table, sometimes decorated to imitate a checked café table (Van Wyngaarden et al., 2018). Each table has a different topic or vignette to prompt discussion. In some formats, these groups might rotate to different stations to collect data on different questions (Brown & Isaacs, 2005). The method emphasizes casual encounters with strangers, akin to what might be found at a café (Jorgenson & Steier, 2013).

The World Café model is a potential tool to collect large amounts of data from a diverse group of people. However, it is not an ideal method for this particular study of White student leaders. First, the group size is labor intensive requiring several individuals to facilitate or capture data at the different café tables. Second, the emphasis on casual encounters with strangers may limit the depth of conversation needed to explore race. Third, the World Café model emphasizes diversity of participant backgrounds, which is not compatible with the design of this study.

Caucusing

There are prospects to using caucusing as a research method. As previously noted, caucusing assembles a group around singular social identity (Obear & martinez, 2013). In these

identity groups, the discussion is centered on the particular privilege associated with the chosen social identity. Examples of social identities might include sexual orientation, gender, race, religion, or socioeconomic status (Davis et al., 2018; Walls et al., 2010). These identity groups are homogenous, only composed by those who share the identity, allowing for honest and intimate conversation on the chosen identity (Obear & martinez, 2013). In this environment, a group can explore sensitive topics before interacting with a larger context.

Giles and Rivers' (2009) used caucusing as method to teach about the sensitive topic of colonization in New Zealand. They assumed students experienced the topic very differently based on their ethnic and racial identity. In particular, those who did not have an indigenous identity entered class discussions with very little knowledge about colonization. This lack of knowledge has the potential to be problematic. Their study sought to use caucusing as a method to avoid relying on the lived experiences of individuals from a historically oppressed identity to educate privileged individuals.

To meet the learning outcomes of the class, Giles and Rivers divided the class based on indigenous and non-indigenous identities. Seven individuals who identified as Maaori formed one caucus and 14 who identified as Non-Maaori formed another. Obear and martinez (2013) explain these homogenous caucuses organized by race afford different types of conversations to take place. The caucuses for people of color offer refuge from resistance or defensiveness expressed by White individuals. In these spaces, there may be rare opportunities to explore dynamics of racism, dismantle internalized racial stereotypes, and discuss healing.

In the study by Giles and Rivers (2009), there was an initial mix of discomfort and surprise with the concept of separating based on identity. As the instruction progressed, students from both groups expressed gratitude for the division. It enabled students to learn in an

environment where they could ask questions without concerns from others. Maaori members felt like they did not need to represent Maaori history and tradition to a mixed group. Non-Maaori students felt like they could ask questions without fear of offending someone.

Obear and martinez (2013) assert these feelings of participants are also common within White racial caucuses in the United States. Individuals in these groups can be reluctant to discuss race, perhaps fearing it creates racial division or assuming there is nothing to learn if a person of color is present. However, Obear and martinez (2013) claim there are several benefits of having White individuals gather to discuss race. White caucuses provide opportunities for White individuals to transition away from feelings of shame, guilt, or defensiveness about White privilege. In these spaces, participants may be able to convert their feelings into a commitment towards changing themselves or their environment. White caucus participants might also realize they can learn from each other when taking action to dismantle racism. Most importantly, it does not place people of color in educator roles; White individuals may develop a sense of responsibility for educating themselves.

Caucusing also has a distinct advantage of not adhering to the non-directive principle of focus groups. In facilitation of caucuses, Obear and martinez (2013) suggest having individuals who are skilled at leading discussion and challenging notions of White privilege. They also imply, when discussing White privilege, it is helpful to have facilitators who identify as White. A facilitator can have a significant impact by acknowledging the times when they identified their own racist attitudes. Through sharing their own personal struggles, these disclosures by a researcher can encourage authentic conversation around race.

A facilitator's presence in a caucus can invite participants to be more vulnerable in dialogue. Walls et al. (2010) indicate it is helpful to have facilitators who are knowledgeable, but

not a definitive experts. Facilitators who demonstrate they are still learning may decrease the power dynamic inherently originating from a facilitator role. This may also increase authentic conversation among participants. Walls et al. (2010) also stress the importance of having multiple facilitators in caucusing work.

The presence of an additional cofacilitator, who shares my privileged identity of being White, expanded the possibilities for caucusing. For example, my cofacilitator in this study shared personal experiences that are unlike my own. Additionally, having two facilitators in the room provided a practical utility during difficult conversations. If a participant were to become upset and leave the room, the cofacilitator could attend to this person's emotional distress. This was not need in this study of White student leaders, but a cofacilitator affords a researcher the opportunity to focus on the caucusing.

In this study, I enlisted a cofacilitator who was familiar with social justice workshop facilitation. This person worked in a similar professional capacity as my own, but did not work at the college campus where the research was conducted. This third-party perspective was helpful for students' comfort, but also provided me additional insight into the study. I briefed this person on the research topic, introduced them to participants during recruitment efforts, and reintroduced them before the caucuses. While they were there to assist with discussion and group management, I served as the researcher directing the conversation. More information about this specific cofacilitator is provided in later sections.

The involvement of facilitators in a caucus is distinctly different from a focus group. By suggesting a researcher should not influence an outcome of discussion, the non-directive principles of a focus group are arguably vestiges of a post-positivist or interpretivist paradigm. This is in stark contrast with a constructivist paradigm, where a researcher also serves as a

participant (Lincoln et al., 2017). The philosophical beliefs informing a group interview method suggest caucusing is a more appropriate fit for the paradigm of constructivism than focus groups.

Caucus Design

The purpose of caucusing with White student leaders was to construct a narrative about processing privilege. To align with this purpose, and avoid limitations from previous studies, the caucus for this study needed to meet multiple times. The members of this caucus came together three times in one semester. Although each caucus was scheduled for one hour, we could have easily discussed the topics for several hours. Each meeting was video recorded to collect data.

Walls et al. (2010) emphasize the importance of reflection during identity caucusing. By providing time between each meeting, it afforded space for participants to reflect. It also offered opportunities for student leaders to apply concepts from the caucus in their cocurricular experiences. The design of this caucus was intended to mirror the three research questions of the study:

Q1 What narratives do White student leaders tell about their leadership identity?

Q2 What narratives do White student leaders tell regarding their racial identity?

Q3 How do White student leaders make meaning of White privilege through a leadership framework?

The sequential nature of these questions and caucus meetings were structured to provide scaffolding for each subsequent meeting. Each caucus meeting was prompted by activities followed by reflective questions to explore leadership identity and White privilege. The content for these activities was adapted from established resources such as *Leadership for a Better World* (Komives & Wagner, 2017), *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice* (Bell et al., 2016), and *White Awareness* (Katz, 2003). Content from *Leadership for a Better World* was sourced from

the chapter by about consciousness-of-self. *White Awareness* (Katz, 2003) features nearly more than 48 activities and one was adapted to prompt conversation on race.

After the completion of each activity, semi-structured reflection questions were posed to the group. These semi-structured, open-ended questions led participants to make meaning of the activity and process their narratives. While the stimuli of the activities produced immediate insights, the reflection questions fostered an environment for participants to cocreate a narrative. For example, after completing the personal inventory regarding leadership, participants will be asked:

1A What words did you select to describe the messages you have received regarding leadership development.

1B Why did you select these words?

1C Tell me a story about one of these words?

1D Who is someone who encouraged you to become a leader?

1E What is your overall impression about leadership development

It is important to have a plan, also known as a curriculum, when facilitating dialogue on racial identity (Bell et al., 2016). However, Walls et al. (2010) caution this curriculum may need to be abandoned for richer conversation. Should conversation begin to unfurl insights about White privilege and leadership, the facilitators should be open to sustaining a conversation. This would be preferable than strict adherence to a curriculum.

The curriculum for these caucuses was designed to match each research question with a caucus meeting. The first meeting was designed to explore consciousness-of-self and leadership. The second meeting began to unpack White privilege. Yet, participant dialogue revealed these meetings were not enough to explore a particular concept. The third caucus was less structured to maintain a space for expanded conversation. In this third meeting, participants began to draw the

connections between leadership and White privilege. Time between caucus meetings allowed participants, and a researcher, the opportunity to prepare for the final conversation.

Giles and Rivers' (2009) research on caucusing can inform the curriculum. These researchers reported the emotions students were experiencing during different moments of caucusing. These insights can help a researcher anticipate emotional needs and reactions from participants. Initially, the concept of an identity caucus might challenge participants. As a result, the first caucus seeks to mitigate the initial discomfort by focusing on leadership. Discussing leadership first, which is less sensitive than race, allowed relationships to develop among participants in this study.

Relationship building is important when exploring social justice topics (Bell et al., 2016). We used a quick activities to get to know each other prior to officially beginning the caucus. Relationship building is not only an important element to social justice work, but is ethically important to narrative inquiry (Clandinin et al., 2018). The nature of interactions and the environment should be considerations when designing a caucus. For example, a classroom with fluorescent lights might not be the most appropriate for caucusing. In this study, we met in a small upscale meeting room in the student union building that offered dimmable lighting and cloth-covered chairs. Food was also offered during each meeting to provide some comfort when holding the difficult conversations.

Sustaining conversation on a difficult topic like race might generate feelings of discomfort among participants (Obear & martinez, 2013). Walls et al. (2010) suggests caucusing around identity may be developmentally inappropriate for exploring privilege with certain audiences and recommends caucusing at the graduate level. However, other scholars have noted the effectiveness of identity work with all audiences in higher education, including

undergraduate students (Davis et al., 2018). Regardless of the target audience, it is important to acknowledge there maybe discomfort when reexamining racial beliefs in a caucus and reaffirm participation is completely voluntary. These acknowledgments were made during each caucusing meeting.

Data Collection and Analysis

This section summarizes the strategies of data collection and analysis. It discusses how participants were selected by reviewing recruitment strategies, criteria for selection, and incentives for participation. Data collection is described by outlining steps to collect information during and in-between caucusing. Analysis of data is also explained through the integration of two coding processes appropriate for narrative inquiry. Detailing these processes provides greater information for evaluating the quality of the study.

Participant Selection

The strategy used to select participants involved a non-probable technique of *purposive* and *snowball sampling*. In purposive sampling, participants are chosen because of their desired characteristics (Dixon et al., 2019). The outreach for finding these individuals required networking with cocurricular student affairs professionals to identify opportunities to recruit participants. Through connections with student affairs professionals, I asked to attend student leader gatherings such as student government meetings, volunteer organizations, Greek councils, and entertainment programming boards. A script was required for these visits to ensure all critical information was tactfully conveyed. I also asked participants to identify other participants who meet the selection criteria and encourage them to participate. This is reliance on referral is called snowball sampling. Unfortunately, no participants came from snowball sampling efforts.

Purposive sampling requires a criteria in order to select individuals to participate in the study. The following characteristics were used to find participants:

White Racial Identity

Participants needed to identify as White for this study. Due to the problematic nature of evaluating one's race, the student participants self-identified their own race. Obear and martinez (2013) propose participation of White identity caucuses based on two qualifiers: those who identify as White or those who experience White skin privilege. The latter addition acknowledges the complexity of participant selection based on race. An individual may ethnically or culturally identify as a person of color, but may have fair enough skin to still benefit from White privilege. This criteria was helpful because a participant in this study had a White mother and a Filipino father. The participant still identified as White due to her appearance and chose to engage in the research.

Student Leader Identity

Participants also needed to identify as a student leader based on past, current, or upcoming experiences. This identity consists of two components. The first required active enrollment at the institution of study. Second, the student was required to be involved with cocurricular activities providing leadership opportunities. These roles did not need to be formal positions within student government – they could consist of volunteer roles, employment, or other involvement experiences. Since there was not an emphasis on controlling confounding variables in this form of sampling, it was helpful to have several different types of student leaders represented from different functional areas.

This diverse sampling of student leadership areas provided a richness from different perspectives, but also was meaningful for student leaders. Through networking with each other,

they learned about different forms of leadership and how racial identity matters in these contexts. Additionally, conversations were honest without the pressure from peers in their current involvement space. The diversity of student leadership roles fostered greater applications and candor when exploring race and leadership.

Traditional Age

Participants were sought within the range of traditionally-aged college students. Generally, this age range is from 18-22 years old (Johnston, et al., 2015). This range was selected because previous studies exclusively focus on this age demographic. Additionally, this age is helpful in terms of exposure to concepts relating to leadership and diversity. For example, if a student was significantly older and already had exposure through other organizations, they may experience the curriculum differently. Different generations also perceive diversity issues differently (Woods, 2019).

Other Criteria

This study was not concerned with other potential criteria for selecting participants. Categories such as gender or socioeconomic status might have potential to reveal a greater nuance in findings, but would significantly narrow the scope of the study. The narrowing of the scope is unnecessary as caucusing seeks to explore a single identity and refocuses when other identities are brought up. Additional criteria would have made it harder to find participants who were willing to explore these topics.

Site Selection

As indicated in the analysis of literature, exploring racial constructs with White students may differ based on the location. The site for data collection was a single four-year public institution within the rocky mountain region of the United States. The rocky mountain region

was selected because racial constructs may not exist solely within a Black and White binary. In previous studies conducted in the Northeast United states, race was exclusively viewed on a Black/White and urban/rural binary. During the time of the study, this part of rocky mountain region was predominantly White, but featured racial diversity in rural and urban settings. There was a notable Latinx presence in rural agricultural communities and large Native American communities nearby. Racial tensions of the area reflected the presence of these two identity groups.

For the purpose of this study, this institution is labeled Frontier State University or simply referenced as Frontier. The geographical location of Frontier was primarily rural with some urban centers within a few hours drive. Most students who attended this institution were drawn from in-state rural areas or small towns. Out-of-state students were usually from nearby states within the rocky mountain region, rather than from across the country. While culture likely differed from state to state in this region, it is largely uniform. Socio-politically, the region contained a mix of ideologies, but leaned conservative on social issues. Most of the rural areas voted for a republican candidate in the 2016 presidential election, while many of the larger population centers voted for a democratic candidate. This institution is located in a college town which was considered to be relatively liberal leaning in comparison to the outlying rural areas.

Frontier was selected because it is considered a predominately White institution (PWI) which would maximize participant recruitment. At the time of the study, overall enrollment was less than 15,000 students and the institution was mostly White with a small Latinx population. White students composed over 70% of the student population. Since there are several PWIs that resemble this profile in the region, this context afforded relative anonymity to student leaders who might be prominent figures on campus. Previous studies on White identity have been

situated in PWI to understand the phenomenon of Whiteness (Cabrera, 2018; Hardiman & Keehn, 2012; Smith, 2014). Frontier was well-suited for additional exploration among White student leaders.

Data Collection

Gathering of data was conducted during and in-between the three caucus meetings with White student leaders. The primary technique for collecting data was video recording the caucus gatherings. Before recording, participants were asked to complete the informed consent and chose participant pseudonyms. The group also got to know each other through an introduction providing a student's class standing, major, and leadership role on campus. The video recordings were digitally collected and stored, in compliance with institutional review board (IRB) regulations. A receipt of the IRB approval can be found in Appendix B. Transcripts were created for the purpose of coding and analysis.

The caucuses were scheduled around student's availability for meetings. Due to their busy schedules, we met on Tuesday evenings at seven. The meetings were held in a public meeting room on campus equipped with video conferencing abilities. The built-in camera of the room helped decrease unease about being video recorded. Additionally, the public meeting room provided familiarity for the participants. The timing between caucuses was designed to be at least one week, but not exceed three weeks. I sought at least one week to afford time for initial analysis and ensure member checking could occur at the following meeting. The students requested to meet consistently for three consecutive weeks, creating a tight turnaround for my member checking efforts.

All participants completed the study were asked to complete a paper survey in the final minutes of the third caucus. The survey was designed to collect additional demographic

information about participants such as age, gender identity, social economic status, religious or spiritual beliefs, and political orientations. This information was sought at the end of the study to avoid distraction from the primary social identity discussed in the caucus – the white racial identity. In the event of a student withdrawing before the conclusion of the study, I was prepared to send a short electronic survey to obtain the same information. This survey had one additional question to ascertain why they chose to leave the caucus. All participants completed the study and the electronic form was not needed.

Analytical memo writing was conducted between the caucuses. Saldaña (2016) considers analytic memos comparable to researcher journal entries. These memos are similar to internal conversations as a researcher is critically thinking about the progression of the project. Analytic memos capture thoughts about positionality, coding, themes, links to theory, problems with the study, and ideas for final reports (Saldaña, 2016). These thought catalogs are especially important for studies with one researcher such as a dissertation. Without a research team, there are fewer opportunities to process the ongoing research among colleagues. Analytic memos serve as an internal method of processing and provide more information for analysis. During the three weeks of the study, I wrote a total of 24 analytic memos.

Data Analysis

A hybrid of two established frameworks were used for data analysis: narrative analysis with longitudinal coding. Narrative analysis is congruent with the use of narrative inquiry as a methodology. The longitudinal coding is most appropriate to capture potential change as White students progressed through the study. The use of both approaches were able to shed insight into the process of a changing narrative.

Narrative analysis is primarily concerned with organizing and making meaning of stories on multiple levels (Doucet, 2019). With this particular study among White student leaders, there was more than just one narrative. Consequently, the analysis needed to account for the multiplicity of narratives and the construction of a common narrative. *Interactive narrative analysis* is the most appropriate approach to capture the richness of caucusing. This analysis technique, sometimes referred to as *in-talk interaction*, and refers to the construction of a narrative by multiple people. Goodwin (2015) describes this process as transformative to the group narrative and individuals who participate in creating a narrative; the interaction simultaneous changes both.

Narratives are analyzed in multiple perspectives such as ontological; social, public, and cultural; and conceptual layers (Doucet, 2019). Ontological layers reveal the plot of narratives and provide insight about those telling the stories. Social, public, and cultural analysis examine how these stories exist in a larger context. Conceptual analysis is reflective of the researcher's role in constructing stories from research. Foste's (2019) study regarding narratives of White student's purporting racial harmony is an excellent example of conceptual analysis. It illustrates how a researcher examined existing stories about racial climate and applied social justice framework to construct a campus narrative.

A primary way to conduct narrative analysis is through the *listening guide* (Doucet, 2019; Gilligan, 2015). Originally introduced in 1985, the listening guide is a tool to systematically listen for patterns in a narrative. Within this tool, there are three steps mirroring the aforementioned layers of narratives. First, a researcher listens for the plot and characters. Then, a researcher seeks how the individual relates to the environment. Finally, a researcher would link this to greater concepts. Despite decades of use, the listening guide remains relevant for narrative

inquiry regarding social identity. Chmielewski (2017) used the listening guide to uncover how women of color struggle with objectification.

This study among White student leaders used the listening guide to determine their current beliefs regarding race and leadership. Data was coded using longitudinal coding of narrative concepts, rather than narrative coding. While narrative coding is primarily characterized by literary elements, the use of longitudinal coding is intended to capture the temporal nature of interactions. Saldaña (2016) suggests longitudinal type of coding is most appropriate for studies that explore identity, change, and development. Comparisons between each caucus provided insight on development of individuals and the overall group. For this study, narrative analysis occurred after each caucus, while longitudinal coding occurred after all data collection.

Incentives for Participation

Benefits and incentive for participation were framed around professional development for student leaders. Not only did White student leaders have the opportunity to learn about leadership and race, but they had the added benefits of networking with other student leaders. Additionally, all participants were provided a free copy of *Leadership for a Better World* (Komives & Wagner, 2017) during their first caucus meeting. This text served as a reference for conversations, but also could be applied in additional ways after the caucus. Financial support was provided by a research office at Frontier to purchase meals for participants, but this incentive did not appear to shape the outcomes of the study. Upon full completion of all three meetings, each participant was provided a certificate of completion for their engagement and learning.

Participant Attrition

Seven students at Frontier State University agreed to participate in the study after a two-week recruitment process in February of 2020. There was heavy communication leading up to the first meeting. Each participant received no less than three correspondences via text and email. The purpose of the communication was two-fold: scheduling a time that worked for all student leaders and remind participants of the upcoming session. These correspondences were kept in a separate email client folder and migrated to a secure location after recruitment was completed.

Among the seven who agreed to participate, only four students showed up for the first caucus. I had anticipated attrition due to the sensitive nature of the topic and purposely recruited beyond my capacity for the caucus. However, I was surprised when the attrition happened at the first meeting. One student gave me advance notice within an hour of the first caucus, but I did not hear anything from the remaining two individuals. Despite my recruitment efforts in organizations open to all class-standings, there were no first-year students who participated.

All of the no-shows were presumptively male identified – an assumption derived from their name and physical appearance. This initial attrition might be a result of specific circumstances belonging to each individual, but the pattern is too significant to ignore. Why would so many male individuals fail to attend the first meeting? It prompted me to wonder if White women at Frontier were more likely to engage in racial dialogue. Additional analysis of this occurrence will be discussed further in Chapter V.

Quality in Research

There are a number of different approaches to assuring quality in qualitative research. For the purpose of this study, concepts from Lincoln et al. (2017) were used to determine quality. These scholars define quality in terms of authenticity and trustworthiness. It is important to

demonstrate authenticity in narrative inquiry because a qualitative researcher is trying to tell the story of participants in the most accurate and ethical manner (Clandinin et al., 2018). Trustworthiness is assuring others methods and findings are worthy of attention (Nowell et al., 2017). Efforts to establish authenticity and trustworthiness are outlined and accompanied by applications for researching White student leaders.

Trustworthiness Criteria

Trustworthiness is traditionally categorized into four concepts: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. *Credibility* is defined by a researcher's ability to recognize an experience and properly represent it (Nowell et al., 2017). In this study with White students, it was achieved by adequately reporting multiple realities constructed by participants. Ensuring multiple realities were reported was accomplished through a strategy of member checking; a process of presenting transcript, analysis, and summary back to participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Member checking is critical to narrative inquiry because there is such a heavy use of participant's comments to construct the themes. Through member checking, participants can nearly, or completely, become co-researchers in the study.

Transferability is the potential for generalization of the inquiry (Nowell et al., 2017). Admittedly, this concept contains origins or overtones of a post-positivist's reliability rigor – the possibility research findings reach a similar outcome when replicating an experiment (Yilmaz, 2013). However, qualitative studies are not aiming for generalizability. Instead, transferability seeks to provide a rich and thick description to convey the context of the study. A strong context can help readers understand why the research design is appropriate and applicable to the inquiry. These contexts can be compared to determine if findings are transferable and how they may apply (Nowell et al., 2017).

In this study among White student leaders, transferability was accomplished by providing a thick description of each participant and their backgrounds. Chapter IV begins with a literary introduction of these characters followed by descriptions of their identities. Utilizing storytelling techniques from narrative inquiry, the small details about participant's experiences supplement findings. There was also a heavy reliance on participant's quotes. In narrative inquiry, use of participants own words are core to the representation of the data (Clandinin, 2006).

Dependability follows transferability because it helps readers understand the methods used. Full operational and design details help readers follow the steps taken in the inquiry. One method to guarantee dependability is audit trails, the tracing of steps taken during the research (Nowell et al., 2017). The aforementioned use of analytic memos serve as an audit trail, chronicling my deliberations and decisions about the ongoing research (Saldaña, 2016).

Confirmability was established by demonstrating how findings are derived from data. This is accomplished through reflexivity, or the process of reflecting critically on being researcher. When facilitating conversations about Whiteness and leadership, a researcher would need to make efforts to reflect on their own identity and their interactions in the group. Analytic memos would assist with reflection. Some researchers suggest including markers on these memos to indicate decisions regarding theoretical, methodological, and analytical choices (Nowell et al., 2017). Other scholars suggest against categorizing memos as they may restrict thinking holistically about the research (Saldaña, 2016). For the purpose of this study, my memos included a date, title, and evocative description. They were short and only addressed one or two thoughts, questions, or concepts.

Authenticity Criteria

Critical to narrative inquiry, an emphasis on authenticity establishes and maintains ethical integrity of the research (Clandinin et al., 2018). Lincoln et al. (2017) identified useful criteria for determining authenticity by two groups: ontological and education authenticity, and catalytic and tactical authenticity. Although these concepts are hallmarks of good constructivist research, Lincoln et al. (2017) include a final component of fairness to be considered. Each concept will be reviewed with relevant applications to this study.

Ontological and educative authenticity requires a raised awareness when conducting research (Lincoln et al., 2017). As previously noted, narrative inquiry refers to a similar concept of as wide-awakeness; a deeper understanding of layers of self and others. Ontological authenticity refers to sharing knowledge to inform participant's lives. Within this study, White student leaders learned more about themselves through the consciousness-of-self model. The educative authenticity component pertains to how participants might learn from each other's lived experiences. Through the caucus method, participants encountered the lived experiences of others, possibly changing their view of the world.

Catalytic and tactical authenticities respectively involve the ability to identify problems and prompt action (Lincoln et al., 2017). These forms of authenticity are most relevant to the study among White student leaders. Caucusing allowed participants to identify their own concerns with White privilege and existing leadership models. While caucusing prompted them to think about the topics, these authenticities encourage participants to generate a capacity for positive social change (Lincoln et al., 2017).

Fairness is the final consideration for authenticity and refers to balance among all perspectives from the study (Lincoln et al., 2017). This was important to maintain in a study on

White student leaders. Not all of the participants held the same views on race and leadership. Fairness was accomplished by including all perspectives, especially when there was not consensus. Fairness contributed to the richness of the study when examining concepts of privilege and leadership.

Limitations and Delimitations

The methodology of this study provides substantial rigor required for qualitative research. While robust trustworthiness and authenticity are demonstrated, one should note this methodology contains inherent limitations. In particular, qualitative studies should not be generalized to a broader population. This study's purpose is designed to shed insight on how some White student leaders make meaning of their racial privilege. The subsequent chapters present data in a careful manner to avoid a generalization of findings to all White students. Recommendations found in Chapter V are specifically crafted with these considerations; written in a manner which allows readers to apply this knowledge in their own particular context.

The recommendations for future research in Chapter V also highlight the delimitations of this research. Relevant topics emerged from my three research questions, but were not central to the purpose of the study. Since these topics strayed from the original inquiry, I made conscious decisions not to pursue them while collecting or analyzing data. These decisions effectively limited the scope of the study and represent delimitations. To ensure these potentially fruitful inquiries were not lost, I documented them in analytic memos and provided them as recommendations for future research.

Conclusions of Methodology

This chapter provides a clear and unambiguous research design to understand how White student leaders process racial and leadership constructs. Use of a constructivist paradigm and

narrative inquiry are an appropriately paired epistemology and methodology for researching White student leaders. Additionally, both approaches have been previously employed to explore Whiteness among college students. The demonstrated abilities of constructivism and narrative inquiry strengthen this research design.

Caucusing, as a new research method, is an exciting prospect for studying race among students. This method has demonstrated applications in classroom instruction and social justice work. Distinct from other group research methods, caucusing offers a new ways to explore race. Not only does this method have the ability to expand our scholarship on race and leadership, it represents an opportunity to expand the methodological approaches within qualitative research.

The chapter concludes with a quality assurance argument. Robust details outline specifics for participant recruitment; data collection and handling; and data analysis and coding strategies. This study utilized a combination of narrative analysis and longitudinal coding to capture how White student leader's narratives changed. Concrete applications of trustworthiness and authenticity ensure an ethical and sound approach to the research. The methodology, methods, data analysis, and research quality sections of this chapter formed the blueprints for this research study of White student leaders.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The findings of this study must begin with the participants. As the primary characters of a narrative study, the participants are central and require an in-depth introduction. These introductions will begin with my first impressions of these people, followed by a depiction of each person's background. The chapter will advance to share the collective narratives these individuals tell about race and leadership. The stories from caucusing are woven together and thematically presented to address each research question. The purpose of this chapter is to establish the personal and group narratives discussed in the subsequent chapter.

First Impressions

I fully expected something to go wrong with the first caucus. It was a frigid February evening and already dark when I began setting up in the Frontier Student Union. I organized the space two hours early - laboring over the arrangement of tables, camera, and microphone. My job taught me to anticipate problems and fret the small details. Yet, I knew the actual challenge was getting White students engaged in difficult conversations about racial privilege. Despite my thoughtful recruitment and diligent follow-up, I found myself nervously checking my email. Less than an hour before the meeting, my fears were validated. "I had something come up and I am unable to make it to the meeting tonight" one student wrote. Full-blown panic creeped into my mind.

Meanwhile, my co-facilitator had arrived early for the meeting. As a professional from another campus, Nick wanted to walk around to see Frontier. I thought, “Sorry friend. It will need to happen some other time.” Managing the mini crisis in my head, I enlisted him to pick up the pizza with me. It was a short drive through the dimly lit rural town to the pizza place, but I utilized every second to revisit the caucus curriculum with Nick. Reviewing the details and relaying my concerns to Nick also helped me assuage my nervousness about attendance. I only needed four participants, but things were already trending downward. Students were dropping from the study before the hard conversations started.

My concerns eased when we arrived at the meeting room with pizza. Riley was sitting outside, a generous 15 minutes early. Lounging on the couches outside the room, she was immersed in her phone. I knew this person was Riley without introduction. She wore long blond hair in a ponytail similar to the picture in her email messages. As a student, she emulated a professional presence in correspondences including a signature line listing her leadership titles. Riley appeared to be the consummate student leader.

While waiting for our meeting on the couch, she was tracking news regarding the democratic presidential primary. Our meeting was scheduled on Tuesday night during primaries in faraway states. The results from various contests were streaming on news outlets and she was eagerly following them. She seemed concerned about how Bernie Sanders was faring against Joe Biden. I would later learn she identifies as a Democrat who leans towards the socialist side of the spectrum. After unlocking the pre-set meeting room, I invited Riley to join us and grab some pizza.

When Quinn entered the room, my anxiety eased even more. I now had two participants – halfway there! Quinn greeted me with a warm smile as we introduced ourselves. She sported a

long sleeve shirt with her sorority letters partially covered by her long black hair. Sorority meetings often happened on Tuesdays at Frontier, so it was likely she had another engagement that evening. She grabbed a slice of pizza and placed her neat pencil bag on the table. Waiting for the meeting to start, she seemed relaxed and confident.

Apollo arrived shortly before the start of the meeting and exuded a counterculture vibe. His appearance contrasted with the Carhartt Cowboy style common at Frontier. His light brown hair was near shoulder length and tucked behind his pierced ears. A smattering of thin facial hair was crowned by a nose piercing. His woolen beanie and pullover sweatshirt looked weathered from several winters at Frontier. I introduced myself and encouraged him to grub on some pizza. Although there was a pizza buffet, meeting all disclosed dietary needs, he pulled an orange from his bag and peeled it.

Apollo, Nick, Quinn, Riley, and I entertained ourselves with idle conversation while we waited for the three missing participants. Fifteen minutes passed and it felt like eternity. I felt uneasy stalling the group while incessantly checking my email. Would the absent students let me know they would not be coming? I just needed one more person to reach my threshold of four students. My hope was beginning to fade when Lauren walked in the door. Apparently, she got lost when trying to find the meeting room.

Lauren walked in wearing squared-toed cowboy boots, jeans, and a black hoodie. Her light brown hair, parted to the side, easily took the prize for the longest hair in the group. With a small amount of perspiration on her forehead, she was profusely apologetic for being late. I could sense she was a bit nervous about entering the space, so I turned on my charm and ushered her into a seat. Perhaps she thought we had already started? Maybe she was having second thoughts about attending? Regardless, I was thankful all four students decided to attend.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

	Apollo	Lauren	Quinn	Riley
Academic Major	Statistics	Engineering	Education	Political Science
Class Standing	Junior	Sophomore	Junior	Senior
Socio-Economic Status	Middle	Middle	Middle	Upper Middle
Gender Identity	Male/Queer	Female	Female	Female
Sexual Orientation	Queer/Gay	Heterosexual	Heterosexual	Queer
Racial Identity	White	White	White	White
Ethnic Identity	White	Filipino, German, American	European, Italian	White
Political Party Affiliation	Radical	Conservative / Republican	Democratic	Democratic leaning Socialist
Religious / Spiritual Beliefs	Atheist	Roman Catholic	Christian	Christian / Unsure
High School	In-State	Out-of-State	Out-of-State	Out-of-State
First Gen. Student	No	No	No	Did not disclose

Student Profiles

The four students in the study were recruited from a variety of different student leadership organizations. They had never participated in a research study and struggled to select pseudonyms to fit their personality. Eventually, they landed with Apollo, Lauren, Quinn, and Riley. During caucusing, they attempted to use these names when referring to themselves and others, but frequently messed up the names. We sometimes teased each other because it should have been easy; name placards were on the table. Surprisingly, most of the participants did not know each other despite heavy involvement in leadership circles. Lauren and Quinn were active in Sororities, but had never had the opportunity to meet.

Riley and Apollo were the exception; these two students knew each other from previous involvement as orientation leaders. Their existing relationship shaped their engagement during the caucuses. For example, Riley and Apollo referenced stories about the Frontier Orientation Office. Their connection was also evident in non-verbal communication. They would often nod in agreement when the other person was sharing thoughts. When Quinn or Lauren would share their stories, Apollo shot a glance at Riley to gauge her reaction during the dialogue.

Three of the four participants were out-of-state students. Although Lauren and Quinn came from the same neighboring state, they were from divergent experiences. Quinn came from a metro area while Lauren attended high school in a rural area outside the metro area. Riley traveled the furthest to attend Frontier - her home was within a sprawling urban area along the West Coast. Only Apollo grew up within the rural state. A comparative glance is exhibited in Table 1 along with other social identities.

The demographics of this research group did not reflect the overall student body of Frontier. Over half of the student population were from the state and usually took pride in their

rural upbringing. For many Frontier students, this was the biggest place they had ever lived. For example, many students' hometown did not have stoplights. They viewed the Frontier as a city when my research cohort likely perceived it as a tiny college town.

The four students shared some social identities, such as being White and coming from a middle-class background. They all were traditionally-aged, with a range of 19-22. Beyond these identities, and their leadership at Frontier, they had little in common. There was a spectrum of political, religious, gender, and sexual identities represented. Some identities were self-disclosed during the caucuses and others were collected in the post-study demographic survey.

Apollo

Apollo grew up in the state, but did not express much fondness for it. Instead, Apollo brought commentary and critique about the sociopolitical environment. During caucusing, he disclosed his family had deep roots in nearby rural communities as founding members of local establishments. When asked about a particular town, he murmured, "Yes, all of that town is my family, unfortunately." While he attended high school within the state, it was located 300 miles away from Frontier. Interestingly, his portrayal of the environment did not differentiate between his hometown, the college town of Frontier, or overall state. It was all the same to Apollo.

Apollo's Leadership Identity

By the time Apollo had finished his junior year at Frontier, he already served in a variety of leadership roles. He demonstrated proclivity for social justice causes by serving as an executive member for the Inclusivity Network, Queer Coalition, and Students for Sensible Drug Policy. He also held paid leadership roles such as an Orientation Leader and the Elections Commissioner for student government at Frontier.

Apollo spoke about leadership using words such as community-based, determined, not-a-big deal, relational, and privileged. He elaborated on some of these choices by sharing about his family. For example, his immediate family did not encourage or recognize the value of leadership development. He explained "my leadership pursuits are not acknowledged… they're just not a big deal to my family." He attributed to the lack of encouragement to the complacency and privilege of his family. "It's just very laissez-faire, comfortable with the privileges they enjoy without ever recognizing why they enjoy those privileges or using them to benefit others… They've never had to stand up for something." Consequently, he used "not-a-big-deal" to describe the messaging he received about leadership development.

Apollo advanced his leadership identity by engaging in cocurricular opportunities at Frontier. "I picked up [leadership concepts] on my own being here in college." He referenced how certain student affairs professionals also encouraged him to grow. He expressed gratitude towards these professionals who encouraged him to explore the privilege of his racial identity. Through sharing about his family and these professionals, Apollo was quick to link leadership concepts with a social justice framework.

Apollo's Racial Identity

Apollo was aware of his racial identity and could articulate some implications of being White. During the second caucus, he used words such as dominant, natural, powerful, privileged, and trustworthy to describe messaging about the White identity. Natural and trustworthy were particularly insightful because he used them to articulate the racial climate of the entire state. Apollo lamented about his upbringing in the predominantly white state, "Growing up and knowing three black people, and always getting the same messages, that we're in such a strong

community... and having that community be majority White." Apollo had difficulty reconciling the messages about a strong rural community when it was racially homogenous.

White was clearly the status-quo for Apollo, but he did not feel this was an indicator of a healthy community. Apollo also expressed concern about what a white status-quo would mean for people of color in the community. He used the word "trustworthy" to describe how White individuals were seen as normal and accepted in White rural communities. He also expressed concern about how people of color were perceived in the same environment. He shared, "Black individuals, who under normal circumstances, shouldn't be considered untrustworthy just because the color of their skin and it's like 11 o'clock at night." In this statement, Apollo disagreed with the normalcy of Whiteness and hinted at how White people might be fearful of people of color.

Lauren

At the time of the study, Lauren was a sophomore and the youngest in the group. She attended Frontier as an out-of-state student, but easily passed as a local. While she had some distant relatives who resided nearby, her cowboy boots and stories were more convincing. In our meetings, she referenced several artifacts of rural roots such as horses, the rodeo team, and flannels.

Lauren talked a lot about the military as it held great significance for her. Her father was in the military and she followed his example. She plainly described it, "He's definitely a big influence in my life. He joined the army, I'm in the army. He has an engineering degree, that's what I'm going for." Reflective of this influence, some of her cocurricular experiences were derived from military preparation programs and she was involved in an engineering honor society. Many of her stories referenced her family, the military, and corresponding philosophies.

Lauren's Leadership Identity

Although Lauren was only a sophomore, she held a variety of prominent leadership roles in her sorority. She expressed surprise at her own involvement by telling a story about how she reluctantly joined one. "Sororities have never been on my radar and I had a bad stigma about it," she explained. After a recruitment process where she thought people were "fussing around", she was surprised when these organizations took interest in her. Once she joined her sorority, she was further astonished because her chapter asked her to assume leadership roles. "Elections came up and I just kept getting nominated for different positions. Why? I just got here." Lauren was concerned she was not qualified or knowledgeable enough for these roles.

Lauren's thoughts about leadership sparked a conversation that lasted multiple caucuses. During the first meeting, she described leadership as beneficial, humble, important, knowledgeable, and supportive. She elaborated on these concepts by stating, "I really do think you have to follow before you lead… you gotta go through some stuff before you know how to take someone else through it." She believed leaders must be competent and earn their knowledge from experience. Lauren colloquially described this process of leadership development as "going through the sticks".

Towards the end of the first caucus Riley challenged Lauren's philosophy about earning leadership positions. The conversation remained cordial as Riley offered a counter perspective for Lauren to consider, "I have experiences with leadership development being a privileged space… if you are someone from a marginalized group, you might not have access to those experiences." Riley was suggesting leadership opportunities may not be available as a result of social identities. From Riley's perspective, earned leadership conflicted with notions of access and opportunity.

Lauren did not respond in the moment, likely because the comment was directed towards the entire group. However, it was evident from Lauren's body language she was experiencing a reaction. She brought her hands to her face for the first time, twiddling her fingers on her lips. This conversation represented the first time these white student leaders challenged each other in the caucus format. The challenge also altered Lauren's thinking about leadership evident by her comments in the next meeting.

When the group reconvened a week later for the second caucus, I asked if participants wanted to share anything about the last meeting. Lauren immediately began the conversation by acknowledging how Riley's comments gave her something to think about. She shared, "Your last point about earning it… that was stuck in my head the rest of the night… I didn't come up with anything, but it was just on my mind." Lauren's willingness to share her thoughts demonstrated the power of caucusing with White student leaders - she felt comfortable enough to acknowledge how another student's perspective may have prompted her to reconsider her own constructs.

Lauren's Racial Identity

Lauren self-identified as White, but had a Filipino father and a White mother. Lauren elaborated, "I'm Filipino. Obviously, I don't look it, but I think about it a lot. Not all my family is white, but clearly I am." Within her stories, Lauren recognized she was fair-skinned and seen as White. Even within her own family she was considered to be White, rather than Filipino or multiracial. "I've been in situations where it's all my Filipino family and they say something about White people… and then they look at me." The family dynamic of this story suggests her own family deemed her White based on her fair-skinned appearance.

The messaging Lauren received from family about being White made demographic-based processes difficult to navigate. In particular, Lauren shared her struggles when applying for

college admissions, scholarships, and special programs. Lauren told a short story about a staff member who came to her class to promote the McNairs Scholars program. As a federal TRIO program, the McNairs Scholars program is designed to motivate and support students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Quinn et al., 2019). Lauren was eager to learn more and participate, but unsure if she qualified because of the requirements. “If you were part of certain ethnic groups you qualify. I talked with them, and one of my friends in the class, and I was like, I dunno if I qualify.” This complicated racial existence was difficult for Lauren to reconcile and surfaced in several stories.

Admittedly, Lauren’s participation in the study prompted me to reconsider some of the activities as planned. For example, during the second caucus, the activity directed students to “describe the messages you received about your racial identity.” As Lauren may have reflected on her Filipino heritage or family dynamic, I felt compelled to be more directive with the activity. I modified the prompt to specify “…describe the messages you received about your White racial identity”. The more explicit directions did not augment the assignment for participants, but helped clarify to ensure the focus was on the White racial identity. To view the full activity, please see Appendix D.

During this activity, Lauren described the messages she received about her white identity as Arrogant, Christian, Conservative, Faith, Family, Happy, Powerful, Privileged, Rich, and Catholic. Lauren was especially frustrated how people associated the White identity with Christian faith, wealth, and certain political beliefs. She self-identified as Catholic, but seemed bothered people would assume she’s Christian based on her racial appearance. She explained, “Sometimes when I meet people, that’s what they think of me. It’s like ‘Oh, you must come from a good Christian family, blah blah blah.’”

Lauren's rebuke of White stereotypes was a sign of her wrestling with defensiveness. Her annoyance was clear, "Why would you just assume that? And I feel like it's assumption that's made a lot." She also shared a story of fellow White students who were supposedly confronted by their teacher after class. In this exchange, she suggested the teacher targeted her friends due to their White identity because they were "just in jeans, boots, and flannels. Nothing was said about guns or whatever." Supposedly, the teacher asked them not to push their conservative beliefs in class.

Understandably, it can be frustrating when assumptions are made by an outward appearance. When these assumptions are derived from race, it becomes especially frustrating or complicated. However, Lauren's narratives about White stereotypes did not acknowledge or consider how people of color might encounter similar stereotypes. Additionally, there was no consideration of how stereotypes about people of color are used to reinforce or justify White supremacy. Unfortunately, Lauren's story regarding her friends or annoyance of White stereotypes was not challenged by anyone in the group – including me and the co-facilitator. The story was met with silence. It was a missed opportunity to unpack a complicated racial issue and spur additional growth for Lauren.

Quinn

Quinn hails from the same state as Lauren, but her high school was located in a suburb of a large city. The state, and particularly the urban areas, experienced considerable growth in recent decades. Exponential growth was also accompanied by changes to racial demographics and political attitudes. As an elementary education major, Quinn seemed cognizant of the changing landscape and sought skills to educate an increasingly diverse populace. Her participation in the study was motivated by the desire to become a better leader.

Quinn's Leadership Identity

Quinn viewed leadership as an exciting opportunity to learn more about herself and others. She cited her father as being instrumental in creating this passion for leadership development, "My dad was always such a leader within his work and his community… the ideal leader." She shared how he advanced despite socioeconomic adversity, "He lived in a trailer park for a while and now he has his Ph.D. He has always demonstrated hard work pays off and pushed me to have leadership roles." Through her father's inspirational story, she clearly valued perseverance within leadership development.

In addition to serving as a role model, Quinn relied on her father's opinion and encouragement for leadership development during her undergraduate experience. She shared,

> Whenever I mentioned I'm thinking about running for a position, he would just always say "yeah, you should do it". So just kind of giving me that support. He would never say something like "Oh no, don't do that". He would always be the person to give me that little shove. Last summer I was thinking about going on a study abroad trip. I had never been out of the country by myself and he encouraged me to go.

Her father represented a role model who was supportive and encouraging. He was also trusted source for guidance, "Even today in my leadership roles, I still call him and ask for advice on things". By her Junior year, Quinn had held a variety of leadership positions in her sorority and the overall Panhellenic Council. She also served as an ambassador for the College of Education.

Reflective of her father's influence, Quinn used the words beneficial, determined, exciting, selective, and transformational to describe the messages she received about leadership development. Quinn's father positively shaped her motivation for leadership opportunities by serving as a role model who overcame socioeconomic hurdles. The narrative is admirable, but

also contains hints of a grand narrative pertaining to race. Specifically, the idea that anyone can improve their own socioeconomic status without external help. Often referred to as the "bootstraps" narrative, this common American lore purports anyone can succeed with only hard work and strong moral character (Goode & Keefer, 2016). This grand narrative will be further analyzed in the following chapter.

Quinn's Racial Identity

In contrast to Lauren's family, there was no messaging provided to Quinn about her White identity. Her family did not explicitly encourage or discourage exploring her racial identity. She explained, "I don't think it was one way or the others… it was kinda just up to me, I guess." Instead, her family emphasized their Italian ethnic identity. Her journey of exploring her racial identity was her own undertaking.

Through conversation with peers in the second caucus, Quinn realized there was a notable absence of racial messaging in her upbringing. While her family traced their Italian heritage, she thought it was odd there were no discussions about being White. Although she was born in the United States, she acknowledged, "I don't think of being from here." She expanded this examination to include her racial identity, "I don't think of my identity as a White American. I just think of my ties back to Europe. I just think that's so weird." The latter part of her statement was evaluative – a realization there was an absence of racial messaging.

Quinn's comments about the White racial identity aligned with previous literature indicating White students lack an awareness of their own racial identity. However, Quinn's unprompted acknowledgment about this absence was insightful. It represented a departure from being unaware of a racial identity and corresponding privilege. It also demonstrates the ability

for White peers to assist in learning about the White identity. Quinn's realization demonstrated how caucusing with peers can act as a catalyst for racial awareness.

Quinn seemed eager to explore the realities of her White racial identity. Her own articulation of this identity represented concepts about privilege she likely acquired during coursework. She used descriptors such as arrogant, comfortable, dominant, oppressive, and privileged to describe her White racial identity. Later, she added rich and trustworthy due to the comments from Apollo and Lauren. However, she expressed dissatisfaction regarding what she had learned about the White identity in class. When recalling content, she indicated she was "learning about other races and stuff, but not necessarily about the White racial identity." She signaled the curriculum was inadequate to help White people explore their identity.

Riley

As a senior in her final semester of study, Riley intended to enter a graduate program. Although the advanced degree was offered at Frontier, she chose to interview with programs across the country. Her willingness to attend an institution in another state paralleled her journey to Frontier. As a high school graduate, she traveled more than 1000 miles from a West Coast city to enroll at Frontier. She also made the transition from a small, private Christian high school to a mid-sized public university. Riley seemed eager to find new environments for learning.

Riley's Leadership Identity

Riley felt excluded from many leadership opportunities leading up to her college experience. Her story of exclusion began in middle school,

> I have not so great feelings about leadership development because I was left out. In middle school, I was trying to be part of this leadership board to help mentor sixth graders. And I was like super excited because sixth grade wasn't cool for me… I got into

> the meeting and I was so excited. I'd been preparing for it for weeks. And I got there and they were like "Oh Riley, you can't do that. You cry too much." But I think that shedding tears is good for mental health. That was my first experience of being like "Oh, you're not allowed in this space because we don't like how you process yourself." And it's still traumatic to me and still something I hear all the time.

In this story, Riley was motivated to help others because of her own difficulties adjusting to middle school. However, she was excluded because of her own emotional processing during her transition.

Riley used her experience in middle school to illustrate how leadership opportunities can be unavailable based on how you show up in the world. If a person does not conform to normative expectations of a group, they may never have the opportunity to lead. Riley remarked about how difficult it was to break out of these limitations, "like once you were coded, and your personality was coded… from preschool to 12th grade, you were done." Prior to entering college, leadership development was unavailable because of the social environment and Riley's differences.

This story of exclusion may account for Riley's desire to challenge Lauren's philosophy in the first caucus. Lauren perceived leadership roles as something you must earn, while Riley felt normative expectations limited opportunity for leadership development. For Riley, it may be hard to earn a leadership role if someone held different social identities. Her experiences with exclusion generated empathy within her own leadership identity. In the third caucus, she referenced several limitations that impacted her own leadership development such as gender and ability status. She also acknowledged how being White made leadership development more accessible for her.

Riley credited co-curricular experiences in college for offering her an opportunity to develop leadership skills. In particular, a program designed for first-year students was transformative for her views on leadership. She reflected, “When I started my leadership journey, I had only seen one type of leader.” She articulated this type of leader as being extroverted and coming from privileged identities. After her involvement in this first-year program, she signaled, “it blew my mind because I was seeing all these other people that… were really effective leaders, but they had exact opposite experiences”.

After participating in this formative first-year leadership program, she realized leadership is not a homogenous experience requiring conformity. “Leadership is not just one type of leader. It’s not this extroverted person. It’s working with everyone.” College provided Riley an opportunity to break away from her trauma of exclusion. The listing of Riley’s cocurricular experiences reflected her eagerness for soaking up leadership development. She served as a student ambassador, orientation leader, first-year mentor, founder of the political science club, and the president of the feminist club. She described the messaging she received about leadership development as adaptive, community-based, emotional, humble, servant, empathy, and equity.

Riley’s Racial Identity

During the activity in the caucus focused on race, Riley selected words to convey a racial awareness of the White identity. She explained, “I put accepted, beneficial, and important because growing up in the city was very different than here. There’s like 13 million in my county, including undocumented people.” She attributed her awareness of being White to the exposure of growing up in a racially diverse environment. She noted how she was treated differently, “I was accepted into spaces. I was benefited. I was important in certain situations just because the color of my skin. So they’re positive words, if you look at them traditionally, but

with a critical lens, they're negative to me." This racial awareness was initially framed around her upbringing, but it became apparent she intentionally sought additional spaces to learn more about her White racial identity.

Riley shared how she pursued conversations online and in-person to further her own understanding. To the astonishment of Apollo, she mentioned how she used the online platform called Tumbler to learn more. She joked back in response, "I went to 14 years of Christian school, and no one talks about any of this. I was an only child and the internet was my only friend." In a more serious tone, she shared, "Not everything is great there, but there was really good dialogue and discourse." Riley's learning through social media presents a new dimension of racial awareness that may be an area for further study.

Riley also indicated she learned about her White identity by having conversations with her roommate. Her roommate is also White and has a similar racial awareness. She described them both as "activists" and claimed there is a level of trust between them to foster honest conversations. She said, "We both know that our anonymity will be respected in those situations, especially when you're in the activism community. It's hard to talk about those inner thoughts sometimes. And so my roommate and I, we unpack them." Riley's descriptions of the conversations with her roommate affirm the role White peers in developing racial awareness.

Personal Stories to Collective Narratives

Each of these participants have their own unique experiences regarding leadership development and racial awareness. Personal stories give insight into their individualized journey and matriculation. Through caucusing as a group, there was the special opportunity to observe the similarities and patterns within individual stories. And once these observations were confirmed through member checking, these individual stories began to form collective

narratives. The thematic presentation of these collective narratives provided insight into the confluences of leadership and race among White student leaders.

Table 2

Words chosen by participants to describe messaging received regarding leadership development & the White racial identity.

	Apollo	Lauren	Quinn	Riley
Leadership Development	Community-Based, Determined, Not a big deal, Privileged, Relational.	Beneficial, Important, Humble, Knowledgeable, Supportive.	Beneficial, Determined, Exciting, Selective, Transformational.	Adaptive, Community-Based, Emotional, Empathy, Equity, Humble, Servant.
White Racial Identity	Dominant, Natural, Powerful, Privileged, Trustworthy, Unimportant.	Arrogant, Catholic, Christian, Conservative, Faith, Family, Happy, Powerful, Privileged, Rich,	Arrogant, Comfortable, Dominant, Oppressive, Privileged, Rich, Trustworthy.	Accepted, Beneficial, Important, Leader, Paternal, Privileged, Rich.

Narratives about Student Leadership

Leadership was an easy topic for our first caucus and served as an excellent entry-point for the series of meetings. The first meeting was designed to create a welcoming environment and build capacity for dialogue. Surprisingly, these efforts were not needed to cultivate conversation. As established student leaders, the four participants were eager to engage and talk about themselves. Almost immediately, we developed into a cohesive group which would embrace tougher topics in subsequent meetings.

In our first meeting together, we explored the messaging they received regarding leadership development. After completing the reflection activity, the four participants easily produced stories about themselves. A summary of the chosen words are found in Table 2. Whether the messaging was positive or negative was not relevant - students still felt comfortable enough disclosing their personal stories. Participants spoke from their own experiences when sharing, rather than referencing the stories of someone else. Stories were also shared through the use of individualistic words such as “I” or “my”. Very seldom, these stories featured group-orientated words such as “we” or “us”.

Stories emerged about the people and places influential to these White student leaders. In particular, they shared stories about their own family and leadership experiences at Frontier State University. Through analysis and member checking, I composed the individual stories into collective narratives. The following section will present these narratives as data to address the research question: what narratives do White student leaders tell about their leadership identity.

Stories about Family

> Growing up, my dad was always such a leader within his work and his community… the ideal leader.
>
> – Quinn, First Caucus

Through the storytelling, it was evident their family were influential in the leadership identities of these students. Lauren and Quinn's stories described how parents served as role models by overcoming adversity to achieve dreams. Riley discussed how her mom was instrumental in getting her connected to campus programs. And Apollo reflected on how his family did not need leadership as a result of their own privilege. All stories illustrated how family influenced leadership development among these White students.

Lauren was one of the first people to share, but seemed nervous in the way she placed her hands on her face. She shared a story about how she emulated her Filipino father's actions of serving in the army and seeking an engineering degree. She viewed him as an accomplished leader who had to overcome his family's financial challenges to be successful. She gave a concise account of his leadership journey:

> My dad's side is Asian and they came from the Philippines and had a lot of money. Then land got taken over and they didn't have money anymore. He had to go into the army before he could pursue his actual career. So he had to make his way to the top.

In this story, there are a number of unanswered questions. Why was his land taken? What role did race play? Even though her father was Filipino, the issue of race was conspicuously absent from this story. The answers to these questions may not matter as much as the main message in her story: hard work and leadership were his pathway to return to good fortune.

Lauren then transitioned to her mom, telling a story about her inspirational leadership. Again, in this story, a main character encountered financial challenges and persevered to success.

> My mom got laid off from her job and she decided she was going to open a brewery. It was solely women owned, in a men dominated industry. She's had it open for six years now. And she's definitely showed me, if you have it in you, just keep pushing forward.

This story about Lauren's mother becoming a female beer pioneer conveyed the values of confidence and grit. Her mother overcame the adversity of losing a job to launch a successful new business in a challenging environment for women. This impressive endeavor taught Lauren she can do anything. This family story also has some missing pieces, such as the capital that might be needed to begin a new business. The stories were similarly oversimplified with the intention to enshrine perseverance.

Lauren's story about her mother is comparable to Quinn's story about her father growing up in a trailer park. Both stories feature middle-class families with a primary character who must overcome financial adversity. All three stories value leadership as a method to improve their economic status while accomplishing dreams. Together, they form a moral narrative about hard work. Regardless of one's circumstances, perseverance will enable success.

Apollo shared stories about how his family was comfortable with their status in life. As a result, he felt they did not emphasize leadership development. He alluded to privilege as being the origin of their comfort, "Being white and growing up, they've never really had to stick their neck out for themselves… it's never really impacted them directly. So I think that's why they don't necessarily think it's that big of a deal." In this statement, Apollo suggests his family may have an easier existence due to their race, quickly linking leadership with race.

Apollo's commentary on his family suggested there was a greater value of leadership than just economic mobility. Apollo expressed a value in leadership which makes the world a better place. When talking about leadership potential he shared, "They don't ever think of the

different components that go into what makes a leader, what leadership is in your everyday life, and how you can transfer that into activism and doing really cool things." Apollo believed leadership should be used to improve the condition for others, not just your own lot.

Riley enthusiastically shared a story about how her mom encouraged her leadership development by enrolling her into a program before coming to campus,

> Literally, the only reason why I knew this program existed is because my mom did all the stuff for me. She was like 'Oh, you will think this is so cool'. I didn't put myself out there. Now I run after first year students and tell them to do it during orientation because it was so beneficial to me.

In this story, Riley's mother understood the value of a cocurricular program. While some parents might encourage their student to find a job on campus or focus on studies, Riley's mom was signing her up for a leadership experiences. In this story, Riley recognized not everyone's family would encourage a student to do the same – so she advocated for students to engage in leadership programs.

The overall messaging, implicit and explicit, received from family tended to emphasize the importance of leadership for economic mobility or self-enrichment. Apollo's family was the exception of not emphasizing leadership development. While much of this messaging was positive and promoted development in college, there may have been privileged constructs driving leadership development. In particular, the role modeling of hard work is representative of a bootstraps narrative. While hard work is important, these moral lessons may minimize the role of race in leadership.

Stories about Frontier

> He [a staff member] was the person who initially supported me and gave me resources on campus to develop my leadership skills.
>
> – Riley, First Caucus

Stories about leadership development often featured staff members who worked at Frontier. In particular, the upper-class students attributed their success to charismatic staff who encouraged their development. Three staff members repeatedly surfaced in stories from Apollo, Quinn, and Riley. Apollo recalled how one student affairs professional helped him get started:

> I met her during orientation and she had a really great personality. She was really easy to talk with. She was the first person that I ever reached out to, and was like, "Hey, I want to get more active on campus. What can I do?" I don't even know what her official title is, but she works on campus. And so I talked to her for like an hour and we just talked about different interests. She got my foot in the door.

Apollo could not recall this person's official title or role on campus, but this staff member invested an hour of their time on his development. In the absence of encouragement from his family, this Frontier staff member made a difference for Apollo.

Riley referenced a similar experience with her academic advisor. This person mentored her in more than just academics; serving as a conduit to getting involved on campus and encouraging her leadership development. One story illustrated how he was able to connect Riley with other student leaders,

> It was so weird. I walk in there to sign papers and he was like, "Oh, you said you were interested in this club, let me introduce you to the president". And she just happened to be in his office. And so it turned into me going to sign papers, into a 45 minute conversation.

These informal interactions with staff fostered connections among student leaders and encouraged involvement. In another instance, this academic advisor also encouraged Riley to apply for a paid leadership role on campus. She shared, “He was really supportive. I mentioned that I liked my orientation experience and I really wanted to be an orientation leader. So he was the person who guided me towards that… he was the first person that put himself out there to help me figure out my resources.” On multiple occasions, this academic advisor sought to help Riley become involved, identify resources, and reach her leadership potential.

Frontier staff were central characters in their narratives about leadership development. Interestingly, none of the students spoke about teachers or counselors from high school. Additionally, they did not tell any stories about the professors or coaches at Frontier. It was a glaring absence for a university environment - faculty were not identified as educators or role models for leadership development. Instead, their stories primarily featured family figures or full-time cocurricular staff. The family served as inspiration, while the Frontier staff aligned student’s interests with existing opportunities.

It was also evident from these stories, leadership education was not part of the staff member’s job descriptions. Apollo was not able to identify the exact position this mentor held, but could only recall she was part of his orientation experience. Riley’s mentor officially served as her academic advisor, but exceeded these expectations by encouraging her development. These staff members went beyond their titles and responsibilities to foster leadership education among college students.

Stories about Peers

> I take it really seriously, but a lot of people don't. And that's frustrating, honestly.
>
> – Quinn, First Caucus

As these student leaders discussed their experiences with leadership development at Frontier, peers appeared as minor characters in the stories. Unfortunately, peers were not a positive influence on their leadership identity. Several participants shared their sharp disappointment in fellow students who did not value leadership development or pursued leadership positions for the wrong reasons. Quinn was the first to express her frustration.

When asked to elaborate, Quinn provided a story about a cancelled leadership retreat for the sororities at Frontier:

> I just always wanted to be in a leadership role, like every time from as long as I can remember. So for me, that was something I was working towards. So as soon as I joined my sorority, I was looking for the next step which is being president. I take it really seriously and I enjoy learning more about my leadership skills. But then we were supposed to go on a leadership retreat, like a month ago, and it got canceled due to weather. I was extremely disappointed because I liked that kind of stuff. But I could tell some people were a little relieved or didn't necessarily want it to be rescheduled. They didn't see the point in going. Like they didn't feel they would get a ton out of it. So I just think that's really interesting – people look at stuff so differently.

In this story, the retreat represented an opportunity for Quinn's advancement, when other students viewed it as a chore associated with sorority roles. In her upbringing, Quinn had received positive messaging about leadership development. Understandably, it was hard for Quinn to reconcile the differing perspectives.

As the group began to dig deeper into attitudes towards leadership, Nick uncovered the frustrations among the participants. At the end of the first caucus, he shared his observations about their own motivations for leadership development. The exchange quickly escalated to encompass frustrations about peers.

Nick: "I'm pretty impressed nobody talked about leadership as a means to an end. Nobody said 'this is for my resume, to help me with my career prospects or whatever.' That's pretty impressive."

Riley: "When people just do it for a resume, is that really leadership?"

Quinn: "I find that so frustrating, that's not a reason. I just don't think that's a reason, but a lot of people do… especially undergrads 'cause they want it for their resume to look good."

Me: It could be both.

Quinn: It could be both. It definitely could be that.

Lauren: But there are people out there that just literally want it. There's definitely people who just joined for like a year, even a semester so they can put it down.

The student leaders were quick to express frustration for peers who sought to pad their resume through leadership roles. I sought to challenge the trajectory of the conversation by suggesting leaders might be motivated by a number of factors. However, it was evident these student leaders felt some peers were exclusively motivated by positions titles or accolades.

Through conversation about peers, it appeared these student leaders prized intrinsic motivation for leadership. They preferred those who sought to improve their own skills and their communities. Apollo did not see most student leaders possessing this idealized motivation. He critiqued peers as being limited in their development:

> I feel a lot will have a static notion of leadership and don't really think they can be improved upon… They don't ever think of the different components that go into what

> makes a leader… and how you can transfer that into activism and doing really cool things. So it's just this sort of static mesh, like "I'm where I'm at with my leadership capabilities."

In response to his commentary, I asked Apollo if he felt his peers have limited potential for leadership development. His response was mixed, "Yea, I think that. I think it's also a lack of self-confidence. It really depends on the person or individual."

Quinn, unsatisfied with the answer, quickly weighed in: "I think some people have lack of confidence. And some people are like 'I'm good, I can't be improved'. There's different mentalities." Quinn is proposing that confidence is not the only factor limiting leadership development. She suggested some peers may be complacent and not feel the need for continued development. The latter implied an active decision not to engage in self-improvement.

Summary of Data for Q1

These White student leaders shared some common narratives about leadership. They told stories about how family served as role models and encouragement for pursuing leadership development. Family members were often inspiration for seeking leadership or social change. Embedded in these stories were grand narratives about hard work and perseverance. As powerful social constructs, these grand narratives hold implications for how race and leadership interface.

These White student leaders also told narratives about their experiences in college at Frontier State University. Full-time staff members were recognized as catalysts in their leadership development. These staff members went beyond formal roles to create connections, explore potential, and develop student leaders. While staff members were main characters in the story, faculty were oddly absent from all narratives. Peers also played minor roles in these

stories, but served as fables about what should be idealized in leadership development. Motivations and attitudes of peers were scrutinized as insufficient for authentic leadership.

The first caucus went incredibly well and provided data to answer my first research question. I was surprised at how quickly the student leaders shared personal stories and how narratives emerged around leadership development. After this experience, I was eager to begin the second caucus on the White racial identity. Yet, I was nervous the harder topic in the second meeting may result in participant attrition. Additionally, participants may not have enjoyed the first experience and decided not to return. The one week between the two caucuses felt like one of the longest in recent memory.

Narratives about Racial Identity

I did not have the same experience when I arrived for the second caucus. All four students returned for the discussion and a few showed up early. We spent the first few minutes catching up and reviewing themes from the last discussion. When I shared preliminary findings, they clarified a few thoughts, but otherwise they voiced satisfaction with the summary. It was during the recap when Lauren shared her reflections on earning leadership. Her eagerness to begin the conversation with vulnerability established a new tone for the second caucus.

The group needed significantly more time to complete the activity, even though it was nearly identical to the first worksheet. Instead of asking participants about the messaging of leadership development, the instructions directed them to find words associated with exploring their White racial identity. There were a few questions from the participants about how to proceed or what words to select. I encouraged the group to reflect on any messages they received from family, friends, church, school, media, or any other place. In contrast to the previous meeting, students selected several descriptors beyond the required five.

This activity elicited a number of stories about race and privilege. Although each individual has their own journey with race, all participants felt encouraged to share their own stories. Some stories reflected a productive awareness of a White racial existence, while other stories still grappled with defensiveness and guilt. This mixed group dynamic awoke all participants to their own lived realities within a White racial construct. Together, these stories provide the data to address the second research question: what narratives do White student leaders tell about their racial identity?

Resistance to the White Identity

> People always think white people are…
>
> – Lauren & Quinn, Second Caucus

When exploring what it means to be White, the conversation naturally gravitated towards the stereotypes of White people. All participants engaged in this conversation, but Lauren and Quinn were the primary complainants. Both seemed to resent the notion of White people being rich, Christian, or having a family consisting of two married parents. Lauren began the conversation when asked about the words she selected, "I circled arrogant. The other ones are pretty much the stereotypical White racial identity, like conservative, Christian, family, faith, power." She elaborated by sharing the assumptions she encounters:

> Sometimes when I meet people, that's what they think of me. It's like "Oh, you must come from a good Christian family. Blah blah blah." Sure. I mean we're not Christian, but still, I think every family has values. Why would you just assume that? And I feel like it's an assumption that's made a lot. "You come from a sweet Christian family."

Lauren struggled with the implication of coming from a good and sweet Christian family. In this statement, she recognizes it is a common association of White people, but takes issue with the construct of a Christian family. Lauren's use of the adjectives "good" and "sweet" also imply a

Christian family dynamic is a positive association for the White identity. Lauren identified as Catholic during this study and she may have resented this nuanced assumption. Or perhaps her Catholic identity was the product of her Filipino father, further complicating her own racial and religious identities? Regardless, she did not appreciate these assumptions from others.

After Lauren expressed her concerns, Quinn quickly added her own thoughts to the original complaint. “With money! I put down rich”, as Quinn referred to her completed activity sheet. Lauren looked at Quinn and concurred, “Yeah, with money. I circled rich too”. Quinn turned to me to summarize, “People always think white people are rich.” Lauren then added, “Always. And you’ll never know until you actually talk to somebody and learn about their life. But those are the statements made right away just because you’re White.”

Although being wealthy or Christian could be a desirable social status, Quinn and Lauren did not want people to think they were wealthy due to race. They both came from middle-class backgrounds and shared stories about how their parents overcame economic adversity. The assumption about wealth seemed to affront to their family narratives about leadership and socioeconomic status. The original narratives implied success was a product of hard work, not simply conferred because of their race. Their families had earned their socioeconomic status. Entertaining assumptions about White people being rich would conflict with their own narratives hard work.

These statements also represent a resistance to racial stereotypes of White people. Lauren and Quinn expressed how it was unfair to be lumped into a racial generalization. Instead, they explicitly asked for conversations to “learn about their life”. Interpersonal dialogue is critical to knowing a person’s lived experience, especially as it pertains to race. However, they did not consider how people of color might also encounter assumptions. This omission of empathy,

without even mentioning of other social identities, is significant. The focus was exclusive to their own stereotypes.

After the exchange about White stereotypes, Lauren progressed the conversation to racial dialogue. This topic was another source of frustration for Lauren:

> [White people] are always told, like "Oh, you shouldn't say that." But it's like, anyone on the other side isn't really told "don't say that". Like, if they're talking about White people, they just go and talk… nobody's going to tell you that's wrong. I don't know, it's weird. It's really weird.

In her depiction of racial dialogue, Lauren articulates a binary characterized by two perspectives in conflict. White people are plainly identified, while the other party is labeled as "the other side." This label suggests all people of color compose "the other side". This language signals a White vs people of color paradigm of racial dialogue. This comment exhibits a White-centric perspective laden with defensiveness.

Lauren struggled with how White people could be reprimanded by someone telling them "Oh, you shouldn't say that". Her statement suggests White people are restricted by what they can say, but the same political correctness is not applied to people of color. She feels the other side can "just go and talk" without the same social repercussions. As a follow-up, I asked if she perceived the situation as a double standard. Lauren replied, "Yes, very much so. And like I get it. It's like some things we say can be wrong. Like wrong place, wrong time. But I don't know. I just think everyone should go by that then."

Lauren's response to my double standard question revealed how she perceived racial dialogue. She acknowledged some comments or stereotypes could be offensive. Yet, she states it could be the product of "wrong place, wrong time". Context is important, but her qualifiers

introduced relativism about stereotypes. In this opinion, the context defines appropriateness. Does this mean she perceives stereotypes to be acceptable in certain settings – perhaps among friends or only White people? Finally, the last part of the response indicates she thinks the dynamic is unfair. She believed, if White people must hold their tongue, people of color should as well.

Apollo and Riley were mostly silent when Lauren and Quinn were talking. Their body behavior signaled they were uncomfortable with the dialogue. During this exchange, Apollo was frequently looking to Riley for a response. Riley did not notice Apollo's overtures or perhaps she was ignoring his non-verbal signals. In previous conversations, Riley disclosed she had attended a private Christian academy prior to attending Frontier. Additionally, she indicated on the demographic survey that her family is upper-middle class. On paper, she was the stereotype they were addressing. It would have been interesting to hear her perspective on the topic of White stereotypes. Instead, she maintained silence and avoided the topic.

Recognition and Articulation of Whiteness

> It's the privilege of not being self-aware and just being able to occupy spaces without having to think about it all the time.
>
> – Apollo, Second Caucus

After the conversation about stereotypes, I was surprised by how quickly these student leaders could recognize Whiteness and racial privilege. They did not hesitate to respond when I asked, "What does it mean to be White?" Riley started the conversation by sharing, "I think ignorance is a big one." Quinn chimed in, "Like a big one". Riley elaborated, "Just kind of allowed to occupy whatever spaces you want to move." Apollo supplemented Riley's statement about occupying spaces, "Security. Just like safety." This must have resonated, because Riley shot back, "Yeah! Exactly. Yeah."

The students were not shy when identifying White privilege. They could easily describe privileges in their own words. Quinn offered, “It means you have power whether you want to or not. It’s just kinda there.” Apollo shared, “It’s the privilege of not being self-aware and just being able to occupy spaces without having to think about it all the time.” Their statements did not display aversion to words with strong connotations such as power, privilege, ignorance, and occupying spaces. They were comfortable with the vocabulary of social justice.

All the students were quick to label Whiteness with these descriptors, but the responses lacked a personal reference point. There were no stories, emotion, or changes in non-verbal behavior. I expected the emotions associated with White fragility. Instead, I felt like a professor who asked a question in class and received a textbook definition. Perhaps this is the safest way for White students to articulate their own privilege – in a detached intellectual concept. Or perhaps college students are socialized to approach race as any other academic topic? Regardless, their responses felt insulated from a lived reality. The students could recognize White privilege, but they were not inclined to articulate personal experiences about being White.

I sought to uncover these personal connections by asking participants to share a story about someone who encouraged exploration of their White identity. The very question seemed foreign at first. Lauren asked me to clarify, “Could you elaborate on that?” I responded,

> It could have been a class where your teacher said “do some homework on this and check it out.” It could have been a mentor who challenged your worldview to be like “have you ever thought about what it means to be White in a grocery store?” It could have been your parents being like “Take a class on this, learn more about ethnic studies.” Is there anyone in your life?

After I provided additional context there was a long pause. I felt like I had struck out. Was there anything beneath the surface of their textbook definitions?

Apollo finally spoke up and demonstrated vulnerability by sharing a story. “For me, I would say the first black man I was attracted to, that I had met personally.” He seemed a bit nervous to share because his story was punctuated with several “ums”.

> There were some black actors I had been attracted to, but there were very few and far between. And that sort of prompted me to be like, Why? Why is that? Like why do I think White people are so much more attractive automatically? Like why do I have such higher standards for other people? And so, that influence has been really what’s helpful in opening that up. Not just in the realm of attraction, but in the realm of everything else because it’s all related.

In this story, Apollo alludes to an attraction he had to a black man. Through conversation or self-reflection, this person prompted awareness of his own preferences of White men. Even more so, he acknowledged he had a higher standard for people of color. Through reflection on the topic of attraction, he examined other examples of the normalcy of Whiteness. After Apollo demonstrated vulnerability, the other students provided a number of their own stories about people who prompted their racial exploration.

Frontier staff surfaced in their stories again. These professionals acted as catalysts to help these White students recognize their own privilege. One professional, who was mentioned the week before, entered as a character again. Riley shared, “This staff member was the first to sit down with me and talk. And it wasn’t like her sitting down and being like ‘let me train you White person.’” Most of the students already knew this staff member was a person of color. Conscious of the privileged dynamic of learning from people of color, Riley acknowledged the

burden of coaching White students. “So good for her for being able to do that because that’s exhausting. But she was the first person where I sat down with.”

Riley continued to share about her discussions with this Frontier staff member. She reminisced, “It wasn’t set out to be that kind of relationship”. They established a connection through a mutual interest of helping people. As they discussed various subjects, the staff member would identify opportunities to pause and explore White privilege. “She would just be like ‘so let’s unpack some of that privilege there.’” Riley responded well to this casual approach. She remarked, “God, I like, need to work on this.”

Riley recognized the significance of her White privilege through the interactions with this staff member, “Once I started to understand my Whiteness and how it played out in the world, I started noticing discrepancies and challenge my own ideas.” Apollo had similar realizations with this particular Frontier staff member. To illustrate his own discussions he provided a metaphor, “It’s like a snowball”. His comment implied learning about White privilege started with small conversations, but eventually became more present in everyday consciousness.

Vulnerability was needed to breach into a personal realm of Whiteness with the student leaders. Most could confidently label White privilege, but they were apprehensive to share their own personal experiences. It required one of the members to progress the conversation beyond comfort to demonstrate there was trust. After we had done this as a group, we began to collectively analyze why it is so hard to talk about race.

Stories about Unlearning Racism

> Your first thought is what you were made to believe and your second thought is who you really are.
>
> – Riley, Second Caucus

I continued to challenge the group to share their personal experiences with Whiteness. Knowing vulnerability was helpful to establish conversation, I admitted how I sometimes have racist thoughts as a White person. When I asked the students if they had any racist thoughts. Apollo was quick to reply,

> If any White person tells you they don't have racist thoughts, or any sort of thought, that is because of their own privilege. They are flat out lying. All of these thoughts are because of the culture we live in. And you think these things all the time. I think it's a process of identifying and realizing why you think of these things in the first place. I think it's counterproductive to be like "No, I don't have any thoughts like that."

Apollo was adamant racist thoughts are a natural part of being White. In his mind, the denial of these thoughts would constitute masking the truth and remaining in privilege. He believed it was vital to identify why White people have racist thoughts – not addressing them would allow these thoughts to continue.

In response to Apollo, Riley wanted to share how she identifies racist thinking as a White person. She shared a story about her roommate at the time of the study.

> Something my roommate and I do – because we are both on this journey and it's never ending – is unpacking these thoughts together. We both know our anonymity will be respected in those situations, especially when you are in the activism community. It's hard to talk about those inner thoughts sometimes. And my roommate and I, we unpack them.

In this instance, Riley acknowledged there is risk to admitting to having racist thoughts, especially if you are trying to adopt anti-racist attitudes. In Riley's perspective, there needs to be an adequate level of trust between the two White peers to process racism.

Riley continued elaborating about her racist thoughts. She referenced a quote she found in 2014 on the social media platform Tumblr. She adopted the quote as a personal philosophy for unlearning racism, "Your first thought is what you were made to believe and your second thought is who you really are." In the context of race, the quote implies we are socialized with racist thoughts. Reexamination can reveal if you truly endorse these constructs. While Riley sought to reevaluate her thoughts about race, she felt it was difficult, "My roommate and I have been unpacking those initial thoughts and it's been really helpful." As she was saying this, her energy became diminished, "But I don't feel like there is a space to do that very much."

I was surprised to learn Riley had established a place to acknowledge and analyze racist beliefs. I could only muster a "wow" and we sat in silence for a moment. That's when Quinn interjected:

> I just think being White doesn't allow for spaces of like saying things. And personally speaking, whenever I had those conversations, people would always tell me "don't say them out loud." Obviously, there's not a space to talk about those things. But that's counterproductive, like Apollo was saying. If you just pretend it's not real, you're going backwards.

Quinn was conflicted. She had racist thoughts as a White person, but struggled because she did not have a place to examine them. It almost seemed like she was resentful of what Riley had established with her roommate. Quinn had been dissuaded by peers from having conversations about racist thoughts.

Quinn wanted to process racism with peers, but perceived there were no safe spaces for conversation.

> I just think it's interesting there aren't very many spaces. What can you really do? It takes a lot of trust. Because if I told you some thought, like what's stopping you from telling other people? Then they're going to think I'm racist or whatever. So that's just so difficult.

She feared a lack of trust and confidentiality could result in a negative reputation among peers. Her perspective also exposed a construct of Whiteness: admitting you have racist thoughts will make others think you are a racist. The two concepts, racist thoughts and racism, are not synonymous. The conflation of the two concepts reinforce Whiteness by preventing conversations about race. If White people are fearful to talk about racist thoughts, it will be hard for them to examine their own racial existence.

Apollo validated her feelings with his own spin, "Yeah, I think it's important to look at those spaces, like where you talk about all those things." He shifted to Riley and asked, "Because, correct me if I'm wrong, but your roommate is White and shares a lot of the same identities?" Riley affirmed the assumption, but he likely already knew this. His question was a subtle way to suggest those who have shared identities may find greater trust to explore their privilege. He also wanted to caution against relying on people of color to learn about White privilege,

> I think that is really important. It's not like you're going to your friends of color and being like "I need you to unpack this for me because you're a person of color and should know everything about these issues." It's important to have those conversations with

> your White friend. And sort of look for resources and learn together. It's really important not to push that burden on people of color.

Quinn just absorbed Apollo's advice about unlearning racist thoughts. However, Lauren seemed ready to say something. She moved her hand to the armrest of her chair, like she was about to push herself up. Her other hand was on her mouth, perhaps in thought about the comments or ready to say something.

Apollo's comments were carefully spun to validate Quinn's fears about discussing racist thoughts, but also an entry point for unlearning racism. He used Quinn's comments as an opportunity to advise White peers where to unpack White privilege. His comments were meaningful because they resonated with previous studies on White privilege and peer interaction. He felt strongly people of color should not be assumed to be the teachers of White people. Through this discussion, he uncovered the carnelian of purpose in caucusing. The single-identity caucusing helped White students advance their understanding of race without leaning on their peers of color. Unlearning racism was a responsibility requiring a thoughtful approach.

Family Counter-Messaging

> Take advantage of the fact you are White.
>
> - Lauren quoting her Grandmother, Second Caucus

After exchanging stories about influential figures, I was interested in knowing if anyone discouraged these student leaders from exploring their White privilege. Riley immediately responded, "My dad." The sudden reply had the whole group in laughter. Quinn blurted out, "That was like, boom!" We were all surprised how quickly and unabashedly Riley identified her father as a discouraging figure.

With a fading smile Riley provided additional context to help the group understand her relationship with her father.

> I love my dad, but he never got access to college. Like it wasn't for him. He got into trade school and figured everything out. Good for him. Now it is always a point of contention 'cause I was the liberal daughter in a conservative house. Then I went to college and I feel that took things to another level. I would say any word with more than four syllables and he would say "you liberal, blah blah blah." And I love him and that's probably coming from a place of insecurity. So I think it's very layered. But anytime I bring it up, we get into a screaming match.

Riley's attributes her conflict with her father to political and educational differences. Tensions surface when they discuss topics of race. To illustrate this conflict, she shared a story about how they entered a screaming match about the historical Native American figure from the Lewis and Clark expedition.

> We got into a screaming match. Like "I hate you. I hate you" kind of thing 'cause I told him not to call her "Sa-ka-ja-wee-ah". I told him her name was Sacagawea and I think it's horrible we never tried to learn her name. 'Cause I took a women in the west course, which talked a lot about racial identity. I was like "they never talk about her name. Her name was Sacagawea, but it's written like "Sa-ka-ja-wee-ah". And that was the conversation. I was just like, "That's so cool that I know her name and there's so much power behind that." And he was like [waves her hand] the whole fight.

Riley's story provides insight into what some White students might encounter when they embrace new ideas about race. She attempted to relay what she had learned at Frontier to her father. Her father was not willing to entertain these new ideas.

Riley's story was followed by other stories about discouragement from family. Apollo shared his own source of friction when speaking with his father about police brutality and murder of people of color,

> Yeah, I would say I had pretty similar experiences. I think my dad, especially with the media, he'll be like "this is all hype." Especially with police shootings and instances of those kind of violence happening. He's like, "this is all hype and has nothing to do with your racial identity." I really don't know why he thinks those things and I exhausted myself trying. At this point, it's sort of just like, it is what it is.

Apollo seemed resigned he could not change his father's mind about police shootings. His conversation with his father is noteworthy due to the timing of the study. The caucusing happened in February 2020; predating the racial protests and unrest of 2020. Apollo was attempting to have these conversations with his father before racial injustice resurfaced as a mainstream political issue in the United States.

After a few others shared their stories about their own families, the group began to acknowledge how unreceptive families could be with matters of social justice. Apollo shared, "My parents don't read any of my work." Riley was shocked, "What?!" Nick felt compelled to share too, "Exactly, it's like my thesis from my masters. I did it on Affirmative Action." The group seemed to be surprised to learn they faced similar challenges when discussing race with parents. It was even more poignant with Nick's contribution since he completed his masters degree twenty years ago. It seem very little had changed with parents' receptivity around evolving social issues.

Apollo elaborated on how his parents were so resistant when he tried to educate them about the prominent murder of Mathew Sheppard. "I gave them an assignment for a class and

was like ‘you should read this.’ And my dad was like, “No. Mathew Sheppard was killed because he sold meth.” And I was like ‘uh, ok’”. Apollo immediately ran into a roadblock when trying to start a conversation with his parents. They were unwilling to read his paper and, instead, presented an alt-right counter narrative. It is easily to see how his conversations with his father felt futile.

Not all stories about family were the same. Quinn felt her parents were not discouraging, “Oh my gosh. Okay. No, my parents were nothing like that.” However, when asked to reflect on the messaging, she could not claim they encouraged her exploration of White privilege. Lauren had the most conflicted interactions with family.

> My Filipino grandma, she was like “Take advantage of the fact you are White. Like you’re going to have a lot of opportunities.” But then again, my other grandma, she was like “White Power”. Like yea, I don’t know… It definitely goes back and forth. I don’t even know anymore.

Lauren received varied messages from her family regarding her White identity. Both perspectives acknowledged the power conferred to the White identity. One encouraged her to leverage her White identity, while another sought to reinforce the systematic privileges given to White people. These two grandmas understood the power of being White. Neither minimized it, but instead encouraged her to maximize it for her benefit. They sought to provide her the most opportunity as a privileged person, but through a problematic reframing of White privilege.

Lauren’s perspective was further complicated by her father being a person of color. Her White grandmother was openly racist, but claimed to accept him. Lauren shared, “She’s very adamant about her beliefs of people of color. Any color besides my dad. She loves him. She’s like, ‘Wow, he’s amazing even though he’s Asian.’” The messaging from this White

grandmother was paradoxical to Lauren. Her father's race was minimized by her grandmother – she approved of him despite his race. The sentiment was meant to be supportive, but reinforced racial constructs of White superiority. The messaging, coupled with her multiracial background, muddled her perspective on White privilege.

The stories from the White student leaders suggested unlearning racism was an uphill struggle. They could not convey their personal exploration of race to their own family. Their stories revealed underlying political, generational, and educational divides among family. After hearing their stories, I was amazed any of them chose to participate in this study. Perhaps they were seeking a new outlet for conversation?

The Exotic White Construct

> I just think back to my ties to Europe, and I think that's so weird.
>
> - Quinn, Second Caucus

Deep into the conversation of the second caucus, I encountered something new. We were discussing the attitudes and behaviors of being White when Quinn shared a thought, "I've always found this so interesting about Americans, in general, when you talk to people about their background and their ethnicity, people always talk about their roots to Europe, but they don't just say they're American." Quinn was suggesting White Americans are more conscious of their European lineage than their current racial or national identity in the United States. Apollo quipped, "Like, here's my 23-and-Me report". The group erupted in laughter over Apollo's jest about the genealogical service that breaks down ancestry by geographical origin. Their laughter suggested this might be a common phenomenon with White people in the United States.

Quinn continued after the joke by sharing a story about her own family. It seemed she was processing out loud about something she just realized,

> I think that's weird because I don't think people in the U.S. really try to discover their White racial identity. I immediately thought of the fact my family has roots to Italy. In downtown, there's this little lodge and you have to prove you're from Potenza Italy specifically to be a part of it. And my family is part of it. And so, I just think of that. I don't think of being from here. I don't think of my identity as a White American. I just think of my ties back to Europe and I just think that is so weird. It's such a weird American thing to do.

Through the conversation, Quinn realized her family emphasized her Italian heritage rather than her current White or American identities. Her family could uniquely trace their ancestral and ethnic identity to a specific location in Italy. It was meaningful to her family to focus on a rich ethnic Italian history. Yet, it obstructed other identities conferring greater social status in the United States – racial privilege and citizenship.

Riley immediately followed Quinn's comments by placing a label on the experience: she called it *exotic White*. She explained exotic White as "trying to differentiate yourself from colonial history and not wanting to be part of that." Quinn responded, "Yea! People never say like, 'oh, I'm just from this state", you know?" Riley provided more context, "I think it's just trying to separate from Whiteness. Because when I'm in certain spaces, I'm like 'oh god, my family came on the Mayflower. We're like the OG colonizer…' The group busted into laughter again because OG is often used as slang abbreviation for the original. Her audacious remark suggested her family's ancestry, traced back to the original English colonies, started some of the original atrocities to native people of North America.

After another round of jokes about tracing lineage to the Mayflower, Riley returned to a serious tone and continued to share about her family history. "But then I want to go to my other

side where they're refugees from Poland. And I think it's just trying to separate myself and being uncomfortable where my Whiteness came from." In Riley's particular ancestry, her family can be traced all the way back to the Mayflower. In another branch, she could emphasize her Polish refugee narrative where they escaped concentration camp in World War II. The latter narrative was a story about how her White ancestors escaped oppression and how it could be seen as less oppressive when transferred to a racial context. Her comments demonstrate how some White students could selectively use their ancestry to distance themselves from White colonialism.

The exotic White construct distanced these White students from their racial identities by emphasizing a European identity. More importantly, it provided the privilege for these White students to choose a favorable narrative. Riley was conscious of these choices based on her ancestry, but still wrestled with the association with colonial atrocities. She shared, "I really want to go into spaces and not be the problem. I'm like 'I'm not that bad, you know?'" She knew she could have distanced herself from colonialism by emphasizing her refugee lineage.

People of color often do not have this ability to distance themselves from historical White supremacy. Apollo caught on quickly and shared his concern about White exotic and distancing from colonialism. He explained,

> I think it is a very uncomfortable question for a lot of people of color because they can't trace back their ancestry. Or if they can, it's really really violent. And so when they see all these White folks, just running around, being like "Oh, I'm from England and Scotland." You're 2% French great grandfather probably did some pretty fucked up shit to everyone else.

Apollo's comments caustically illustrated how ancestry is a privileged concept for White people. And while DNA tests can provide regions of origin for all individuals, they lack the narratives of

slavery, disease, or violence. In this context, he suggests a hyper-charged saliency of a European identity among White Americans could be offensive to people of color.

I was fascinated by the meaning of this phrase and asked Riley where it came from. She responded, “I hope you know, my term exotic White is in a making fun of way, and not…”. She trailed off quietly. I nodded to indicate it was okay for her to continue, but she sat there silently. I responded, “I just think it’s such a complex term. Oftentimes, in problematic ways, people refer to people of color as exotic. It’s an objectification of their racial identity. But I’ve never heard of it applied to white people. I’m just curious where you came across it.” She explained, “I think my friends and I were just making fun of people ‘I’m 25% this… 75% this…”. Her label was a critique of White people’s behaviors.

Riley had created this label with her White friends to identify an element of Whiteness I had never encountered. I was learning so much from these students. The exotic White construct enabled White people to distance themselves from the ugly side of their racial identity. The fascination with an exotic European ancestry in the United States deflected the focus from the White colonial atrocities. Most importantly, the distancing obstructed meaningful conversation about what it meant to be White. If challenged about race, a White students could claim their family also experienced oppression. Through the conversation about ancestry, these students began to identify and dismantle a construct of Whiteness.

The Voice of the Voiceless Narrative

> I tried to apologize. Maybe that's not the best approach, but I'm sorry that people have wronged you that look like me.
>
> – Riley, Second Caucus

I was amazed about how reflective the White student leaders were about their race, but the privilege was hard to reconcile. Even as self-identified activists, Apollo and Riley struggled with their privilege. Riley's journey exemplified this challenge,

> When I first got into social justice, I didn't quite understand privilege and like where to use it. And so, I did the thing I've seen my friends do – being the voice for the voiceless. Because, I'm like "Oh, I have the privilege to be the voice." But I shouldn't be the voice. I should help or be there for someone.

A "voice" is code for one with power. Riley's phrase "voice for the voiceless" is a phrase that suggests a desire to help those who are most marginalized in society and may not be able to advocate for themselves.

Riley reflected about how she realized paternalism was embedded in the "voice for the voiceless" narrative. She shared how her perspective changed,

> I learned through my classes. A lot of my gender, women's, and disability studies courses. Before, I identified as disabled. Now I have an identity. And now it's powerful. But thinking "I can be the voice for the voiceless for people that have autism or down syndrome!" No. They have a voice. We just don't create a landscape where their voice can be heard or understood.

Riley's learning in class helped her realize she did not need to represent those who do not have privilege. Even within her own identity as a person with a disability, she felt she should not be the voice for those with differing cognitive abilities.

Riley was compelled to use privilege to alter the social environment. The concept still felt vague so I asked her to elaborate. She responded, “I think some voices aren’t included for a reason and I would just keep allowing White voices to only be heard if I was the voice for the voiceless. Hope that helps.” Quinn agreed and contributed, “I’ve always been told, and it’s true throughout history, people who are White were known to oppress other groups. And not give them a voice if they had one.” Apollo brought the conversation back to activism, “I used to think, like Riley, that using your privilege effectively was speaking for people who weren’t represented. And through more exposure began to realize it’s changing the landscape of the social arena that you’re in to accommodate those voices and let them be heard independently.”

Their comments provided marginal clarity. White people, speaking for people of color, obviously perpetuated White superiority because people of color were still prevented from speaking. However, I struggled to understand how these White student leaders specifically altered their environment to make space for voices. Quinn was the only one to explicitly acknowledge the problem, “The whole thing with not speaking for people who don’t have a voice, but also finding a way to include them? Like that’s just hard. That’s something you have to think about.” It seemed these White student leaders grasped the concept in an intellectual manner, but it was still difficult to put into practice. I avoided pressing further because I hoped to explore it during the third caucus.

Summary of Data for Q2

Despite the varying personal experiences and comfort levels, these students shared several narratives about their racial identity. They expressed defensiveness, resistance, or silence around the stereotypes of White people. Although they could articulate the societal privileges conferred to White people, they were less apt to describe how they personally benefited from

White privilege. Discussions about White privilege in a personal context required a level of vulnerability and trust.

These White student leaders were reluctant to engage in conversations about race and racism for several reasons. Some student leaders feared what peers would think. There was risk of being branded a racist if they admitted to having a racist thought. If they were part of a social justice activism community, there were concerns about finding an appropriate place to discuss Whiteness. It was hard to find someone with similar identities and mindset to explore their racial identity with vulnerability. Additionally, they ruled out having these conversations with their peers of color to avoid placing a burden of teaching on them. These limitations left the students feeling like they had very few places to unpack their racial identity.

The group also shared a common narrative about family and race. In contrast to their stories about leadership development, their parents and grandparents discouraged them from exploring race. Some parents were ambivalent and never mentioned race. However, most of the stories illustrated how parents actively opposed their desire to explore the topic. When race was discussed at home, conversations were characterized by screaming matches and dismissive counter-messaging. Shockingly, one student leader was encouraged to maximize her White privilege and maintain this system of power. Family members were more than just discouraging; they were a threat to developing a socially responsible White racial identity.

These students also identified complex narratives associated with being White. The exotic White construct offered insight into the implications of alternate genealogical narratives. Some of the participants knew they could minimize their own racial privilege by focusing on an ethnic European identity. Reflective in the conversation about the Voice for the Voiceless

narrative, they expressed a personal struggle with how to approach their White privilege. Their journeys suggested they were still learning how to integrate privilege into practice.

The second caucus on racial identity gave me tingles. It yielded more than enough information to answer the research question regarding the narratives they tell about their racial identity. I was expecting to encounter more resistance or hesitancy to dig into White privilege. Instead, I was amazed by their general acceptance of privilege and willingness to share deeply personal stories. I was not surprised to learn they struggled with privilege in a personal context. Their struggle is part of a national narrative of Whiteness. I wanted to dig deeper, but was limited by time. The third and final caucus would provide me this opportunity. By placing their privilege in the context of their leadership positions, these students would be prompted to discuss the confluences of race and leadership.

Narratives about Leadership and Race

As the third meeting approached, I was excited to finish caucusing. Our previous conversations were excellent primers to synthesize leadership and racial narratives. The group decided to schedule this final meeting on March 10, 2020. The students selected this date to finish before spring break at Frontier. I similarly felt an impending urgency to wrap up the study because a new and unknown virus ravaging China and Italy. Before the meeting began, I was reading the latest news about how Italy was locked down to prevent the spread of the virus.

When the students shuffled in for the final meeting, they were discussing rumors of professors cancelling class due to the virus. Riley curiously asked, “Would Frontier should down? Are classes going online?” Although I had worked in higher education for 15 years, I could not give a reassuring answer. This was something I had never seen before and I knew their curiosity was fueled by a silence from Frontier administration. Since Frontier was located in a

rural part of the Rocky Mountain Region, the virus still felt distant to us. I selfishly hoped their concerns would not loom over the conversation and prevent meaningful dialogue. Even though they were curious, the questions quickly subsided and they settled into their chairs.

For our final caucus, I provided a different activity to elicit stories about White privilege and student leadership. The students were asked to complete a modified version of McIntosh's (1988) knapsack checklist. In addition to these classic questions about White privilege, I added some specific prompts relevant to student leaders. These prompts were designed with a student experience in mind, such as "I can be late to a meeting and not have it reflect on my race" or "I can walk into a classroom and know I will not be the only member of my race". For the student leaders who had completed the original McIntosh inventory, it had a familiar feel, but a slightly different flavor. To view the full activity, please see Appendix D.

We spent a reasonable amount of time discussing the inventory questions, especially for those who had never seen the privilege checklist. The prompt spurred conversation and corresponding stories about being a White student leader at Frontier. Similar to our conversation about race, the dialogue started with critique of their surrounding environment rather than their own experiences. Eventually, we inwardly gazed at our own actions as student leaders. The deeper discussion yielded an understanding of how White privilege compares to their marginalized identities and, more importantly, how they can become socially responsible student leaders. These stories provided the data to address the third research question, how do White student leaders make meaning of White privilege through a leadership framework?

Race and Leadership at Frontier

> The walls are just filled with White People.
>
> – Apollo, Third Caucus

When we completed the activity, I asked the group if they could think of how some of these scenarios related to leadership – especially at Frontier. Quinn recounted a realization during a student leadership trip,

> I was actually at the state capitol working on legislation stuff. And I wasn't surprised, but it's still weird to me... just looking at all the members of the senate and house – like 80% white men. I just think that's interesting because obviously the state is not 90% white men. I knew it was going to be like that, but still hard for me to see. It's not the best representation of population here.

Although Quinn's response did not directly address my question about Frontier, it opened the door for discussions about representation and equality. Before I could transition to discussing Frontier's environment, the students progressed the topic of representation. Lauren said, "It's weird though, when you actually pay attention. When you actually focus on it and you see 90% White, you expect it, but you're actually paying attention." Lauren was suggesting with awareness of representation, there is a conscious recognition of inequality in leadership. Quinn hopped back into the conversation, "Yea, I encountered, throughout the entire day, less than ten women."

Campus Climate. I sensed this conversation was not directed enough towards race in leadership. I asserted myself into the dialogue and suggestively asked, "Has anyone been into the Frontier student government chamber?" Riley indicated she had been there many times as an orientation leader, "That's where we do a lot of our admissions presentations. And just seeing what that is truly saying, like subconsciously." Riley caught my hint and was alluding to the

numerous pictures of student leaders on the wall. Every student government administration, going back to the founding of Frontier, was visually represented along the walls.

The Frontier student government chamber was an incredibly preserved historical record, but also problematic in representation of student leadership. Apollo was quick to levy his opinion, "The walls are just filled with White people." Quinn also jumped in, "White people everywhere. It's like the whole room." And Apollo then shared his simplistic evaluation, "It's bad." I wanted to explore why the student leaders felt this representation was not acceptable, but Riley returned to a topic I hoped to avoid. "Well this is maybe not connecting, but fun fact, you'll see more women in positions of power there. There's white women, but during times of war. I thought that was interesting." Lauren took the bait to discuss gender rather than race. She digressed into a lengthy story about a class assignment on women's leadership in the military.

Tactfully, I stepped into the conversation with the intention to direct conversation back to race and leadership,

> Okay. I truly believe gender issues are important and would love to unpack some of those things. But I'd like to refocus our conversation on race. They do intersect – most definitely. But in the context of race, can you see any of these things in leadership, manifested here at Frontier?

The three females were a little dismayed when I shifted away from women's issues in leadership. Their voices reflected a passion for the topic, but the pivot back to race was understandable.

Quinn helped resume the topic of race and leadership at Frontier. She brought up the recent search for a new president,

> I thought it was really interesting that all three of the finalists for the new president were all White men. White men, but White in general. Just looking at their pictures, they all

look very similar. Which is interesting and quite disappointing. I didn't see a lot of diversity there… it seems like everyone is pushing for more diversity

Curious to learn more about how Quinn made meaning of this topic, I asked her "So why do you think the finalists were three White men?" She paused and then spoke, "I think it's because the Board of Trustees are White men. That's my opinion." Riley was eager to express her opinion on the topic too, "I also feel they weren't comfortable hearing from a woman. And again, that goes back to gender." Riley's disclaimer on the end of her statement was acknowledging I wanted to talk about race, but she still felt compelled to speak to gender issues.

Quinn seemed to disagree the decision was purely a matter of gender. She shared, "I was just going to say that we're too comfortable. He's just comfortable, a White man. Comfortable for the University and the Board. He's the easy option." Apollo also felt a White leader was easier for the PWI campus environment, "There's definitely more scrutiny when it's not a White man. Definitely more watched and more criticism."

To help clarify Apollo's comments I asked him, "So would you say it's politically safe then?" Quinn immediately responded with greater intensity, "Yea, it's SO politically safe. SO politically safe. I met all of them. I know they're different, but they're also SO the same." Quinn's comments were an attempt to reconcile two competing narratives between leadership and race. In the previous caucuses, she had joined Lauren in asking for individual consideration of specific lived experiences. They believed White people should not be generalized based on race. However, in the context of Frontier's leadership, she acknowledged the candidates all seemed to blend together.

To my surprise the conversation abruptly shifted with a comment from Riley, "Another thing we talked about in my first year seminar that pertains to Whiteness and seeing it on campus

is the statue in the middle of campus." While there were several statues of people across campus, Riley was referring to a prominent sculpture of abstract people made of White marble, "Yea, my professor called it the Ivory Soap people." I sought to capitalize on this new direction about leadership and race by asking the group if they could recall any people of color who are enshrined on campus.

The group was silent until Riley spoke up, "I can't think of any statues on campus, except for one." Having seen this statue myself, I knew exactly what she was referencing. The statue was prominently located by the Dining Hall and featured a local Native American leader in a full headdress of feathers. This historical figure was revered among local tribes and celebrated for his successful peaceful negotiations with White settlers. Inaccurately, the statue featured him riding a horse with a spear held above his head. I encouraged the group to explore this imagery, "Let's talk about that statue."

Quinn quickly labeled it, "It's super stereotypical". I responded, "Tell me why." She knew exactly why, "I mean, it's a Native American man with the whole headdress and how you would stereotypically think of them. Riding on a horse and going into battle. I also think it's stereotypical because it doesn't show their daily life." Riley also found the statue to be problematic, "It's like the university can use their Native American indigenous background when it's convenient to them… we are occupying stolen land and walking around. We do it when it's convenient." Riley was suggesting that this leader was favored among White people and the statue seemed tokenizing. Frontier still rested on former Native lands and there was little acknowledgement.

Quinn understood her comment in a different way, "And also, I never heard of anybody else. I'm sure there's other people that were influential and important." Apollo returned to this

leader's significance, "It's just so used colloquially now. It's where we eat, we just go there. It takes the power away from that name. It's a big thing in a lot of indigenous culture…" Apollo trailed off and Quinn interjected, "Like calling it by its nickname?" Quinn's inquiry seemed to be a moment of learning. By abbreviating the Native American leader's full name for simplicity and pronounceability, it reduced the name into slang. Apollo responded, " like giving power to those names, you know?" Quinn acknowledged, "yeah, that's true." While the nickname was affectionately used by students, it did not reflect the full cultural importance of the leader's identity. Furthermore, the reduction was a cultural component at a rural PWI campus. The cultural significance of this person of color was reduced and lost upon the student at Frontier.

Student Leadership at Frontier. I wanted to narrow the focus of our final conversation to their leadership experiences on the Frontier campus. I asked, "In this checklist, are there any experiences that might not be on it, but apply in a similar way? Can you think of anything in your own experiences?" Apollo responded first and claimed student government was primarily a place for White people. The contribution did not generate much conversation since we had already talked about it.

The conversation reignited when Lauren responded with one word, "Rodeo". When I asked her to elaborate, she provided an analysis of the Frontier Rodeo team,

> There was one African American and that's it. Everyone else was White. I just think it's so normalized for White people. It's hard because it shouldn't be. There should be more represented, but there's not. I feel like they can't just because it's a White spot, like it wouldn't be a welcoming space.

Lauren believed people of color would not feel comfortable entering predominantly White spaces like the club Rodeo team.

I was actually surprised there was a Black student as part of the team and wanted to know more, “If you wanted to be on the Rodeo Team or Captain of the Rodeo Team, do you think race would be a barrier? Lauren nodded and was about to speak, but Riley jumped into the conversation, “And then they’ll tokenize like anyone. Yeah, like that is occupying spaces. I don’t know if tokenism is an acceptable word, but that’s what they’re doing.” Riley was implying a student of color who sought these leadership positions in Rodeo would be tokenized, which is just as problematic as exclusion.

My direction of the conversation was interrupted by Riley’s commentary on the Rodeo team, but I thought it might be helpful to explore tokenism in student leadership. I asked Riley, “Can you think of a few examples of what that might look like?” Riley shared a story about her own complicit participation in tokenism,

> So something really horrible, that I didn’t know that I was participating, I did this picture as an orientation leader with the marketing office. There was four of us: three were White and one of us was Black. He had like an Afro. Basically, we were all taking pictures and helping each other ride a skateboard. And if you look at the website for the University, it’s me helping someone Black on a skateboard. And like if you look at any of the other pictures from that shoot, it’s like all the White orientation leaders helping each other.

Riley was implying the Frontier marketing office selectively used photos to highlight diversity among student leaders. The majority of the photos included White people, but these were not used for publications. The one picture placed on the Frontier homepage featured her assisted by a Black student leader. She felt embarrassed because she felt the messaging was reflective of unwanted power dynamics. As a student leader focused on activism, this was not how she desired to be portrayed on the Frontier website.

Apollo followed with his own story about tokenism associated with his experience as an orientation leader. He began critiquing how the office was "glowing" to add a person of color to the ranks of student leaders. Riley also recalled the incident, "They had hired all White people, so they made an internship." Riley implied the hiring practices were not adequate in attracting racial diversity or overlooked people of color. To remedy the lack of diversity, the Orientation Office established a new internship and filled it with a person of color. Apollo continued, "For one of the football players. Yeah, it definitely was just for diversity." I was a little perplexed about this critique. Apollo did not mention this person was a person of color, but implicitly associated his racial identity with athletic status. I found this comment difficult to reconcile. It reinforced stereotypes we had previously critiqued, but was critical of tokenism.

To get a better sense of the situation I asked, "Umm, okay. What did the intern do?" Riley shrugged to convey she was not aware. I turned to Apollo to explain,

> He really didn't have many tasks. And I feel like this is not a reflection of him because he was a great person. He interacted with students really well. Not sure what would have been required, but his position was literally just to be an aide and help. Which is also another weird thing because, you're like, "let's put a Black person in a position to help us and be our person that does things for us."

Apollo's explanation provided a bit more context. He was unaware of the purpose of this internship, but he thought it was designed to help the orientation leader cohort. This dynamic was problematic because the entire team was White. He did not appreciate how a Black student was tasked with helping the White student leaders. It is also unclear if the internship was paid or unpaid. This disparity might have added to the awkward racial dynamic.

We were making inroads toward their personal experiences with race and leadership roles. Seeking to bring the conversation even closer, I asked "Can you share a time you thought about race when engaging in one of your leadership opportunities?" Apollo provided a concrete example from his leadership in a student organization,

> This semester we started the queer community coalition. It is a student organization on campus. But the logos, and like everything we produced, I required us to include black and brown on the LGBTQ flag. Just because it's fucked up that it caused such a debate. And I think we should include that. It's not that hard. I was like, "we're keeping black, like every single logo has to have it. I don't care. It's being implemented somehow." There's no excuse for not doing it.

Apollo was firm and direct with his fellow student leaders about racial inclusion. The black and brown stripes of the classic rainbow flag were new additions designed to reflect the people of color in the movement. He unapologetically demanded the group adopt this new imagery to signal racial awareness. His actions were probably bold at a PWI institution like Frontier.

Riley stepped in next and shared a story from her experience as an orientation leader. In particular, the story was about a time she realized how recruitment materials may have been insensitive and she needed to take action.

> I was supposed to take over admissions materials to the Native American Center. As I was walking there, I realized, all the materials said "The world needs more Frontiersmen!" I was like, "Oh God, I can't." These materials were going to be sent to the reservation. In this moment, I needed to go back to our basement and go find different t-shirts. I was actually worried that my boss was going to get mad at me.

Riley felt the connotation of a Frontiersman would be insensitive within the legacy of White settlement of Native American lands. She felt her supervisor lacked awareness of this racial dynamic. Consequently, it placed a burden on her to speak up about the issue.

Riley knew she needed to take action, but was fearful for the possible repercussions. She eventually brought the issue up with her supervisor and suggested using old t-shirts from several years ago.

> I know my boss doesn't harbor any negative feelings now, but it's not a big social justice job. It's just like, if you care about social justice, you're taking on the burden of doing that work. I was pleasantly surprised, but they thought it was funny. And I'm like "Yo, I just almost sent 200 shirts with an offensive slogan to the reservation. And you didn't even think about it. And now it's funny?!" It was just really apparent to me, no one is thinking about this. And putting the work on student ambassadors.

Riley was astonished at the lack of sensitivity from the Orientation Office. She acknowledged the office was not progressive enough to realize their mistake, but yet felt resentful the "burden" was placed on student leaders. This predicament felt compromising and she worried about the implications for her employment as a paid student leader.

Parallels of Marginalized Identities

> I started to relate to queerness… it's different, but also the same.
>
> - Apollo, Third Caucus

As they continued to examine their own leadership roles, Apollo wanted to make a distinction about being a White leader. "I think there's a differentiation. Like how does your individual Whiteness relate to these things? Versus how can you, in a position of privilege, recognize the operations of Whiteness?" His phrasing was perhaps too complex for the group because it did not garner much conversation. Simply put, Apollo was stating leaders can examine

their personal responsibility in Whiteness or they can view positions as power to address Whiteness.

With no response from the group, he continued to elaborate on his message. It came out even more muddled. He struggled to illustrate this distinction in leadership, so he sought to make a parallel to another marginalized identity,

> I just started to relate to queerness. Queerness can be, to some extent, more hidden than racial identity. And there's people who are biracial and their identity can also be hidden. But I think queerness is a little more… I don't know. I think it's different, but they're also the same.

When Apollo was unable to articulate the relationship between leadership and race, he relied upon one of his marginalized identities to illustrate the nature of the problem. Yet, even he found this comparison to be inadequate to describe the relationship between race and leadership.

Apollo recognized racial and sexual orientation marginalized identities had commonality, but also were divergent in relation to leadership. In particular, he brought up the concept of hiding one's marginalized identities to be accepted in roles. Riley tried to summarize his comments, "Yeah. A difference between passing and performing." Passing would involve hiding a marginalized identity to be accepted by a majority, while performing would be integrating an identity as part of an overall leadership identity.

This spurred Riley to share her own parallels with marginalized identities. She felt the only way she could assume leadership in social justice activism was to proclaim her marginalized identities.

> Okay, this is something I've been talking about with a friend, when you're taking leadership roles in a social justice area. Your Whiteness is so attached to the idea you can

> have other intersecting identities, but those get completely ignored by your Whiteness. And how much privilege there is with that. But then having to be so open about your identities and why you should also belong in this social justice space. Like having to tell literally anyone I talk to that I'm disabled, even though that could hurt me getting a job.

She struggled with how race seemed to overshadow other relevant identities. She wanted to be part of social justice activism, but felt her White racial identity prevented her from becoming a leader. She moderated this frustration by acknowledging the importance of race, "But then again, I think back about the color of my skin. I don't know. It's just been something we're talking about. And then you see people trying to take on identities to seem…" She trailed off without words, but was suggestive that people might adopt marginalized identities for credibility in activism. Apollo provided an example of a national politician who claimed to have Native American ancestry to add to her progressive credentials.

These comments placed me in a difficult predicament. As a White leader with my own identities, I have experienced these frustrations as well. Race has precluded me from certain spaces of activism. Yet, I felt compelled to counter their perspective, "I think that's great and it's already come up in our discussion. You know, there may be other identities that experience oppression that you hold, but sometimes you can either hide them or your racial identity has greater meaning in a social context." I expressed race has no parallels; it is a unique phenomenon in the United States.

Apollo did not agree and gently pushed back on my opinion. He felt it was problematic to hide identities,

> There's the notion that you can hide those things and then you're safe in that situation. Like you can get past that situation. But I don't think a lot of times we focus on the

> trauma and the hard that hiding causes that individual. Just because they got to this situation safe, doesn't mean they weren't harmed or disenfranchised in that individual situation. There's still psychological and collective trauma building up.

I appreciated Apollo felt comfortable enough to challenge my earlier comments. He was likely speaking from lived experiences of suppressing a social identity. However, he did not address my prioritization of race. It seemed they could recognize the importance of race, but felt the salience of their own marginalized identities. Their understanding of the power dynamics around race and leadership were informed by their own lived experiences with marginalized identities.

Being a White Student Leader

> Good leadership should amplify racial awareness for anyone.
>
> - Apollo, Third Caucus

While we were still on the topic of student leadership and race, I wanted to explore what it meant to be a White student leader. I asked that exact question and Lauren tilted her head sideways in a confused look. She shifted to Quinn with a raised eyebrow compelling Quinn to speak. "I would just say normal. I don't think anything of it. It sounds bad, but I don't. Just those two are together." In Quinn's view, student leadership was synonymous with being White. The sentiment was most likely based in reality – Frontier was overwhelmingly White. Yet, her perception hinted at a bigger problem within student leadership at Frontier.

Apollo expanded on Quinn's thought in new ways, "That's something I'm still working on. If I get selected for something, I just think it's normal. I never really consider how my race inputs to it." Apollo sensed race was not a factor when seeking leadership positions. Due to the normalcy of Whiteness, he never considered how race may have influenced the outcome in positive or negative manners.

Lauren had a different experience when in high school that shaped her view on race and leadership positions. She felt her White race negatively impacted her chances when she applied for a specific position.

> In high school, I put in for an officer position. They told me they needed someone of not White color. They needed someone, so I didn't get it. They put someone Indian in, which I'm not upset about. It's just like, why would you even have to make that point? Just put him on the team. I don't know.

Lauren felt rejected because of her White race. While she was not opposed to the selection of someone due to race, she would have preferred race was not mentioned as a selection factor.

On the topic of students of color in leadership roles, Riley shared a different perspective she had gained from friends. She compared the experiences of student leaders through the lens of race.

> Then I think about my friends of color that take on leadership roles. And they just talk about a faster burnout than a White student in a leadership position. Not taking into consideration other intersectional identities, I just know so many student leaders don't want to take on certain roles. They know they're just going to have to speak about their existence all the time. And that's just something we just don't experience – that level of burnout.

Riley highlighted a privilege of White student leaders. Due to the normalcy of Whiteness, they do not need to represent their race or constantly talk about it. In contrast, a student of color in a leadership position might have these challenges, in addition to the high demands of a leadership role. These additional factors make being a student leader easier for White students.

These confounding factors likely lead to higher levels of burnout in students of color. I remarked, “So, it sounds like leadership amplifies racial awareness for people of color?” Quinn simply responded with a “yup” while Apollo rested in deep thought. He spoke up, “I think good leadership should amplify racial awareness for anyone.” The group became wide-eyed after this statement. A chorus of agreement erupted. It was a culmination of discussions leading to this consensus; race and leadership were intertwined. These White student leaders were beginning to shed the Whiteness which made race invisible.

Takeaways from Caucusing

> I’m always thinking about the privilege I occupy… And so this sparked looking at leadership.
>
> - Riley, Third Caucus

My experience with these students had been transformational, but I did not want to assume they had the same experience. I could make inferences based on their interactions or body language, but I thought it would be prudent to ask. I tried to avoid begging the question, “So, you spent three nights together. How might your participation influence your leadership or your world view? And maybe it doesn’t at all. No offense to me, I’m just asking the question.” Quinn emerged first,

> I hope to teach in the inner city. That’s been my dream. I’m learning about culturally responsible pedagogy and things like that. So it just furthers the questions that go through my head when I’m planning lessons, activities, back to school nights, parent teacher conferences, and basically everything. And it pushes me to continue to make sure that I’m including everyone in a respectful manner.

Quinn’s response was reflective of her career ambitions. I had not considered all the ways a teacher could assume daily leadership among youth. And I thought she could go further to inspire

responsible leadership as a teacher. I planted the seed, “Or maybe even the non-teaching roles too? Like encouraging leadership, coaching, or mentoring?” Quinn nodded thoughtfully in response.

Apollo named immediate takeaways which could be applied to current relationships and leadership roles. His thoughts were derived from the caucusing.

> For me, it’s having conversations with other White leaders. You get to a point where I have questions about Whiteness or leadership positions. I will recognize and be like “Okay, I can’t just ask people of color all these questions and burden them.” But I never really take it to the next step. Like, okay, let me go talk with my White friends about these things. And it’s just the importance of taking the next step.

His response was powerful. His honesty about his own shortcomings in exploring race exhibited sincerity. He wanted to speak with people of color, but knew the burden it caused. Instead, he realized he should speak with White friends. He just needed to start making those efforts. Caucusing had demonstrated the benefit of speaking with White peers.

Lauren was next to contribute her reflections. Her thoughts revealed a newfound awareness of racial surroundings,

> I feel because of this study I’m thinking about all the places I go. Seeing how much of it is really White. There’s a lot of places I go where it’s all White people. I’ve paid more attention in the past two weeks. And it’s just crazy when you actually recognize it. I’m digging into it now.

For Lauren, this study may have been her real foray into White privilege. The topic of leadership brought her into the conversation, but she walked away with a greater racial awareness. A leadership framework served a bridge to her racial awareness.

Riley was the last to speak and referenced how these meetings coincided with her interviews for graduate school assistantships. The combination of the two experiences prompted reflection on her racial presence.

> A lot of my interview questions were like "What are your experiences helping diverse populations?" I feel like I got really comfortable here in my Whiteness. I went to my interviews and I was like "Dang, what am I actively doing?" I know I'm not actively harming anyone, but am I passively harming anyone?

Prior to these experiences, she felt content at Frontier as a student leader. The interviews and caucusing prompted her to reconsider her actions. Her renewed consciousness demonstrated sensitivity which reactivated self-monitoring.

Summary of Data for Q3

Our final meeting offered incredible insights about how White student leaders make meaning of race through a leadership framework. Stories were quickly furnished about their own campus environment, but were less likely to emerge from examining their own leadership roles. Through continued vulnerability and honest self-examination, their own synthesis of leadership and race emerged. Their own marginalized identities provided them a tempting way to understand racial privilege, but was perhaps misleading and constituted an unequal comparison.

Through their exchange of stories, these students told a new narrative of being a White student leader. This narrative still spoke to their unique journeys of race, but also a shared understanding of the identity. Apollo's final statement, and the reaction of the group, demonstrated how they adopted this newfound narrative. They recognized the specific privileges and responsibility associated with White leadership. With a greater racial awareness, they were already identifying ways to change their own leadership.

We brought our final meeting to a close with an acknowledgment. I expressed my gratitude how they chose to stay engaged for all three meetings. Afterwards, they hung around to socialize. Several were excited to have built relationships together and wanted to connect after break. Little did they know, this would be their last week on-campus. After their spring break, COVID-19 began to rock the nation and most states moved to shelter-in-place orders. Their in-person classes transitioned online and they were told not to return to campus. Lauren and Quinn's plans for Greek Week were discarded. Apollo's work on student government elections shifted online. And Riley would not be able to celebrate her graduation in-person. The group would never meet again.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

My study explored how White student leaders make meaning of their racial identity through leadership concepts. A leadership framework was employed to encourage the exploration of racial privilege to become a better leader. Using the consciousness-of-self framework, an emphasis on self-exploration opened the door to difficult conversations around race. Designed with a constructivist paradigm employing a narrative methodology, the study elicited the stories of students to coconstruct a new narrative of leadership and race.

White student leaders gathered among their peers in a single-identity caucus to learn more about their own constructs. Three caucus meetings were conducted to explore the research questions in succession:

Q1 What narratives do White student leaders tell about their leadership identity?

Q2 What narratives do White student leaders tell regarding their racial identity?

Q3 How do White student leaders make meaning of White privilege through a leadership framework?

Member checking guided the determination of narratives from the stories. After the caucusing, I critically analyzed the narratives to discern the meaning of specific codes which frequently arose in conversation. While codes were mostly unidentified, several participants still addressed their meaning in conversation. This chapter systematically analyzes these coded constructs using the research questions as a format. The discussion of these findings reveal a deeper meaning of what it means to be a White student leader.

The meaning derived from analysis will be overlaid with existing grand narratives about race in the United States. Two grand narratives will be addressed in discussion of the data: bootstraps and the White savior narratives. These will be presented in a familiar format established by the research questions. Integration of these narratives offer meaningful insights to inform my overall recommendations and reflections. Recommendations include suggestions for White student leaders, leadership educators, and higher education researchers or practitioners.

The chapter will also introduce topics for future research. This material was derived from the analytic memos I used to reflexively chronicle my thoughts during the study. Several ideas were related to race and leadership, but not central to this research topic. Consequently, they were excluded from the findings and discussion. Yet, these offerings provide new avenues to understand how White students make meaning of a privileged identity.

Finally, the chapter will conclude with my personal meaning-making of the research. As a result of my reflections, I will offer further considerations for caucusing, developing instruments, and professional applications. These discernments may be useful for a researcher or practitioner seeking to apply the knowledge from this study. The synthesis of analysis, recommendations, and reflections will culminate in a final statement to progress racial awareness in higher education.

Examining Leadership Narratives

The first caucus was devoted to exploring leadership identity. The student's stories illustrated a leadership narrative associated with economic status. For most of the participants, parents were role models for leadership in careers. In this regard, leadership was equated with financial and personal success. Apollo, drew a distinction in this narrative because his family did not need leadership due to their privilege. Instead, he wished his family adopted an everyday leadership to help others. His critique of family still aligned with the prevalent narrative among

the group – leadership was primarily used to improve one's own individual or family circumstance.

Coded Constructs from Leadership

Most of their families enthusiastically encouraged leadership development. There appeared to be a cohesive narrative around leadership and family, but conflict emerged when discussing leadership opportunity. Due to their personal and family backgrounds with leadership, the students disagreed about how someone becomes a leader. This difference was revealed by the discussion of coded constructs pertaining to leadership, signifying larger philosophical divides. Quinn and Lauren originally felt leadership should be earned, while Riley felt this could be exclusionary. These conversations would endure through the remaining caucusing and serve as a rich opportunity to connect race and leadership.

Earned Leadership

The first coded construct to emerge was earned leadership. Originally, this construct was expressed as becoming a leader by proving yourself as a competent and experienced individual. Lauren provided a coded phrase for this philosophy as going "through the sticks". It conveyed an image of a hardship due to being in a rougher environment. This proverbial phrase was likely a product of her family's rural or military background. She later summarized it as, "You have to follow first, before you can lead. You have to know what you're even talking about before you teach that to somebody else." In this perspective, an individual earns leadership by going through rough experiences and learning from existing leaders.

Quinn also held a construct about earned leadership. She explained, "The leaders I know are people who had to work for it... it wasn't necessarily handed to them." Her use of the word "handed" suggests an evaluation of how leadership is obtained. Hardworking people earn

leadership, while some obtain leadership without working for it. The latter is likely not worthy because it was handed to them, rather than working hard for the position. In earned leadership, hard work was the differentiating factor.

The earned leadership construct conveyed a distinct picture of how an individual becomes a leader. It required an individual to be knowledgeable of the context, proven by trial, and accepted among others. This concept inherently purveyed exclusivity for leadership. Not everybody was worthy to hold a leadership position: one must contain the right mix of qualities or follow a specific path. Merit from experience was the hallmark of earned leadership.

As a standalone construct, merit was a logical factor for conferring leadership. However, it does not consider how other societal structures impact this way of thinking. For example, how does bias towards certain social identities shape the evaluation of one's competence? Even if an individual held the proper qualifications, bias would limit opportunities for those with identities who are not as accepted. During the third caucus, this possible confluence between race and leadership became apparent when discussing the Frontier presidential search.

The White student leaders felt hiring a White male to be the president at Frontier was an "easy" choice for the institution. It would be accepted and uncontested by the PWI campus. They also expressed it would be easier for a White person to assume the leadership role. Their honest assessment furnished an unconscious acknowledgment about the flaws of earned leadership. If it was easier for a White male to be accepted by a campus community, it was inherently harder for a candidate of color to earn this leadership role. The candidate of color worked just as hard, but the White candidate was favored due to overall acceptance.

The earned leadership construct seems like a reasonable way to become a leader. If a candidate had tested abilities, then it seems logical they could lead. Yet, it lacks consideration of

how race and other disadvantaged social identities may not be as accepted in these roles. In the evaluation of the Frontier presidential search, these students uncovered the potential pitfalls of earned leadership. It can be harder for a person of color, or other oppressed group, to earn and perform in a top leadership role. Often this phenomenon is referred to as the *glass ceiling*. Earned leadership may be one of many systematic barriers resulting in the glass ceiling.

Alternatives to Earned Leadership

Even before the third caucus and examination of Frontier, these student leaders were astute enough to identify the problems with the earned leadership construct. At the end of the first caucus, Riley pushed back on the concept. Her challenge of the earned leadership construct was not informed by her racial identity, but by her own parallels of marginalized identities with a glass ceiling. She felt excluded in middle and high school environments because she was not accepted. Consequently, she disagreed about how leadership should be obtained.

My analysis of Riley's comments prompted me to explore another construct which could supplant earned leadership. I revisited her comments seeking something she presented as an alternative, but had difficulty identifying anything new. While she had resisted earned leadership, her critique did not label another way of conferring leadership. She only could describe experiences where she witnessed the encouragement of different types of leadership styles. I similarly struggled to find my own alternative process of providing leadership opportunities. Perhaps there are inclusive leadership models designed to encourage folks of various backgrounds to step-up? I could not think of a single model. Undoubtedly, a community aligned with earned leadership may struggle with this new paradigm. And those who subscribed to earned leadership would likely just consider an alternative as "handing" people of color leadership.

My examination of Riley's comments, coupled with my own challenges, suggests White people may not be equipped with alternative ways to view leadership. Whiteness and earned leadership seemed intertwined. Finding a new way to develop leadership constituted dismantling a component of White supremacy. This task may hold significant implications for White leaders and higher education. Recommendations might include studying emergent racial leadership models to examine how people become leaders. Future studies could also dig deeper into learning how leadership is viewed in culturally relevant ways.

The First Encouragers

These White student leaders shared a narrative regarding leadership development in college. Their stories praised Frontier staff as professionals who spurred their leadership growth. There was no mention of characters from high school such as teachers, coaches, counselors, or mentors. College peers were not seen as a positive influence. Furthermore, Frontier faculty were conspicuously absent from conversations of leadership. The narrative entirely focused on Frontier staff.

The participants signaled these staff members went beyond their job descriptions to encourage involvement and push them to become leaders. Several participants described these people as "the first person" who focused on their development. Riley also referenced Frontier as "the first time" she was able to become a leader. In entirety, the White student leaders were using these phrases to indicate a divergence in their leadership narrative. The college environment had changed how they perceived their own leadership.

Frontier staff were considered their *first encouragers*. They heaped praise on certain professionals for their assistance, but these people were likely not the first to encourage them. In fact, the first stories they told pertained to the family who directly supported their engagement.

Riley's mom even enrolled her in first-year leadership programs before she had arrived on Frontier's campus. Obviously, Frontier staff were not the first figures to encourage them.

These stories elevating Frontier staff members might hold a deeper meaning. In one of Riley's stories about a staff member, she felt like college was an opportunity to redefine yourself. As previously mentioned, she cited other's limited her involvement in leadership, "like once you were coded, and your personality was coded… from preschool to 12th grade, you were done." The remainder of her thoughts provided greater insight into these limitations, "I never really had time to develop myself because I was just who everybody else thought was Riley". Peer perceptions had prevented Riley from participating. Frontier offered a break from these limiting perceptions – an opportunity to create a new identity. The college environment was different because Riley could redefine herself and seek leadership.

Frontier staff were the characters in the White students' leadership narrative who enabled them to redefine their leadership identity. Apollo's comments also aligned with concept. When speaking about his first encourager at Frontier, he said she helped him "talk about the different things I could do." These staff encouraged them to consider new experiences, reinforced their confidence, and pushed them to engage. As a result, they coconstructed a new leadership identity with professionals and peers.

The first encouragers is a coded construct displaying insight into White student leaders' meaning-making of identity development. Frontier staff were given the credit for acting as catalysts in their development. However, this development was more than just acquiring new skills. Student leaders shed their previous limitations and proceeded to become leaders in a new environment. This process involved the departure from existing narratives and the creation of new leadership identities. Family did not offer them the same opportunity. These stories around

first encouragers offer implications for cocurricular professionals when examining how White student leaders make meaning of a privileged identity.

Bootstraps Grand Narrative

College was a new opportunity for these students to redefine their leadership identity, but many of them still held constructs from their parents. Parental figures demonstrated leadership would yield achievement, especially financial success. The narrative featured several parents who overcame socioeconomic adversity to earn their positions and improve their situation. Consequently, economic success and leadership were concretely linked. Hard work was the primary factor in this construct.

In isolation, this construct of earned leadership is logical. If a person applies enough hard work and persistence, they would be rewarded appropriate leadership roles. When this narrative is considered in a greater societal context, it aligns with a pervasive grand narrative in the United States. The bootstraps narrative asserts a person is solely in control of their own success - hard work determines their destiny. Success is guaranteed through a fair and impartial social agreement (Goode & Keefer, 2016).

The bootstraps grand narrative also provides an explanation for why people fail to improve their own situation. Those who fail are presumed to be unmotivated or deficient. In the earned leadership construct, individuals who are unable to prove themselves are not provided leadership opportunities. When opportunity is provided without the prescribed hard work, it generated resentment among the student leaders. Two student leaders in this study described this situation as being “handed” leadership. This phrasing is closely associated with a handout – something given freely to someone. A handout can carry a heavy connotation, especially as a pejorative reference to social welfare programs.

As a result of the bootstraps grand narrative, tensions surfaced when the group began discussing race. In particular, Lauren and Quinn did not appreciate how people assumed they were rich because they were White. The concept of being given something without hard work conflicted with their leadership narrative. The stereotype suggested their families did not work hard to obtain their financial standing. Instead, success was a product of race and simply handed down to them.

The implications of being privileged due to race ran counter to the bootstraps narrative. It generated defensiveness because it invalidated their family success stories. Furthermore, the counter narrative suggested race was the most important factor to success, not hard work. This narrative had the potential to negate the social agreement they embraced to make meaning of their own leadership identities. Racial privilege seemed to threaten their existing constructs and produced cognitive dissonance.

It was difficult for the student leaders to see how their own leadership was influenced by race. Apollo even acknowledged in the third caucus, “If I get selected for something, I just think it’s normal. I never really consider how my race inputs to it.” Yet, when the student leaders critiqued the presidential search at Frontier, race was easily seen as a complicating factor. Meritocracy was disrupted by other social structures of conferring opportunity. In this particular instance, these student leaders could identify how White privilege influenced the presidential search. They could make meaning of it in an external context, but it was much more challenging to focus on the personal.

Examining Racial Narratives

Each student had a unique experience learning about their White racial identity. Even among these diverse journeys, there were clear and common racial narratives. Unlike their

leadership development, their family did not encourage exploration of racial identity. Family often dismissed, disputed, or dissuaded their attempts to discuss race. In Lauren's experience, her family even encouraged her to leverage her racial privilege to maximize her opportunity. Frontier staff, along with some faculty, were seen as the first encouragers for their exploration of racial privilege.

This group may not be representative of most White student leaders, but these participants could easily identify White privilege. They recognized and confidently described the benefits of being White. Yet, this group was also apprehensive about making personal connections. They preferred to discuss external situations rather than examine how they personally benefited from White privilege. Their initial articulation of Whiteness seemed more like an intellectual concept, rather than a lived experience filled with emotion. Only after we established vulnerability, could these students dig into their own White identity.

Vulnerability did not resolve all issues associated with unpacking White privilege. Our conversations were peppered with traces of defensiveness, guilt, and misdirection. However, these conversations revealed their barriers of examining their own White privilege. These students felt they did not have very many places, even among White peers, to unpack their own privilege. Some expressed their leadership identities might be compromised if they admitted to having a racist thought. Vulnerability was hard to accomplish in the caucuses, but even harder in their everyday leadership roles.

Coded Constructs from Race

During the second and third caucuses, these students uncovered racially coded constructs. These constructs pertained to how White people viewed their own identity and White privilege. In particular, they realized how an exotic aggrandizement of White genealogy could distance

themselves from a White racial identity. When processing White privilege, they also discussed how one's voice was symbolic of power. The discussions of these coded constructs revealed the potential hazards of making meaning of the White identity.

Exotic White

The first coded construct emerged when discussing White ancestry. These students critiqued when White people overemphasize European heritage to distance themselves from racial identity. Through an understanding of one's own of lineage, a White person could choose a family narrative that seemed less racially oppressive. For example, a family story about how Jewish grandparents survived the holocaust is less racially charged as having ancestors who owned cotton plantations in Georgia. Conceivably, a White individual could have both lineages, but selectively tell the narrative they felt most socially appropriate. Furthermore, a strong emphasis on one's European ethnic identity could minimize racial identity. Riley deemed this phenomenon as being "exotic White".

The combination of these two words convey a complex meaning with an intimation of satire. Through caucusing, these students articulated the White identity as accepted, natural, or unimportant. Their descriptions were congruent with literature suggesting White college students view their race as normal or ordinary. In contrast, exotic implies a foreign or uncommon characteristic, perhaps from an alluring story within someone's White identity. The exotic White label is an ironic satire of those who overemphasize their lineages.

The implications for this coded construct are more significant than the literal meaning. In the exotic White construct, the saliency of European ethnic identity displaces the meaning of a racial identity in the United States. Quinn affirmed this implication, "I don't think of my identity as a White American. I just think of my ties back to Europe and I just think that is so weird."

Exotic White intentionally conflates ethnic and racial identities. As a result, White people can choose a narrative that seems less oppressive or avoid racial constructs altogether.

Riley's personal reflections reveal the temptation of the exotic White construct, "I want to go to my other side where they're refugees from Poland." Her comments suggest the Polish narrative is not as problematic as her Mayflower lineage. She then admitted why, "I really want to go into spaces and not be the problem. I'm like 'I'm not that bad, you know?'" As literature has indicated, racism is often seen as a moral issue in the United States. Those who are racist are considered bad. When racism becomes a moral issue, rather than a systematic issue, Whites seek to distance themselves to not appear bad. The exotic White construct is another manifestation of this distancing.

Reflective of the student's satirical comments and laughter, they recognized absurdity in overemphasizing European genealogy. In particular, they mocked how a White person could showcase their genealogical breakdown as it was a prized pedigree. In contrast, Apollo noted how most people of color could not furnish such a record in the United States. And if they could, it would likely contain atrocities of colonialism. The exotic White construct was not just a behavior that maintained Whiteness, it also constituted a privilege exclusively available to White people.

It was Riley's reflections that illustrated the greatest challenge of the exotic White construct. She clearly rejected the concept, but the potential lingered in her mind. She deeply cared about social justice activism and desired to contribute. Her dominant social identities, especially being White, precluded her from activism circles. She knew the exotic White construct provided the opportunity to minimize an oppressive narrative or claim a marginalized one. If she could share a family narrative of oppression, perhaps she would not be seen as bad. Or maybe it

would demonstrate an understanding of generational oppression? Riley wanted to be seen as one of the good White people and the exotic White construct offered an opportunity.

White Savior Grand Narrative

Morality continued to surface when discussing the responsibility of White privilege. Riley and Apollo indicated they felt compelled to use their White privilege to speak for those who were not represented. They referred to this responsibility as "being a voice for the voiceless". A "voice" is code for societal power while "the voiceless" signified those without power. This phrase suggested those who have power should advocate on behalf of those most marginalized by society. Riley and Apollo shared they adopted this philosophy early in their social justice activism, but later abandoned it due to the inherent "paternalism". In their opinion, being a voice for marginalized individuals still did not afford them a voice. Instead, this coded construct maintained an environment to reinforce existing power.

Being a voice for the voiceless is similar to a grand narrative pertaining to morality and White privilege. The *White savior narrative* invokes a plot where people of color need rescuing from a terrible situation by a White hero. Only the White person has the power to intervene. Without this figure, the people of color would be left to their fates. As compensation for their altruistic efforts, the White savior is provided an emotional reward. This trope is pervasively found in movies, social media, and other narratives in the United States (Hughey, 2014).

Similar to the exotic White construct, The White savior grand narrative portrays race as a moral issue. The White savior is perceived as a good White person who uses their power for a seemingly charitable purpose. It effectively ignores the systematic issues contributing to the disenfranchisement of people of color (Aronson, 2017). Furthermore, it suggests people of color are unable to help themselves. The White savior narrative makes White people feel good about

helping others – perhaps when they may not even need the assistance. It is easy to see how an eager White student leader could adopt a White savior narrative. The narrative is a latent snare for the well-intended leader.

Quinn's desire to teach in a different community setting might be a tangible evidence of the White savior narrative. She shared, "I hope to teach in the inner city. That's been my dream. I'm learning about culturally responsible pedagogy and things like that." She expressed a well-meant sentiment to learn more about race and leadership to become an exceptional teacher. Yet, embedded in this response was a code regarding race. Her statement implied the inner city was a racially different setting. Furthermore, the inner city renders meaning beyond just a physical location. There is a connotation of an urban place beleaguered by problems which need addressing.

It is unclear why Quinn wanted to teach in the inner city. She did not grow up in the inner city. Perhaps she was excited to work in a place contrasting with the rurality of Frontier. Or perhaps she preferred working in a larger school district. Without probing deeper, the motives of her "dream" are unclear. However, scholars have found the White savior narrative to be prevalent among White educators. White females are especially indoctrinated by romantic notions of teaching in urban classrooms to keep students of color from failing (Aronson, 2017). Quinn's dream to teach in the inner city was well-intended, but likely informed by racial narratives.

Moving Beyond Code

Apollo and Riley could recognize how the voice narrative was problematic. Riley continued to speak in metaphor, "no, they have a voice, we just don't create a landscape where their voice can be heard or understood." She then proceeded to contextualize the narrative in race, "I think some voices aren't included for a reason and I would just keep allowing White

voices to only be heard if I was the voice for the voiceless." Apollo echoed Riley's opinion and offered a fix, "it's changing the landscape of the social arena that you're in to accommodate those voices and let them be heard independently".

In this statement, Apollo's solution was altering the "landscape of the social arena." His phrasing is another way of describing the current social context that confers power of a voice. His wording of "independently" suggested these voices would be free from outside influence or control. It is assumed that White student leaders have the ability to change an environment to make the setting more equitable. I was curious to learn how he envisioned creating this new landscape.

These students pointed out the flaws of both narratives when speaking in coded metaphor. They wanted to make space for other voices rather than represent them. However, the conversation did not progress beyond codes. What would space look like in a student leadership role? Would they be willing to give up their role for someone else to lead? Using codes illuminated the issue, but did not offer concrete recommendations for change. Our examination of racial narratives suggested they understood the challenges, but perhaps only in a conceptual dimension.

The Confluences of Race and Leadership

The research study attracted White students who wanted to talk about race, but the framework of consciousness-of-self empowered them to evaluate deeply held beliefs in an accelerated manner. As early as the first meeting, these students began tracing the confluences between White privilege and student leadership. Understandably, the specific applications in their own leadership were more elusive. It was easier, and perhaps safer, to examine race as an external concept. Personal interrogation was less likely to emerge naturally in conversation.

Caucusing and vulnerability was needed to produce insight into the personal confluences of leadership and race.

Coded Constructs from Confluences

The analysis of longitudinal codes revealed how the students' perspective changed by the third caucus. They were making new meaning of their roles as White student leaders. Lauren and Quinn expressed a newfound awareness about the pervasiveness of Whiteness. Riley felt the study had brought a greater sense of urgency to her anti-racism efforts. Apollo shared his desire to take the next step and begin engaging his White peers in dialogue about White privilege. The words "awareness" and "amplify" marked their new narrative about leadership and White privilege.

In the first meeting about leadership, the concept of awareness seldom appeared in conversation. It was only explicitly mentioned once and analysis of coded concepts revealed a handful of other references. Understandably, the second discussion on race invoked a greater theme of awareness and was mentioned several times by multiple participants. By the third meeting the concept of awareness became pervasive. Regardless of the topic, leadership or race, awareness was embedded into their conversation. By the end of our meetings, awareness had also evolved into a newer coded concept of amplification.

Awareness

Awareness likely meant something different for each member in the group, but each student used this word. For Lauren, Whiteness became apparent in her surroundings. Prior to the experience, she understood Frontier was a relatively White environment. Things were different by the third caucus – she began to know the meaning of a nearly all-White environment. She shared, "I've paid more attention in the past two weeks. And it's just crazy when you actually

recognize it. I'm digging into it now." Awareness meant noticing the dominance of the White identity.

Quinn's meaning of awareness was aligned with her career aspiration to become a teacher and serve the inner city community. Caucusing with White student leaders nudged her to continue learning about becoming culturally responsive. She knew her students would be more racially diverse than those at Frontier and she would need different skills for these classrooms. Awareness meant seeking the meaning of her own White identity to be an effective instructor.

Riley's awareness was raised by her interviews for graduate school. During her interviews, she was asked about her contributions to diversity and inclusion. Immediately after interviewing she participated in the caucusing. The combination of the two experiences prompted an honest assessment of her anti-racism actions. She felt she grew complacent in the predominantly White environment of Frontier and retreated into Whiteness. Awareness meant a renewal of her anti-racism activism.

Apollo's definition of awareness was illustrated by his actions in leadership roles at Frontier. In leadership roles, he assertively influenced his peers to welcome and affirm students of color. Even with these efforts, he still realized he could be doing more as a White student leader. Through the research study, he recognized the power of speaking with White peers about race. Awareness meant taking the next step to engage White peers about White privilege.

Amplification

The culmination of caucusing came when Apollo suggested, "I think good leadership should amplify racial awareness for anyone". There are several meanings embedded into this profound statement. It is an evaluative comment marked by the word "good". This word indicates ideal leadership should contain racial awareness. A self-aware and socially conscious

leader cannot ignore race. Colorblindness, or treating everyone equal, is not being aware. A "good" leader would know the significance of race in their organization.

The statement also broadly applies through the word "anyone." Awareness is not exclusive to certain leadership settings. "Anyone" denotes racial awareness is a tangible possibility in any place. It also suggests racial awareness is accessible for any leader to develop. Apollo may not have specifically chosen this word and just arbitrarily used it. Yet, the word use provides greater meaning to the declaration. "Anyone" is distinctly different than "everyone". Racial awareness can be adopted by any member of a group, it does not matter who. "Everyone" suggests a mandate among every member of a group. Anyone represents the choice to attain racially aware leadership.

Finally, Apollo's statement implies leadership is the modifier of racial awareness. Leadership has the power to enlarge an understanding of race. The word "amplify" is a summative code for these confluences. Racial awareness is magnified through conscious leadership. As awareness might mean different things for each of these student leaders, the effects of amplification likely results in different outcomes.

Revisiting the Social Change Model

In this study with White student leaders, our group interactions prompted reevaluation of individual values. Most notably, Lauren reconsidered her core beliefs about earned leadership and many in the group uncovered their own constructs pertaining to Whiteness. These instances demonstrate how individual and group domains do not need to occur in sequential order – they concurrently influence each other. These examples also illustrate how social perspective taking and social identity exploration occur as a result of group dialogue. The social change model for leadership inherently welcomes the examination of power and privilege.

The social change model for leadership is also designed to cultivate socially responsible leaders who generate positive change. This study has demonstrated how the framework can lead students to think about social responsibility. This is especially relevant for those who are privileged in society; privilege necessitates responsibility. The White student leaders in this study began to hint at this responsibility when discussing the amplification of racial awareness via leadership.

This model is ripe with applications for fostering anti-racist perspectives and behaviors. Yet, the structure of the current model does not explicitly mention race as a consideration within consciousness-of-self. Furthermore, the guidance from the model to develop self-awareness lacks an adequate level of challenge needed for White students to breakthrough Whiteness. In this study, caucusing was needed as a supplement to provide enough challenge to examine privileged constructs. Without the directed focus of caucusing, the participants would have been more likely to talk about their own marginalized identity or examine external circumstances of privilege.

Social change cannot originate without challenging privileged constructs. Unfortunately, the social change model for leadership does not provide enough guidance for students to challenge constructs on their own. While recommendations are provided later in this chapter to help White students advance their understanding of privilege, the social change model must continue to evolve with these considerations. In the absence of these developments, researchers and practitioners should be prepared to appropriately supplement this model.

Conclusions in Discussion

There was a common narrative among these White student leaders regarding leadership and race. Admittedly, awareness had no universal meaning in this narrative. Similar to the multiple realities purported in constructivism, the meaning of awareness differed among each

participant. The students tailored the meaning of awareness for their own leadership purpose. The incongruous meaning of this construct was significant. The meaning was not dependent on a certain threshold of racial awareness. Instead, each student could share how they cultivated their awareness from our discussions. Awareness had personal relevance in their own reality.

The theoretical framework of the study, consciousness-of-self, enabled these students to discuss race. Leadership served as a gateway to enroll White students into conversations they would rather avoid. These students had challenged each other, recognized their own constructs, dismantled problematic narratives, and coconstructed a new narrative. In the process, they found leadership amplified their racial awareness. Their leadership and racial identities were altered as a result of participating. The understanding of their narrative has potential and prospects for other White student leaders, leadership education, and higher education professionals.

Recommendations

The recommendations derived from this study are tailored to a particular population who might find this information relevant. As a result of my constructivist paradigm and narrative methodology, the recommendations are written as they were messages directed towards the specific audience. For example, recommendations will speak to White student leaders, rather than speak about them. This approach is often found in leadership textbooks designed to foster development of college students. Each section will have an understandably different voice for the audience, but reflect the authentic conversations produced from this type of scholarship.

The first set of recommendations will be directed towards the most relevant stakeholder group – White student leaders. Apollo, Lauren, Quinn, and Riley provided me the opportunity to learn about their deeply held beliefs. I would like to reciprocate their contributions by offering suggestions to enable growth for other White college students. These recommendations will

transition to address leadership educators including faculty and staff in higher education. Considerations for research will not be presented in these recommendations, but withheld until the next section for greater discussion.

A Message for White Student Leaders

This study about leadership and race was designed to help inform your choices for your own development. Your leadership style is inextricably connected to your sense of self. Becoming a better leader means you need to be self-aware; cognizant of the dynamics of social identities. Consciousness-of-self is a concept that enables leaders to develop this awareness by learning about yourself and others. Some of your identities might be easier for you to talk about, but race is often the hardest. White people are often socialized to ignore, minimize, or defend our race. These recommendations are designed to help you break out of these trappings.

Be Brave and Vulnerable

If you are honest with yourself, it will unlock doors for new personal discovery. Being authentic about your feelings on race can be scary, especially if they differ from what your parents or family believe. The White students in this study illustrated how vulnerability allows you to uncover the constructs you have grown up with. Riley summarized it well, “Your first thought is what you were made to believe and your second thought is who you really are.” She would probably encourage you to examine those beliefs you were given. By being vulnerable with your inner thoughts, you can begin to recognize the more problematic concepts of race.

The students in this study also illustrated how it can be hard to examine your own racial privilege. They found it easier to talk about external situations, like their college campus, rather than unpack their own beliefs. Be brave and challenge yourself to examine your own thoughts. Can you think about the last time you considered race in your leadership - and - did you change

anything as a result? Your courage to ask and answer these questions can lead to learning. Just remember, race is not a moral issue. You are not inherently bad because you are White. Race was designed to be a social structure of power - this makes racism a systematic problem.

Find Appropriate Places to Unpack

You will learn more about yourself when you talk with others. This study demonstrated the value of connecting with other White students. When Apollo, Lauren, Quinn, and Riley shared their personal experiences, they began to develop trust. They were not afraid of judgment or compromising their leadership roles. I would encourage you to find a group of White students who you can discuss race. They can help you learn about yourself and navigate your difficult situations.

Speaking with White students also reduces the potential for causing harm to your friends of color. It might be tempting to ask these peers about race, but asking them to recall painful experiences for your learning can be traumatic. Instead, seek these answers through other places – such as a group of White student peers. Perhaps take a class together to learn more about race. Several of the students in this research study indicated how coursework could be helpful for generating racial awareness. Think about the possibilities of gathering a group of friends to explore the content together! There are a number of majors and courses that could stimulate learning such as ethnic studies, sociology, history, or social justice. Taking one of these courses might even satisfy some of your general education requirements for graduation or look good when applying for graduate school.

If taking a course with peers is not feasible, maybe you could attend a guest lecture series who addresses race? Or designate a monthly book circle on a racial topic? As student leaders, you could work to bring a speaker to campus. Riley even indicated how useful the internet could

be when exploring race. There are a number of ways you could embark on learning about your White race. If you care about your friends of color, try to avoid the most convenient option of asking them for answers. Seek a more rewarding and meaningful answer from your own research.

Seek Encouragers

Another resource for learning about your race is found on your college campus. Many of the students in this study found professional staff as encouraging mentors. If you are having a hard time meeting other students or identifying places to get involved, these professionals are a great place to start. Consider talking to an academic advisor, student activities coordinator, or fraternity and sorority life advisor. They will likely know about like-minded students, student organization, or educational workshops designed for discussing race. Ask if they can introduce you to these people or spaces.

Risks and Benefits

The students in this study shared some of their fears about discussing race with peers, but were bold enough to participate in this study. They knew there would be benefit to their leadership development. Some sought to increase equality in their own community and reduce racism. Others knew they needed these skills for their leadership and careers. Developing an awareness would set them apart from other White graduates when applying for graduate school or jobs. Regardless of their motivation, each student determined the benefits outweighed the risks. As a result of their willingness to have candid conversations among themselves, they amplified their racial awareness. I would encourage you to weigh the risk, but then step outside of your comfort zone. Seek the benefits awaiting your development.

Recommendations for Leadership Educators

From the literature on leadership education, we know leadership development occurs in a variety of settings on our college campuses. Formal instruction by faculty is one source, but development is also fostered by staff members via cocurricular programs. The importance of professional staff is highlighted by the narratives in this study. The participants did not identify any faculty members at Frontier State University as poignant leadership mentors. Instead, Frontier staff were seen as the first encouragers who prompted meaningful leadership development. The prominence of university staff may be due to the absence of a formal leadership program at Frontier. Yet, the findings suggest staff and faculty could be equally important in leadership education. My recommendations from this study will concentrate on a topic applicable to both parties: the potential of using caucusing as a tool for social identity exploration in leadership. It will also emphasize how staff or faculty can become a first encourager for college students.

The literature on leadership education indicates social identity is an emerging topic necessitating further exploration. It is recommended leadership educators adopt caucusing as a technique to bring awareness to social identity. This study serves as an example of how single-identity caucusing pairs well with a leadership framework. As most leadership models encourage self-awareness, there are a number of possible applications for caucusing. The following content will outline the steps needed for faculty and staff to implement this recommendation.

Prepare for Caucusing

The paucity of literature on caucusing does not provide an adequate guide for implementing the method in classrooms and cocurricular experiences. An eager educator might seek to quickly integrate an abbreviated caucus for a lesson plan or brief exercise. If an educator

is not prepared to facilitate a caucus, they may cause more harm than learning. Unintentional efforts can also drive participants into the recesses of defensiveness. As illustrated by this study, a significant amount of preparation is needed to design and facilitate identity caucusing.

There are many obstacles for a leadership educator seeking to implement caucusing. The four White student leaders of this study were reluctant to speak about their privilege in a personal way. Vulnerability was needed to dig into the privileged identity. A facilitator must demonstrate their own vulnerability in order to encourage it among others. This might be challenging for some facilitators because they may not see themselves as part of the conversation. Instead, a facilitator may view themselves as a neutral party guiding discussion. This pedagogical approach of neutrality is incompatible with identity caucusing. A facilitator is inherently involved due to the implications of their own social identities. They are part of the social system as well.

Consequently, a leadership educator must participate in the difficult discussions. They do not get a pass simply because they are responsible for facilitating. Participation might be especially challenging for faculty or staff who feel they must be an expert in course content. It is impossible for someone to know the lived experiences of every social identity. To avoid this potential pitfall, it is recommended educators adopt a constructivist paradigm for these activities where all participants can learn from each other. The facilitator will undoubtedly be included in this learning. It is recommended facilitators embrace the humility originating from a shared ownership of the learning environment.

The facilitator should also be focused on the learning of others rather than their own learning. This may seem contradictory to the previous recommendation, but a facilitator's purpose is helping the group collectively explore a social identity. Caucusing is not the appropriate place for a facilitator to sort through their own issues. A facilitator must

meaningfully understand the implications of their own identities to establish vulnerability and encourage others, but avoid dominating the space or derailing the conversation. It is recommended a facilitator explore their own identities prior to leading a caucus.

The aforementioned considerations can help facilitators prepare for caucusing. There are a number of resources referenced in this research study which a facilitator may find useful (Blitz & Kohl, 2012; Obear & martinez, 2013; Walls et al., 2010). In addition to reading about the caucusing process, it would be beneficial for a prospective facilitator to participate in a single-identity caucus. It is highly recommended a facilitator hone their skills by observing how others navigate difficult conversations. An educator can likely find these caucusing opportunities in national social justice conferences or sometimes featured as part of on-campus workshops.

Use of Caucusing

It is recommended leadership educators employ caucusing to explore the role of social identities in leadership development. Caucusing has been demonstrated as a promising tool inside and outside the classroom (Davis et al., 2018; Giles & Rivers, 2009). When coupled with any number of leadership frameworks, caucusing can uncover the relevance of social identities in leadership. Unlike this study on White student leaders, the caucusing does not need to be exclusively focused on race.

The White student leaders in this study expressed a desire to explore their marginalized identities. They were noticeably less inclined to dig deeper into their White identity. Facilitators will likely encounter similar behaviors from participants in caucusing. Certain identities have greater salience for participants than the spotlighted privileged identity. It is important to affirm the lived experiences of the marginalized identities of participants, but a facilitator must gently

bring the conversation back to the focus of the caucus. Otherwise, a meaningful understanding of the identity may not be accomplished through caucusing.

Critics might contend this exclusive examination of one social identity diminishes the concept of intersectionality. Prevalent in social justice pedagogy, intersectionality highly emphasizes the synergetic interactions of compounding social identities. For example, the lived experience of a Latino male could significantly differ from a Latina female. Both share the Lantinx identity, but gender intersects with the identity to produce different lived experiences. Critics may feel this approach pushes intersectionality to the margins of identity work.

Instead of viewing single-identity caucusing as a threat to intersectionality, it is recommended leadership educators view it as a vehicle to understand intersectionality. A person cannot understand the collective nature of their identity without unpacking the meaning of specific identities. As illustrated in this study, a dominant identity can be minimized, defended, or distanced by constructs. Without a tool such as caucusing, privileged identities may not be unpacked or understood by those who hold them.

To mitigate some of this concern, facilitators may design multiple caucuses focused on both marginalized and privileged identities. There are a number of considerations and cautions when creating these opportunities. Facilitators should thoughtfully consider how to place participants in caucuses, provide sufficient time for each group, respect confidentiality, and ensure appropriate participation among privileged and marginalized groups. As previously noted, participants will likely stray away from privileged identities. Walls et al., (2010) offers some additional insight when navigating these challenges in the classroom.

Become a First Encourager

Caucusing is not the only tool available for leadership educators to prompt development. Informal mentorship is another method recommended to foster awareness among student leaders. In this study, White student leaders identified mentors as staff members in unlikely places. These first encouragers were not responsible for leadership development or racial awareness in their positions, but sought to prompt growth and development. In this regard, any staff or faculty member can be seen as an educator.

Informal connections with students may be opportunistic moments for leadership or racial identity development. Both Riley and Apollo shared how transactional interactions with certain staff members resulted in transformational moments. Staff and faculty should consider asking questions about students' interests and their desires within these topics. At the very least, these students will feel holistically supported by faculty and staff. These conversations may help students establish connections at college which result in retention and persistence. Potentially, they could morph into a mutually satisfying mentorship relationship spurring growth.

Informal interactions may seem like a natural way to become a first encourager, but some may prefer a structured program to cultivate development. There are a number of ways to structure development such as student book clubs, brown bag lunches, skill workshops, participation in cultural student organizations, and other activities mimicking the tenants of identity caucusing. In the absence of formal academic instruction, these type of cocurricular experiences may fill the void. Leadership educators should consider serving as a first encourager by planning these types of engagements and enrolling students in them.

These cocurricular offerings do not need to have the rigor of academic programs to prompt growth. Social components of cocurricular experiences can act as a protective factor.

They provide students an incentive to return, generate capacity for deeper conversations, and build communities around identity. While staff or faculty could certainly design these opportunities for students, it may be more meaningful to enlist students. Encouraging students to develop these opportunities for their peers could provide them with skills and a more meaningful experience.

Considerations for Future Research

In the process of conducting this study, several new topics emanated from the original inquiry. Although these new topics were relevant to race and leadership, they were peripheral to my three research questions. I documented these ideas in analytic memos to preserve the topics for future consideration. The following section presents four possibilities for researchers to consider: caucusing with students of color, social media, family and the White identity development, and caucusing as a research method.

Caucusing with Students of Color

During my recruitment phase, I encountered multiple students who questioned the purpose of my study. Some were baffled by my desire to study White student leaders. After elaborating on my rationale, most students appeared satisfied by the response. However, at least one student in every group I visited asked if there would be a separate caucus for students of color. I tactfully answered their question by explaining the narrow focus of my study. There was scant literature about how the White race influenced college student leaders, while emergent models were being published about students of color. I offered to meet with students outside of my study to review these leadership models.

Interestingly, the scrutiny of my study did not come from students of color. These questions came from White students who seemed perplexed by my exclusive focus on

Whiteness. Furrowed brows, grimaces, and folded arms implied a resistance to the overall value of researching this identity. One student asked me what I could possibly learn about being White, while another leader emphatically insisted I should meet with students of color instead. I thanked them for their suggestions, but the recommendations did not align with the purpose of my study. Their suggestions may have been motivated by defensiveness, but caucusing with students of color still contains merit.

Caucusing is a powerful way to further explore how race influences leadership. For example, in this study Riley claimed her peers of color experienced accelerated burnout as leaders. Caucusing could not only explore this phenomenon in greater depth, but it could offer an opportunity for students of color to build support networks. This type of action-research is especially helpful at PWI campuses where students of color may feel isolated.

Caucusing research could also examine racial identities less frequently explored in leadership education. Currently, there is a wealth of information on Latinx student leadership. Perhaps scholars could use caucusing to explore Asian, African Diaspora, or Native American student leadership. Cultural centers on-campus might be fantastic places to recruit and conduct the research. Caucusing with students of color can shed more insight on relevant leadership models or prompt the creation of new ones.

Social Media and Whiteness in College Students

In this study of White student leaders, one person indicated they had used the internet to process their racial identity. I was surprised how Riley found the Tumblr platform as a space to process privilege. Tumblr did not seem as influential as her experiences at Frontier, but it was significant enough for her to mention it. It may have been her only resource when attending a

Christian Academy and living in a conservative household. Her reference of social media prompted my curiosity about the role of the internet in racial identity development.

Social media has been thoroughly exhausted in academic research. Even racial identity is comprehensively featured in scholarly work on social media. Most studies about race explore how people of color affirm their identity online and find community. Riley's experience prompted me to think about how social media might influence racial identity for White students. Social Media could offer spaces for some White students to explore their privilege with relative anonymity. The participants in this study felt their leadership roles might be compromised if they acknowledged racist thoughts among peers. The internet or social media may offer environments where there is less pressure to conform. A relatively anonymous setting, where identity work is separated from leadership roles, might yield honest conversations.

Social media might hold implications for future research regarding student leaders with privilege. What if researchers created these environments via action research online? Conducting a caucus online might increase the willingness to be vulnerable and cite more personal examples. Amid the COVID19 pandemic, there may be additional benefit for conducting research virtually. It reduces the spread of the virus, enables easier video recording of conversations, and can connect students from various locations. There may be some inherent challenges too, such as the greater likelihood of attracting radical ideology and the ability to disengage while on virtual platforms.

Influence of Family in White Identity Development

Family members were mentioned in our conversations during this study. They were prominently featured as characters in leadership development, but only made minor appearances in stories about race. For example, Lauren received messaging which reinforced the superiority

of her White Identity, while Quinn had an absence of messaging from her family. It can be surmised from Apollo and Riley's stories that family conversations about race might be challenging. Despite these messages from family, these students still chose to participate in this study exploring racial their privilege. The role of family remains unclear and further research is needed to determine the significance in White identity development.

This study purposely did not utilize White identity development theory as a framework to interpret findings. As previously mentioned, researchers have noted how existing theory is not equipped to fully name Whiteness (Foste, 2019). However, additional research about the role of family may address these shortcomings. By studying family messaging, researchers might uncover insights about the White identity development of college students. Similar to this study's design, it is recommended that researchers choose participants who are traditionally-aged and attend PWIs. Findings from an exclusive study on this topic might indicate if family messaging influences a student's willingness to explore race. Insights could also inform diversity training curriculum aimed at developing anti-racist behaviors in White students.

Caucusing as a Research Method

The most promising consideration for research is further exploring caucusing as a research method. At the time of this study, there was a small handful of scholarly articles on caucusing. Most of these resources did not use caucusing as a research method, but instead presented it as a tool for teaching. This dissertation provides insight about the purpose of caucusing, how to prepare for caucusing, and possible applications for research topics. Identity work is likely the greatest application, but student identities beyond race could be explored with caucusing. This could be an innovative method to delve into masculinity, faith, political affiliations, physical and cognitive abilities, military service, sexuality, or parenting.

Caucusing has the potential to be a prominent tool among social justice researchers. It can expose the authentic realities among privileged or marginalized identities. Narrative inquiry pairs well with caucusing because participant stories transform data and offer a glimpse into a lived experience. Paired with empathy from a reader, these stories have the power to alter our own constructs. And as stories are retold, they can augment the dominant narratives in our society. Caucusing is a tool to transcend the constructs acting as barriers, like Whiteness, to tell a new story of what lies beneath.

Researcher Reflections and Meaning-Making

The constructivist nature of this study required my subjective involvement in various aspects of design, facilitation, and analysis. My influence is reflected in the narrative discussion, critical discernment of findings, and the conversational tones of recommendations. However, a constructivist study is not exclusively marked by influence from a researcher. A hallmark of a constructivist paradigm is coconstructing with participants. In this dynamic, I am also considered a participant and derive meaning from the study. My involvement in this research changed how I view my leadership and race. Consequently, the findings and implications would not be complete without annotating my own transformation.

An Unlikely Journey

This study impacted my leadership and racial identities by engendering evaluation of my own constructs. Evaluation of my own beliefs immediately began when I selected this topic. Regrettably, I wish I had chronicled my journey of selecting this dissertation topic. The process seems fuzzy in retrospect. If someone had told me 10 years ago my dissertation would be on White privilege, I would have chuckled in disbelief. Exploring your privilege is not a topic most

seek to expound upon in 200 pages. It has been an unlikely journey to write about White privilege and leadership - the product of an evolving sense of responsibility in our society.

Prior to this study, I felt reasonably informed and comfortable engaging in conversations about social identity. My past jobs required a basic understanding of the importance of social difference and an ability to affirm those with marginalized identities. In an effort to improve upon my abilities, I enrolled in a White privilege class as part of my doctoral coursework. Like the students in this study, I examined external environments of Whiteness in assignments. I was less likely to dig into my experiences and share personal examples. My participation in this course demonstrated how my own Whiteness impeded my ability to have productive conversations about race. I may have appeared willing to explore White privilege, but I was overly confident and guarded.

In a similar manner, this study tested my comfort around race and registered my overconfidence. The most poignant experiences originated from casual interactions. Discussions with White friends and family about my dissertation topic were especially hard. When people asked me about my topic, I tried to gauge their sociopolitical disposition to discussing race. If it was unclear how they would react, I would vaguely offer the dissertation focused on leadership. In these exchanges, I rarely mentioned race or privilege. This backfired when people wanted to know more. In one particular instance, I was unable to evade questions and I stated the study was about White privilege. They interpreted my topic as defending the White identity under siege by a politically-correct society. My desire to avoid tension among family and friends only resulted in greater consternation.

During my recruitment phase, there was no possible way to dance around the topic. It was clearly outlined on my informed consent form. I needed to embrace the discomfort in order

to ethically recruit students. I received a mix of reactions when speaking with Frontier students. My role as a researcher forced me to relinquish a desire to avoid conflict. This straightforward approach with unknown audiences provided me confidence to have conversations in other places outside of higher education. I eventually began to harness my confidence in social spaces. Once I started being honest about my topic, I was surprised how it generate constructive dialogue in the most unlikely of places.

Each conversation about my dissertation topic was unpredictable amid the racial unrest of 2020. I had some White friends who would immediately recoil and withdraw after the words "White privilege". Civil unrest brought national prominence to racial inequality, but also increased the relevance of my topic. I was surprised when some of my most conservative acquaintances could constructively engage in discussion on my topic. It seemed that some people appreciated the invitation to civilly converse about the politically-charged issue.

I underestimated the significance of a dissertation topic and how many people would want to know about it. When friends or family learn you are pursuing a doctorate, they immediately ask two questions. Ironically, the first question is "when are you going to be done?" The second question is "what is your thesis about?" A dissertation topic about social identity carries implications for these conversations. Everyone has social identities making the topic relevant for anyone. Consequently, there is instant evaluation of your scholarship based on their own social constructs.

I did not realize how my research would transcend higher education enclaves. Just the act of talking about my topic impacted my relationships, but it also resulted in a transformation. I have become less timid about discussing race in varied audiences. My sense of responsibility has

grown to directly address barriers to inequity in a public manner. This dissertation has resulted in an unlikely journey and self-discovery.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity is an essential component to this study. As a key ingredient for narrative inquiry, reflexivity obligates a researcher to understand their influence. When exploring the constructs of these four student leaders, I examined my own constructs underpinning the research. Remaining wide-awake to these interfacing layers demonstrates trustworthiness within a study, but it also engenders the evaluation of my own constructs. In other words, my conversation with these student leaders forced me to revisit my own values on leadership and race.

The first example of reflexivity is illustrated by the activity used during caucusing. This identity inventory, found in appendix D, was selected as a result of my own use of the tool. When I first came across the activity developed by Katz (2003), I used it to examine the messages I received around my White racial identity. In a curious application, I used the same tool to inspect my leadership identity. I found a sharp contrast between the two sets of messages. I was highly encouraged to explore my leadership development, but little direction was provided to understand my racial identity. My personal reflections from using the inventory piqued my interest. I wondered how this checklist could prompt conversation among White college students. Would the instrument generate similar results as mine? At the very least, I concluded this inventory would be helpful for stimulating conversation during caucusing. My personal experiences with the tool inspired the use in this study.

Reflexivity also surfaced during the conversations with the four White student leaders. Their narratives about leadership and hard work resonated with some of my own upbringing. It

spurred me to think back to when I modified or abandoned these constructs. I searched myself to determine how I reconciled leadership and racial narratives. In many ways, I could see a part of myself in each student's comment. The familiarity with these constructs allowed me to respond with empathy, but also an appropriate level of interrogation. Caucusing would not have been as effective without this reflexivity.

The most impactful moment of caucusing was our exploration of the exotic White construct. I take pride in my European heritage, perhaps more than others. One of my parents immigrated from Europe and I grew up with symbols of this heritage in my room. The language, culture, and history from this specific country are important parts of my identity. Yet, I have realized the problematic nature of overemphasizing European heritage due to several missteps in my past. Not everyone can trace their lineage in similar manners. Recent immigration also does not absolve me from the racial history of the United States. The exotic White construct assisted my understanding how these behaviors go afoul - when ethnic or national culture eclipses the meaning of race. I wish I had the opportunity to examine these constructs earlier in life, but my mistakes enabled me to articulate the importance of knowing this construct. I still have pride in my family in Europe, but it is balanced with an awareness of my racial status in the United States.

Praxis

When I was conducting this research, I was working full-time in higher education. The content of my dissertation grew in relevance as racial protests surged across the country. In response to growing racial discord, my institution sought to develop opportunities for professional development regarding race. And as a PWI, there was a desire to explore Whiteness.

One series explicitly focused on dismantling White supremacy in the workplace and included smaller topical groups for learning.

In this professional context, I proposed using my research framework with White leaders in higher education. The development series mirrored my research format with three distinct meetings to explore leadership, race, and confluences. Unfortunately, there are limits about what can be shared from conversations because there was no IRB approval for this activity. However, the application of the framework to a professional setting demonstrated the praxis of this research. This research could easily be applied to leadership beyond higher education.

The praxis was also a testament of how my professional identity changed. Facilitating tough dialogue with students prepared me to have similar conversations in the workplace. My confidence also emboldened my sense of responsibility. What is the purpose of writing about White privilege, if I could not put these elements into practice? Higher education is not immune from the barriers of race. Despite all of the diversity courses and training, many professionals like myself still avoid conversations on race. I found myself compelled to assume a leadership role in advancing racial dialogue on campus.

Personal Takeaways

At the end of my research, I asked the students: "How might your participation influence your leadership or your world view?" Their responses shed insight into how they make meaning of their identities. Awareness about their racial privilege transformed their leadership. If I were to ask myself the same question, I arrive at my own transformation. This unlikely journey has evinced a new meaning of my identities as a White leader in higher education. My reflexivity exhibited how I can influence scholarly and workplace environments. My confidence has borne responsibility. My research has galvanized my desire to make change through praxis.

Chapter Summary

The narratives of the four White student leaders provided an abundance of data to address my research questions. Sustained dialogue about their concept of earned leadership hinted to a larger narrative in society – the bootstraps narrative. This grand narrative suggests hard work and perseverance equals success. The bootstraps narrative was exhibited by the student's stories of family members and served as motivation for their own leadership development. Fascinatingly, not all students subscribed to this narrative and their dialogue indicated the narrative did not remain static. Our multiple meetings, and subsequent conversations about race, offered an opportunity to reconsider their constructs.

Our conversation about race uncovered perceptions the students held about being White. Specifically, the exotic White construct served as an excellent exercise to recognize and dismantle one problematic element of Whiteness. Through our conversation, the students realized strong pride in a European heritage can obscure a racial identity. They ultimately came to reject this construct, but there was still latent meaning in their statements we were unable to process. Analysis of students' motivations revealed a moral dimension of race. Some students expressed wanting to be a good White person via activism work or their careers. These motivations to help others are admirable, but might also signal a grand narrative associated with White privilege. The White savior complex often ensnares well-intended White individuals who seek to help people of color. The students skimmed the surface of this narrative when discussing voice for the voiceless, but never progressed beyond coded language.

Reconciling these conflicting narratives found in leadership and race proved challenging. The challenge was especially evident in their willingness to make connections to their personal leadership contexts. Privilege was easy to discuss as a detached intellectual concept, but became

harder to acknowledge in their lived reality. Eventually, vulnerability displayed by these students enabled us to progress the discussion beyond external applications. A deep examination of their coded constructs in a personal context yielded a comprehension of the confluences between race and leadership. Through these candid conversations, the four student leaders were able to cultivate their own concept of awareness. By the final meeting, we came to a consensus about leadership and race - good leadership should amplify racial awareness for anyone.

This chapter also offered recommendations for future research. The majority of this content dwelled on the nascent potential of caucusing. As an underdeveloped method, these two sections supplemented existing literature on caucusing. Suggestions offer fresh approaches to advance the realms of research and practice. The scholarly gains in these areas can complement, rather than minimize existing intersectionality work. Caucusing might be the best tool suited for exploring the newest developments in social identity.

This final section of the chapter is a capstone containing my own reflections. I recount my unlikely journey of completing a dissertation on race. I found my dissertation was more than just a writing topic, the scholarship transformed it into a lived experience. In this section, I also account for my personal influence in the study via reflexivity. This discussion progressed to the burgeoning examples of my praxis. Lastly, I share my takeaways from the study which has furnished a greater knowledge and corresponding responsibility.

Conclusion

Racism is easily viewed in narrow ways to limit responsibility. Some consider it a moral issue involving a few bad people who perpetuate hate. While overt bigotry is socially unacceptable to most, this narrow view of racism relegates the problem to those who experience the brunt of it. When viewed as a moral issue, only implicating a few, it allows the majority of

White people to excuse themselves from conversations about race. The moral implications of racism creates barriers to engaging and discussing race.

As a systematic social construct, everyone in society has a responsibility to discuss race. A reexamination of race and racism is needed to include those who can make a difference. Anti-racist efforts are not the sole responsibility for people of color. The eradication of racism cannot happen if White people do not get involved. Well intended White people are equally implicated in this issue as much as anyone else. However, White individuals must be careful not to adopt problematic narratives for engaging in conversations about race. As the White student leaders in this study noted, becoming a voice for the voiceless can still represent oppression.

This study with White student leaders demonstrated how caucusing is a powerful tool to invite conversation about race. In this framework, leadership can be seen as a vehicle to encourage difficult dialogue which might not otherwise occur. This environment promoted social-perspective-taking among peers who were gathered to discuss a single privileged identity. Through dynamic and continuous dialogue, these White student leaders were willing to become vulnerable and reconsider their beliefs. Researcher reflexivity contributed to a formative experience where new narratives were created regarding race and leadership. In our post-fact world, these narratives are a compelling tool to transform our conversations about race.

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APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Informed Consent Form for Participation in Research

Title of Research Study: Confluences of Student Leadership and White Racial Identity

Researcher(s): Jeremy N. Davis, Doctoral Student of Higher Edu. & Student Affairs Leadership (HESAL) Phone Number: (xxx) xxx-xxxx Email: davi2262@bears.unco.edu

Research Advisor: Dr. Matthew Birnbaum, Professor HESAL
Phone Number: (970) 351-2598 Email: matthew.birnbaum@unco.edu

Procedures: Please consider participating in my research study to learn more about student leaders who identify as white. If you participate in this study, you will be asked to attend three (3) group meetings that will last a little more than one (1) hour each. During these meetings, we will complete activities to explore leadership and racial identities, then talk about the activities afterwards. There will be four (4) to six (6) other white student leaders who will be part of the group. There will also be a co-facilitator to help me conduct this research: his name is Nick xxxxx and he works at xxxxxxxxxxx.

I know you are busy as student leaders, so all meetings will be scheduled based on everyone's availability. I will keep all information confidential and ask participants to keep discussions confidential too. As part of the study, you will get to select a fake name for the project. Our conversations will be video recorded in a smart classroom or meeting room and our activity handouts will be collected.

As an incentive to participate, you will receive a copy of *Leadership for a Better World* during your first meeting. This book will be used to introduce leadership concepts. Through our conversations and this textbook, you may learn more about yourself - an important part of leadership development. Upon full attendance of all three meetings, you will be provided a certificate for exploring these concepts.

The risks of participating are comparable to the conversations you might have with peers on campus. As race is a sensitive topic, there may be discomfort in discussing matters of racial identity. However, as an all-white group, there may be less feelings of discomfort or fear of judgement. Additionally, we will focus on building relationships during our meetings together. This networking might also be beneficial for you as a leader.

Questions: If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to contact Jeremy Davis at xxx-xxx-xxxx. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact Nicole Morse, Research Compliance Manager, University of Northern Colorado at nicole.morse@unco.edu or 970-351-1910.

Voluntary Participation: Please understand that your participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Please take all the time you need to read through this document and decide whether you would like to participate in this research study.

If you agree to participate in this research study, please sign below. You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

_____ _____

Participant Signature Date

_____ _____

Investigator Signature Date

APPENDIX B

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

UNIVERSITY OF
NORTHERN COLORADO

Institutional Review Board

DATE:	February 4, 2020
TO:	Jeremy Davis, MS
FROM:	University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB
PROJECT TITLE:	[1555262-1] Confluences of Student Leadership and White Racial Identity
SUBMISSION TYPE:	New Project
ACTION:	APPROVAL/VERIFICATION OF EXEMPT STATUS
DECISION DATE:	February 4, 2020
EXPIRATION DATE:	February 4, 2024

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB approves this project and verifies its status as EXEMPT according to federal IRB regulations.

Hi Jeremy,

Thank you for your thorough IRB application. I have determined your study to be exempt, but ask that you make one revision to your consent form before beginning your study. Please include a statement that asks all participants to please keep what is shared within your meeting confidential. I know you can't promise confidentiality from one participant to another in these types of settings, but I think it's important to at least ask for it from others.

In addition, please submit a modification request that includes the interview questions for your third caucus as soon as you have those written. You can submit a copy of the above revised consent at that time too; no need to send in a revised copy prior to starting your project.

Thank you and best of luck with your research!

Nicole Morse

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records for a duration of 4 years.

If you have any questions, please contact Nicole Morse at 970-351-1910 or nicole.morse@unco.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB's records.

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL & CAUCUS SCRIPT

UNIVERSITY OF
NORTHERN COLORADO

Title of Research Study: Confluences of Student Leadership and White Racial Identity

Researcher(s): Jeremy N. Davis, Doctoral Student of Higher Edu. & Student Affairs Leadership (HESAL) Phone Number: (xxx) xxx-xxxx Email: davi2262@bears.unco.edu

Research Advisor: Dr. Matthew Birnbaum, Professor HESAL
Phone Number: (970) 351-2598 Email: matthew.birnbaum@unco.edu

Interview Protocol / Curriculum

First Caucus

1. **Welcome**

"Thank you for showing up today to participate in my research study to learn more about your perspectives about leadership and the white racial identity. If you don't recall, my name is Jeremy Davis. This is my co-facilitator for this research **[Let Nick introduce himself]**. Before we begin, I would like to share a little more about this study, review and complete the informed consent form, and provide your leadership text for participating.

- Review – As you may know, this study will happen during three meetings, lasting about 1 hour each. During this time, we'll complete activities together and discuss them afterwards. Our conversations after the activities will be recorded using the built-in video camera and mic's in this room. In addition to helping me learn more about this topic of study, there may be benefits you receive by learning more about leadership or racial identities.
- Informed Consent – Before we begin, it's important to ensure you understand what participation means. **[Provide copies of *Informed Consent*.]** I would like to emphasize participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time, without any penalty. You are welcome to keep the text you've been provided too. Additionally, you identity will be kept confidential and our next order of business will be establishing fake names, also known as pseudonyms. We'll put these names on nametags and use them for the entire study. Our conversations may become tense or uncomfortable at certain points. This is natural when discussing these topics, but I wanted to give you advance notice.
  [If written consent has not been completed, participants will be asked to complete the form.]
- Pseudonyms – If you could take a moment and think of a name you'd like to use for the study. When ready, please write this name on your name tag.
- Leadership text – Again, thank you for your participation. We'll be using this text as reference for some of our discussions. As a benefit for participating, I would like to provide you a copy of this. **[Pass out textbooks**]. You are not required to bring this book to future meetings or read any chapters. It is simply yours to keep and something you can read more about.

2. **Begin Study**

Now that we've covered some of the basics, I'd like to start our first meeting. I think it's helpful for use to get to know each other before we begin talking about leadership. Perhaps we can go around and introduce ourselves and mention your class standing, major, and leadership role on

campus. The video recording is not on right now, but I'll take some notes as we introduce ourselves.

Thanks for sharing. We will begin with an activity that is designed to explore our leadership identity. In particular, we will be examining some of the messages we received about leadership development. For example, perhaps your parents, coaches, teachers, friends, or relatives shared their opinion about leadership development. Exploring these messages might give you a stronger understanding of self, which is called "consciousness-of-self" in your text and found on page 43 (I book marked the page with a thank you note).

I will be asking you to complete an activity found on this handout **[Pass out Identity Messaging Check-List].** This activity is adapted from your textbook and an activity from another text.

- Instructions – Please take 5-10 minutes to complete this activity. Please circle five words that describe the messages you received about leadership development. It's OK if you need to circle more than five. Please write you pseudonym at the top of the sheet – not your real name. When you have completed this activity, we will process this with some questions. I will begin recording once our discussion begins. Does anyone have any questions?
- **[begin recording before the questions]**

3. **Discussion** (semi-structured group interview questions)
   - What words did you select to describe the messages you have received regarding leadership development?
   - Why did you select these words?
   - Tell me a story about one of these words?
   - Who is someone who encouraged you to become a leader?
   - What is your overall impression about leadership development?
4. **Conclusion**
   - Thank you for sharing your stories and perspectives about leadership. It's been fascinating to learn more about how you came into leadership. Our next meeting will employ a similar exercise to explore your racial identity. I will also be sharing some preliminary information from this meeting so you can let me know if I got it right.
   - **[stop recording]**
   - **[if the next meeting is not scheduled, find a time that works for the whole group].** Just as a reminder, our next meeting will be _____. I'm really looking forward to meeting again.

Second Caucus

1. **Welcome**
   Welcome back. I'm super excited to begin our second meeting!
   - If you could, please write your pseudonym you chose last meeting on your name tag again. We will continue to use these names for the study.
   - For this session, I will begin the recording a lot earlier to capture some of our thoughts. Is it OK if I turn it on now?

   [Begin recording].
2. **Reflection** (semi-structured questions)
   - After our last meeting and discussion about leadership, did anyone reflect more about their experiences with leadership? Is there anything you'd like to share?
   - Here are some of the thoughts I had about our last session. **[share notes on themes].** Did I get this right? Was there anything I missed?

- Did anyone give this upcoming session any though? Did you have any emotions associated with it?

3. **Activity**
   - We will now complete the same activity to explore the messages you've received regarding your white racial identity. **[Pass out Identity Messaging Check-List].**
   - Instructions – Please take 5-10 minutes to complete this activity. Please circle five words that describe the messages you received about your white racial identity. It's OK if you need to circle more than five. Please write you pseudonym at the top of the sheet – not your real name. When you have completed this activity, we will process this with some questions. I will begin recording once our discussion begins. Does anyone have any questions?
4. **Discussion** (semi-structured group interview questions]
   - What words did you select to describe your white racial identity?
   - Why did you select these words?
   - Tell me a story about one of these words?
   - Who is someone who encouraged you to explore your racial identity? (if no response, ask if anyone discouraged them from exploring their identity).
   - What is your overall impression about being white?
   - If you encountered conflict around race, who would you turn to for guidance navigating the challenge?
5. **Conclusion**
   - Thank you for sharing your stories and perspectives about race. It's been fascinating to learn about this topic. Our next meeting will explore how these two topics might connect. I will also be sharing some preliminary information from this meeting so you can let me know if I got it right.
   - **[stop recording]**
   - **[if the next meeting is not scheduled, find a time that works for the whole group].** Just as a reminder, our next meeting will be _____. I'm really looking forward to meeting again.

Third Caucus

1. **Welcome**
   Thank you for coming back to our final session!
   - For this session, I will begin the recording a lot earlier to capture some of our thoughts. Is it OK if I turn it on now?
   - **[Begin recording].**
2. **Reflection** (semi-structured questions)
   - After our last meeting and discussion about the white racial identity, did anyone reflect more about their experiences on this topic? Is there anything you'd like to share?
   - Here are some of the thoughts I had about our last session. **[share notes on themes].** Did I get this right? Was there anything I missed?
   - Did anyone give this upcoming session any though? Did you have any emotions associated with it?
3. **Activity**
   - We will now complete a short activity to explore the daily significance of being white on-campus. **[Pass out Identity Messaging Check-List].**
   - Instructions – Please take 5-10 minutes to complete this activity. You will need to read the check-list and place a check next to the situations that apply to you.
4. **Discussion** (semi-structured group interview questions]

- What is your reaction to this check-list?
- How do you think some of the items on this check-list apply to leadership? Can you give me an example?
- What experiences might not be on this list, but apply in a similar way?
- Can you share a time you thought about your race when engaging in leadership opportunities?
- Please think about a time when race was discussed during one of your leadership roles. (This could have occurred during a meeting, a function, or social conversations.) Can you share what happened?
- How do you think race influences your leadership style?
- Optional follow-up #1: Do you think there are challenges or benefits associated with being a white student leader?
- Optional follow-up #2: Can you tell me about a time when you changed how you interact with with others as a result of your awareness of being white?
  [**Provide their activity handouts back to participants**] What does it mean to be white and a student leader?
- How might your participation in this research influence your leadership or worldview?
- Before we conclude, do you have any final thoughts or questions about this research?

5. Thank your for sharing your candid thoughts. I am going to stop recording now **[stop recording]**.
6. To conclude our time together, I have two items of business.

- **[Pass out paper survey].** Can you please complete the following survey to collect more information about your background? Please only provide your pseudonym at the top of the survey.
- **[Pass out Certificates of Completion].** Finally, I'd like to award each of you with a certificate of completion for attending each session and providing me your authentic perspectives on these topics. I am deeply appreciative for your contributions to this research study.

APPENDIX D

ACTIVITY PROMPTS

Your pseudonym (fake name):_____

Select at least five (5) words to describe the messages you received about **leadership development**:

Accepted	Disappointed	Intelligent	Pure
Adaptive	Dominant	Invisible	Puzzled
Afraid	Easy	Jewish	Relational
Arrogant	Emotional	Just	Rich
Assaulted	Enraged	Knowledgeable	Right
Average	Equality	Leader	Scientific
Bad	Exciting	Liberal	Secure
Beneficial	Exclusive	Limited	Selective
Beautiful	Exploited	Misunderstood	Self-Aware
Better	Faith	Natural	Separatist
Blamed	Family	Nice	Servant
Brave	Flexible	Normal	Sharp
Burden	Free	Not a big deal	Smart
Career	Friendly	Neutral	Soulful
Chosen	Good	Oppressed	Spiritual
Christian	Happy	Oppressive	Strong
Co-curricular	Helpless	Ordinary	Supportive
Collective	Hopeful	Outraged	Targeted
Comfortable	Humble	Paternal	Together
Community-based	Hurt	Patient	Tokenized
Confident	Ignored	Poor	Transformational
Conservative	Important	Powerful	True
Creative	Inclusive	Privileged	Trustworthy
Culture	Independent	Progressive	Understanding
Denied	Individual	Proper	Uptight
Determined	Inferior	Protective	Victimized
Dignified	Insulted	Proud	Worth

Write any additional words if the above list is not descriptive enough:

Your pseudonym (fake name):_____

Select at least five (5) words to describe messages you received about **your white racial identity:**

Accepted	Disappointed	Intelligent	Pure
Adaptive	Dominant	Invisible	Puzzled
Afraid	Easy	Jewish	Relational
Arrogant	Emotional	Just	Rich
Assaulted	Enraged	Knowledgeable	Right
Average	Equality	Leader	Scientific
Bad	Exciting	Liberal	Secure
Beneficial	Exclusive	Limited	Selective
Beautiful	Exploited	Misunderstood	Self-Aware
Better	Faith	Natural	Separatist
Blamed	Family	Nice	Servant
Brave	Flexible	Normal	Sharp
Burden	Free	Not a big deal	Smart
Career	Friendly	Neutral	Soulful
Chosen	Good	Oppressed	Spiritual
Christian	Happy	Oppressive	Strong
Co-curricular	Helpless	Ordinary	Supportive
Collective	Hopeful	Outraged	Targeted
Comfortable	Humble	Paternal	Together
Community-based	Hurt	Patient	Tokenized
Confident	Ignored	Poor	Transformational
Conservative	Important	Powerful	True
Creative	Inclusive	Privileged	Trustworthy
Culture	Independent	Progressive	Understanding
Denied	Individual	Proper	Uptight
Determined	Inferior	Protective	Victimized
Dignified	Insulted	Proud	Worth

Write any additional words if the above list is not descriptive enough:

Please read the list and place a check mark next the situations that apply to you or you have encountered.

____ 1. I can arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time.

____ 2. I can go shopping alone, most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.

____ 3. I can turn on the television or scroll through social media, and I will see people of my race widely represented.

____ 4. When I am told about national heritage or civilization, the leaders and important people are of my race.

____ 5. I am not made acutely aware that my shape, bearing, or body odor will be taken as a reflection of my race.

____ 6. I can worry about racism without been seen as self-interested or self-seeking.

____ 7. I can be late to a meeting without having the lateness reflect on my race.

____ 8. I am never asked to speak for all people of my race.

____ 9. I can walk into a classroom and know I will not be the only member of my race.

____ 10. I can enroll in a class at a college and be sure that the majority of my professors will be of my race.