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This is a good article for faculty and staff and focuses on white students and the sometimes difficult subject of whiteness. It has a significant Bibliography at the end of the article. Abstract: “What pedagogies and inter-/intragroup dynamics facilitate increased understanding of issues of race, white racial identity development, and racism in the U.S.? Can white students effectively learn about whiteness by themselves as well as in collaboration with students of diverse racial background? This project examines white student learning in the Intergroup People of Color-White People Dialogues and Intra-groups White Racial Identity Dialogues at a small liberal arts college in the Northeast. Through content analyses of student paper, this student advances our understanding of how white students make sense of their own racial group membership and how they navigate cross-racial interactions in college; it also continues and extends national efforts to conduct and disseminate research on both the substantive nature and process of Inter-/Intra-groups Dialogues and their impact on students.

Shifting White Ideological Scripts: The Educational Benefits of Inter- and Intra-racial Curricular Dialogues on the Experiences of White College Students

Kristie A. Ford
Skidmore College

What pedagogies and inter-/intragroup dynamics facilitate increased understanding of issues of race, white racial identity development, and racism in the U.S.? Can white students effectively learn about whiteness by themselves as well as in collaboration with students of diverse racial backgrounds? This project examines white student learning in the Intergroup People of Color-White People Dialogues and Intra-Group White Racial Identity Dialogues at a small liberal arts college in the Northeast. Through content analyses of student papers, this study advances our understanding of how white students make sense of their own racial group membership and how they navigate cross-racial interactions in college; it also continues and extends national efforts to conduct and disseminate research on both the substantive nature and process of Inter-/Intra-Group Dialogues and their impact on students.

Keywords: intergroup dialogue, intragroup dialogue, whiteness, white racial identity, student learning outcomes

Racial diversity has become the “buzz-word” in institutions of higher education as recent studies have concluded that a racially diverse student population is beneficial to student learning (Gurin, Lehman, & Lewis, 2004; Hurtado, 2003; Ortiz & Santos, 2010). Although some scholars in the field have examined how white college students respond to these diversity efforts, more work needs to be done to better understand how they make sense of and navigate race within predominately white institutions (PWIs) (Bonilla-Silva & Forman, 2000; Chesler, Peet, & Sevig, 2003; Tatum, 2003).

Given raced and classed residential segregation patterns in the U.S. (Blumenfeld & Raymond, 2000; Krysan & Farley, 2002; Massey & Denton, 1993), it is likely that white students have had minimal contact with people of differing racial backgrounds prior to college. As a result, white students may enter college in different stages of development with respect to their understanding of and engagement with

race, especially with whiteness. Once in college, white students’ increased contact with students of color alone may not result in race-related attitudinal or behavioral changes as meaningful cross-racial friendships are often limited (Stearns, Buchmann, & Bonneau, 2009; Tatum, 2003). Moreover, white students and students of color typically “talk past one another” (Blauner, 1994 as cited in Omi, 2001, p. 267) in race-related classroom discussions; honest conversations about race are hindered by fears of conflict, a climate of political correctness, and inexperience with effective models of inter- and intraracial dialogue (Bonilla-Silva & Forman, 2000; Tatum, 2003). In other words, representational racial diversity is not enough; at this prime moment in the identity development of young men and women (Tatum, 2003), colleges/universities must also productively utilize interactional diversity, with an emphasis on issues of power, privilege, and social justice, to realize its intended benefits (Gurin, 1999; Gurin, Lehman, & Lewis, 2004; Gurin & Nagda, 2006; Hurtado, 1999).

Within this context, reflective of the challenges present at many PWIs, the following research questions remain unresolved: What pedagogies and inter-/intragroup dynamics facilitate increased understanding of issues of

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Kristie A. Ford, Department of Sociology, Skidmore College, 815 North Broadway, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866. E-mail: kford@skidmore.edu

race, white racial identity development, and racism in the U.S.? And, can white students effectively learn about whiteness by themselves as well as in collaboration with students of diverse racial backgrounds?

In order to better prepare white students for an increasingly diverse society, it is crucial that colleges/universities in the U.S. find innovative ways of integrating race into the curriculum. To address these concerns, many institutions of higher education have developed Intergroup Relations Programs to help students navigate diverse learning environments (Hurtado, 2005). This exploratory study examines the effect of two undergraduate credit-bearing courses on race, Inter- and Intra-Group Dialogues, offered by an Intergroup Relations Program at a small private liberal arts college in the Northeast. These courses use inter- and intraracial dialogue modalities in an effort to assess the educational benefits of this pedagogy and its impact on student outcomes (generally) and the experiences of white students (specifically). The former brings students across racial identities together; the latter engages students from one shared racial identity category (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007; Tatum, 2003). More concretely, this article explores the ideological script changes of white students in the Intergroup People of Color-White People Dialogues (POC-WHITE) and Intra-Group White Racial Identity Dialogues (IWRID).

Conceptual Framework

White Ideological Scripts

Tatum (2003) defines racial identity development as “the process of defining for oneself the personal significance and social meaning of belonging to a particular racial group,” (p. 16) and Helms (2008) argues that a positive white racial identity “requires a conscious decision to abandon racism” (p. 26). Extrapolating from these definitions, by “white racial identity development” this article focuses on the process by which White people not only come to realize that they “have race” (Lewis, 2004, p. 635), but also recognize the larger societal implications of it. According to Lewis (2004), “the racialization of Whites has always been tied intimately to the history of defining *self* both through the symbolic construction of *the other* and through the

actual domination of others” (p. 630). Ideally, through the white racial identity development process, they also come to understand whiteness as a complicated, nuanced, cultural, ideological, and material construct, independent of a reference group (Hardiman, 1994; Helms, 1990; 1995; 2008; Lewis, 2004; Tatum, 2003).

To understand the discourse of whiteness among white college students at a PWI, this article uses the term “traditionalist white ideological scripts” to signify white students’ shared storylines or typical hegemonic narratives that elaborate understandings (or misunderstandings) of whiteness, white racial identity, and white racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2010). In contrast, the term “revisionist white ideological scripts” signifies the counterhegemonic narratives of resistance, alliances, and antiracism work that white students embrace as they progress in their understanding of white racial identity development in the Inter-/Intra-Group Dialogues.

Inter- and Intra-Group Dialogue Pedagogy¹

Zúñiga, Nagda, Chesler, and Cytron (2007) define Intergroup Dialogue as a facilitated, face-to-face encounter that aims to cultivate meaningful engagement between members of two or more social identity groups that have a history of conflict. Its objective is to provide a safe space for students to explore commonalities and differences, examine structures of power and privilege, and work toward equality and social justice. A race dialogue, for instance, would bring together people of color and White people (POC-WHITE). The pedagogical components that distinguish Intergroup Dialogue from more traditional courses include establishing: (a) structured interaction (e.g., small group of students, equal representation of two social identity groups); (b) active and engaged learning that balances both content (e.g., sociological and psychological readings) and process (e.g., critical self-reflection, experiential activities) knowledge; and (c) facilitated learning environment led by two trained peer-leaders (Nagda, Gurin, Sorensen, & Zúñiga, 2009; Zúñiga et al., 2007).

While Intergroup Dialogue is one of the most common social justice education prac-

¹ Adapted from Ford and Malaney’s (2012) article in *Equity and Excellence in Education*.

tices, increasingly dialogue practitioners are structuring Intra-Group Dialogue courses to support the exploration of a single target or agent group identity (Adams et al., 2007; Tatum, 2003). Target group refers to social identities that are subordinated within the societal power structure; agent group, in contrast, refers to social identities that hold societal power or privilege (Adams et al., 2007; Tatum, 2003). For example, the University of Michigan's Intergroup Relations Program recently implemented IWRID. Structurally and pedagogically similar to POC-WHITE, in the IWRID, white students meet together to explore common experiences, issues of power and privilege, and the meaning of whiteness in relation to their multiple group identities. While the curricula may slightly differ depending upon the focus of the dialogue, both courses follow a four-stage pedagogical model (forming relationships; exploring differences and commonalities of experience; discussing hot topics; building alliances),² incorporate engaged learning activities and assignments (e.g., testimonials; social identity profile; cycle of socialization; privilege walk/cross the line; collaborative project; social justice box),³ and contain foundational readings on key concepts (e.g., dialogue, debate, and discussion; socialization processes; sociohistorical context of race relations in the U.S.; race and racial identity development; social identities and their intersections; whiteness and white privilege; discrimination and oppression; differing manifestations of racism; alliances and social change). In addition, the POC-WHITE course provides white students with the opportunity to experience intragroup dialogue, on a smaller scale, through caucous groups.

To explore the outcomes related to the POC-WHITE and IWRID, this article begins by providing an overview of relevant literature on white racial attitudes, white identity, and inter-/intragroup dialogue. Next, it explains the research methodology and presents nine central themes that highlight white students' pre- and postdialogue learning. Finally, it ends with a discussion of the diversity-related implications of incorporating social justice education courses into the curricular offerings at PWIs.

Literature Review

Research on White Racial Attitudes: From Old-Fashioned to Colorblind Racism

Much of the classical sociological and socio-psychological literature on race utilizes quantitative analysis to examine Whites' attitudes toward other racial groups (e.g., Bobo & Kluegel, 1993; Kinder & Sanders, 1996; Sniderman & Piazza, 1993; Schuman, Steeh, Bobo, & Krysan, 1997). While trends in the longitudinal survey data generally reflect increased racial tolerance over time, Schuman et al. (1997) conclude that positive changes in the racial attitudes of Whites may not accurately capture U.S. race relations. In particular, they observe that while Whites support policies to assist people of color, in theory, they are nonetheless resistant to the implementation of such policies, in practice. Similarly, Bobo and Kluegel (1993) contend that the way in which policy is framed matters—when race-based policies are framed as “equal-outcome,” they get less support from Whites than when the same policy is framed as “equal-opportunity.” These findings suggest that the contradictions underlying white intentions and actions need to be further explored.

To that end, recent research explores the more subtle ways racism continues to thrive within white-dominated power structures. More concretely, some scholars argue that “symbolic racism” (Kinder & Sears, 1981), “aversive racism” (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986), or the “colorblind” (Bonilla-Silva, 2010) mentality allows seemingly liberal-minded or racially progressive Whites to reify their dominance; in particular the “human race” rhetoric simultaneously denies the importance of racially constructed categories and structures of oppression, while also reinforcing white power and privilege (Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Lewis, Chesler, & Forman, 2000; McIntyre, 1997; Sleeter, 1994; Sullivan, 2006). Specifically, McIntyre (1997) labels Whites' tendency to deny their racial privilege as “white talk” (pp. 45–46); Sleeter (1994) argues that Whites engage in “white racial bonding” through coded communi-

² For more explanation of the four stages, see: Zúñiga et al. (2007, pp. 27–28).

³ Zúñiga et al. (2007) and *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice* (2010) provide an overview of some of these activities.

cation patterns that unites them; and Sullivan (2006) identifies the “unconscious racial habits” of Whites that perpetuate inequality (pp. 3–4). Bonilla-Silva (2010) also theorizes four major principles of colorblind racism that derive from his interviews with white students. In particular, he names abstract liberalism, naturalization, cultural racism, and minimization of racism as central components of colorblind racism, a new racial ideology that explains persistent forms of racial inequality in nonracial terms (pp. 28–29). Couched in the tenets of American individualism and meritocracy, Bonilla-Silva (2010) argues that this new, covert type of racism perpetuates oppression through a series of “semantic moves” (e.g., ignorance, avoidance, ambivalence), “race talk” (e.g., “I am not racist, but . . .”; “I am not Black so I don’t know”), and racial “story lines” (e.g., “the past is the past”; “I didn’t get that job because of a Black man”) (pp. 53–63, 75–87). Sacks and Lindholm (2002) find similar narratives among a group of white college men; they disregard the importance of race and dismiss the implications of structural racism through meritocratic statements like “. . . anyone can make it if they just work hard enough. At some point you just have to stop whining and decide to better your own life” (p. 135).⁴ Finally, in Lewis, Chesler, and Forman’s (2000) research, students of color confirm these racial scripts and provide examples of how white colorblindness manifests itself on college campuses.

Research on White Identity, Whiteness, and Its Intersections

In addition to attitudinal research, in recent years, scholars in the field have also begun to: (a) theoretically develop models of racial identity development (Hardiman & Jackson, 1992; Hardiman, 1994; Helms, 1990; 1995; 2008; Tatum, 2003); and (b) conceptually and/or empirically examine the experiences of White people and the hegemonic character of whiteness in the U.S. (Hartigan, 1997; 1999; 2001; Johnson, 2006; Kendall, 2006; Rothenberg, 2002).

Beginning with the former, theorists outline stages of social identity and racial identity development (Hardiman & Jackson, 1992; Hardiman, 1994; Helms, 1990; 1995; 2008; Tatum, 2003) that facilitate a positive racialized sense of self. Helms (1990; 1995; 2008), for instance, posits a six stage white racial identity model: (a) contact:

racial ignorance; (b) disintegration: racial confusion and conflict; (c) reintegration: racial defensiveness and fear; (d) pseudoindependence: racial awareness and guilt; (e) immersion/emersion: racial redefinition and responsibility; and (f) autonomy: racial internalization and change. Although an ongoing (and sometimes) nonlinear process, Helms (1990; 1995; 2008) argues that these categories provide a framework for understanding how Whites can transition from an identity based on naiveté and racelessness (contact) to embracing a self-actualized antiracist/social justice-oriented white racial identity (autonomy). Critiquing these developmental identity models, Rowe, Bennett, and Atkinson (1994), in contrast, articulate the notion of white racial consciousness and outline seven distinct modes of racial engagement that reflect “unachieved” (avoidant, dependent, dissonant) or “achieved” (dominative, conflictive, reactive, and integrative) racial attitudes. While distinct, both theoretical approaches attempt to better understand the central patterns and attitude shifts reflected during Whites’ racial identity development or process of dissonance reduction.

In terms of the latter, this growing tradition focuses on White people’s views of themselves as white, on their relationship to structures of power and privilege, and on different forms of whiteness as they occur in White people of various intersecting social identities. More concretely, third wave whiteness researchers emphasize the need to empirically focus on the multilayered, fluid, and nuanced nature of whiteness, rather than reducing it to a monolithic category (Bonnett, 1996; 1997; Eichstedt, 2001; McDermott & Samson, 2005; Twine & Gallagher, 2008). Further, Eichstedt’s (2001) research suggests that antiracist Whites reject essentialist notions of whiteness and seek to understand its historical and structural dimensions. Elaborating on this, Twine and Gallagher (2008) note: “third wave analysis takes as its starting point the understanding that whiteness is not now, nor has it ever been, a static, uniform category of social identification” (p. 6). Instead, this growing body of work highlights how intrawhite stratifications are negotiated based on geography, institutional context, polit-

⁴ This is comparable with Bonilla-Silva’s (2010) story line, “If Jews, Italians, and Irish have made it, how come Blacks have not?” (p. 82).

ical affiliation, skin color, age, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and social class (e.g., Frankenberg, 1993; Hartigan, 1997; 1999; 2001; Perry, 2002; McDermott, 2006).

Research on Intergroup Dialogue⁵

While the literature on whiteness is indeed growing, social-psychological research into race relations has been dominated by studies of White persons' attitudes toward people of color (e.g., Bobo & Kluegel, 1993; Kinder & Sanders, 1996; Schuman et al., 1997; Sniderman & Piazza, 1993) and/or focuses on the way that white individuals learn from interactions with people of color (Gurin & Nagda, 2006; Nagda et al., 2009; Rich & Cargile, 2004). In addition, emergent scholarship examines the development of students within intergroup settings (e.g., Nagda & Zúñiga, 2003; Nagda et al., 2009; Sorensen, Nagda, Gurin, & Maxwell, 2009; Zúñiga et al., 2007). Based on a multi-university study across nine different colleges/universities, Sorensen et al. (2009) present a critical-dialogic theoretical model that informs Intergroup Dialogue curricular practices; the model provides a concise way of summarizing the observed pedagogical, communicative, and psychological processes that contribute to positive intergroup outcomes for students. More concretely, when controlling for selectivity, the quantitative and qualitative data suggest a number of attitudinal and behavioral changes in both white students and students of color, including: (a) increased self-reflexivity about issues of power and privilege; (b) heightened awareness of the institutionalization of race and racism in the U.S.; (c) improved cross-racial interaction; (d) diminished fear about race-related conflict; and (e) increased participation in social change actions (e.g., participating in alliance-building; challenging derogatory comments). According to Nagda et al. (2009), students who participate in Intergroup Dialogues experience these outcomes to a more significant extent than students in a control group or students enrolled in social science courses. Nagda et al. (2009) also theorize that there are two processes—communication processes which “occur between individuals” and psychological processes which “occur within individuals” (p. 4)—and it is these processes that mediate the influence of the Intergroup Dialogue pedagogy on the related out-

comes. In other words, content alone is not sufficient in fostering intergroup understanding, positive intergroup relationships, and intergroup collaboration. Although these outcomes, to differing degrees, are evident for both students of color and white students, less is theoretically and empirically understood about the identity processes of white students in intragroup dialogue settings.

Research on Intra-Group Dialogue

While there is educational value in both interracial and intraracial dialogue, Omi (2001) observes that the former often focuses too much on White people with “the goal of substantively transforming white attitudes toward people of color” (p. 290)—often by relying on people of color to educate Whites. An intragroup dialogue among Whites, in contrast, challenges the notion that a reference group is necessary to promote change. According to Tatum (2003), “separate groups give White people the ‘space to speak with honesty and candor rarely possible in racially mixed groups’” (p. 111). Through pedagogical experience, Rich and Cargile (2004) also confirm the ways intragroup dialogue can complement intergroup work:

Although it might seem disadvantageous to separate the class among color lines, especially considering the fact that factions were already formed during the crisis stage, we felt that it was important for both groups to have a safe space to process what they had read and if necessary, vent their feelings . . . Furthermore, whereas many students of color were willing and able to engage racial issues, a number of white students were angry or completely shut down . . . we believed at the time that the class would remain in the crisis stage if we did not provide an opportunity for students to meet in separate groups. Our ultimate goal was to move toward a dialogic community, and we were willing to take some risks to accomplish this objective (p. 359).

Finally, Feagin and Vera (1995) identify the “sincere fictions of Whites” and argue: “the key to understanding white racism is to be found not only in what Whites think of people of color but also in what Whites think of themselves” (p. xi).

Literature on intragroup dialogue, however, is quite limited; and within this body of work, there is little research that examines how intragroup initiatives can be beneficial for white

⁵ Adapted from Ford and Malaney's (2012) article in *Equity and Excellence in Education*.

students (specifically) and agent group members (generally). For example, the intragroup solidarity model encourages learning among target, or nonprivileged social identity groups; this model does not expand to include the use of intragroup dialogue among dominant group members (Gurin & Nagda, 2006).

Research on White Identity, Inter-/Intra-Group Dialogue Pedagogy, and Student Learning

As previously noted, much of the literature on racial attitudes focuses on Whites engagement with people of color (e.g., Gurin & Nagda, 2006; Nagda et al., 2009; Omi, 2001; Rich & Cargile, 2004); this article addresses this noted gap by also exploring an alternative approach to white identity development. Specifically, it is important to further explore white student learning in the Inter- and Intra-Group Dialogue courses, because they are the numerical majority, occupy a privileged position within society, and are often less experienced at engaging with issues of race. Moreover, whiteness remains a controversial analytical frame and pedagogical focus within academia. Hence, it continues to be an important area of inquiry for race relations scholars and social justice practitioners. As Ortiz and Rhoads (2000) argue: “If educators want to advance students’ understanding of white privilege, and relatedly, racial inequality, they need to help students explore and deconstruct white racial identity, both among Whites and non-Whites. This is a pivotal step in promoting a multicultural perspective” (p. 82).

This project extends research on the Dialogues by assessing white students’ learning across inter- and intraracial group settings. Specifically, it focuses on: (a) how white students’ understanding of race, racism, and white identity is affected by participation in a POC-WHITE or IWRID, and (b) the pedagogies and group dynamics that promote awareness of white students’ racial identity.

Methodology⁶

This institutional review board approved research takes place at a small private liberal arts college in the Northeast. In accordance with national trends within higher education, women (60%) outnumber men (40%) on campus. In

terms of racial demographics, approximately 20% of students self-identify as people of color⁷ and 80% identify as white. While the college continues to recruit and enroll increasingly diverse cohorts of first-year students, significant diversity-related challenges are still present at this PWI. Like many comparable institutions, this college faces a range of ongoing issues, including: (a) students of color/multiracial students are generally the sole representatives of their racial group(s) within a classroom; (b) whiteness remains an unmarked and underexplored racial category; and (c) biased incidents regarding race, social class, gender, and sexuality remain prevalent occurrences on campus.

Despite these identified campus climate issues, the college recognizes the importance of social justice education and recently included a provision in the revised 2010 Strategic Plan, which focuses on developing the diversity-related knowledge and skills of faculty, staff, and students in hopes of building a more inclusive community. The plan also acknowledges the importance of Inter-/Intra-Group Dialogue in achieving its overall mission (college website).

Within this context, a comparative case study approach with document analysis (Berg, 2007) was used in this predialogue/postdialogue design to qualitatively explore white students’ learning in the Inter-/Intra-Group Dialogues in 2009–2011. White students interested in participating in a two-credit, peer-facilitated race dialogue were either enrolled in a POC-WHITE or an Intragroup experience—the IWRID.

At this particular college, the courses were offered as 200-level, interdisciplinary, elective, letter-graded courses on race. In congruence with the University of Michigan’s curricular models (elaborated on in the Inter- and Intra-group Dialogue Pedagogy Section), these POC-WHITE and IWRID social justice courses followed a similar structure, pedagogical style, and course content. Within a 10-person dialogue led

⁶ Adapted from Ford and Malaney’s (2012) article in *Equity and Excellence in Education*.

⁷ The number of students of color at the College is based on student self-identifications, which reflects people of African, Asian, Latin American, and indigenous descent. While the number is not inclusive of international students, it is possible that some students might identify with both categories.

by two trained peer-facilitators⁸ with different (for the POC-WHITE) or the same (for the IWRID) racial identity backgrounds, the Inter-/Intra-Group Dialogues merged theoretical knowledge on race and racism (the “head”) with affective learning and communication skills (the “heart”). The primary distinction between the courses was the emphasis on learning about race (generally) and whiteness (specifically) across or within their racial identity group.

In total, the sample consisted of seven sections of POC-WHITE ($n = 30$) and two sections of IWRID ($n = 19$) that enrolled an aggregate of 49 white students (10 men; 39 women). These traditional college-aged (18–23-year-old) students represented a range of other group and social identities, including differing class years (first-years through seniors); nationalities (e.g., dual citizen; U.S. citizen); religious affiliations (e.g., Jewish, Christian, Agnostic, Spiritual, Non-Religious); sexualities (e.g., gay, bisexual, heterosexual); and social classes (e.g., working, middle, upper).

An inductively derived qualitative analysis of two written, graded assignments, a four-page preliminary paper and an eight-page final paper, allowed for a nuanced exploration of white students’ articulation of race, racial identity, and racism. Both papers required students to critically reflect on their experiences with and understandings of race, by addressing three topical areas: (a) social identities; (b) social structures; and (c) dialogue experiences. The final papers also required students to integrate course readings into their analysis. Specifically, the papers explored questions such as:

1. Social identities. What and how were you taught (explicitly or implicitly) about what it means to be white, in terms of attitudes, behaviors, your future, the nature of the society, and so forth? Broadly speaking, what does it mean to you to be a White person? What do you know about your ethnic/cultural heritage (i.e., the culture, country or region of the world from which your ancestors came)? And how might this affect your feelings about being considered part of your racial group? What are some experiences that have made your race/ethnicity visible to you?

2. Social structures. Throughout your life, have most of your friends and other people close to you been of the same racial/ethnic background? If so, why do you think this was

the case? If not, what do you think led you to cross racial/ethnic lines in these relationships? Have you been subject to discrimination based on your race/ethnicity? If so, what type of discrimination (be specific with examples)? Has your racial/ethnic identity brought you any privileges or benefits? If so, what types of privileges or benefits (be specific with examples)? How do you think demographic changes that are currently underway in the U.S. and the world will affect your experiences with and attitudes relating to race/ethnicity and racism?

3. Dialogue experiences.

- **Preliminary paper.** What are some of your hopes, or learning objectives, for this dialogue? What are some of your fears or concerns about participating in this dialogue?
- **Final paper.** How, if at all, have you been impacted by this semester’s dialogue? What, if any, has been the impact of this semester’s dialogue on your knowledge and views about being a White person in U.S. society? What, if any, has been the impact of this semester’s dialogue on your knowledge and views about race/ethnicity and racism? What, if any, are your goals for personal next steps concerning the topic of this dialogue? How, if at all, do you expect to use what you have learned in the future (both at the college and beyond)?

The author of this article did not instruct the courses and student grades,⁹ determined by faculty/staff instructors, were not contingent on participating in this research project. Upon completion of the dialogue, the 98 (49 preliminary/49 final) papers of consenting students were assigned a number and cleaned of any

⁸ Peer-facilitators are trained by faculty/staff instructors at the College and are selected based on their academic performance, facilitation skills, developmental maturity, and leadership potential. To be considered, peer-facilitators have to successfully complete a two course series of race-focused sociology courses at the 200 and 300-levels. In addition, while facilitating a peer-led dialogue, they must enroll in a 300-level Practicum course to enhance their content knowledge and skills.

⁹ The grading criteria for the papers included assessment of: (a) writing clarity and organization; (b) critical engagement with the assignment prompt; and (c) integration of the readings (for the final paper).

personally identifiable information. To address issues of trustworthiness and enhance credibility and confirmability in the coding process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004), the papers were coded by the principle researcher, an African American woman, as well as six former peer-facilitators¹⁰ of differing racial identities who were trained as research assistants. To account for researcher positionality in the use of the established research protocol, each paper was reviewed by at least three members of the team. If discrepancies arose that affected the intercoder reliability of the sample, additional team members would review the passage in question and the team would discuss differing interpretations of the data until a consensus was reached. In addition, reflexivity, or systematically documenting and reflecting on the research process through researcher memoing (or journaling) and debriefing, was used to remain attuned to potential subjectivities and biases in the collection and interpretation of the data. Finally, an in-depth description of the research site and methodological process was provided to help other researchers determine the transferability of this study to similar institutional contexts within higher education (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004).

While the diversity of the research team was strategically employed to allow for various perspectives to surface, the principle researcher nonetheless recognizes that her racial identity, and the identities of her research team, ultimately influenced the ways in which the team cocreated meaning in the analysis of the collected data. This meaning-making process first involved reading each paper several times and engaging in line-by-line hand-coding to identify any (and all) sociological phenomena that emerged in the data. Then, through open and focused coding, the identified words or phrases were categorized into a lengthy running list of themes and subthemes. This enabled the research team to develop a coding scheme, which was subsequently organized and manually applied to all of the student papers in the QSR N-Vivo software program. This qualitative program was used to isolate particular variables and run queries (or searches) on the data. Keyword and thematic searches, coupled with numerical reports, allowed the researchers to conduct a more in-depth analysis of the data, reconsider or refine previous schemas, and fo-

cus on core emergent themes. Finally, by developing conceptual and theoretical memos and examining relevant excerpts from the data, themes from the preliminary and final papers were compared to discern common patterns across the students' narratives over time (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). While the researchers were able to document student-specific shifts in perspective, for this article, the team was primarily interested in presenting themes that reflected group, rather than individual-level, pre- to postdialogue differences. Although the personal transformations evident in these data are certainly powerful, it is the cross- and within-group patterns that might help researchers further elucidate the pedagogical implications of inter-/intragroup dialogue on the study of whiteness.

Results

In both the POC-WHITE and IWRID, white student papers suggest self-reported growth—in terms of content learning and dialogue processes—over the course of the semester. Reflecting on this experience, 48 of the 49 white students noted the ways in which they have been positively transformed:

Postdialogue: It seems that although I didn't notice the progress that I've made, when I am put in a situation that exposes it, I can see that I have grown. The growth is multidimensional; I now not only understand what it means to be white but also have a better idea of the significance of identities different than my own. (Lindsay,¹¹ POC-WHITE)

Postdialogue: Through this course, I have come to see that passivity might seem harmless, but like cancer or carbon monoxide, it is a silent killer. Shying away from difficult racial issues is the cowardly way out, and I am ashamed to think I once thought my attitude was noble . . . I was taking those important baby steps, I was opening my mind to the process ahead of me, and most importantly, I was beginning to view society and my family and my own whiteness in a whole new light . . . I went into that dialogue feeling no different from any of my friends, and I came out astounded at the progress I had made in my white racial identity work. (Chelsea, IWRID)

While some students, like Chelsea, report making "progress" in their racial identity work,

¹⁰ The peer-facilitators did not analyze data from their own dialogue sections.

¹¹ To protect confidentiality, participant names were changed in the analysis of these data.

resistance also emerged along the way. One White woman, Jenn, in the IWRID, for instance, critiqued the intragroup dialogue structure, questioning, “What can I learn from other White people?”

Postdialogue: I have been consistent in my desire to be part of the mixed racial group; I felt severely limited in the viewpoints we discussed. Throughout the semester people constantly said that I shouldn’t look to other people to represent the race, and I agree. I am looking to people of color to hear their story. I think I would rather learn about other people and then take time to digest, rather than constantly have to talk about myself . . . I feel like we were constantly caught between two ideas—how are we supposed to be able to spend 15 weeks talking about our racial identity, if the privilege of being white is that we never have to think about race. (Jenn, IWRID)

Underlying Jenn’s comment is the notion of cognitive dissonance—the inability to reconcile or make sense of information that contradicts one’s current worldview (Goodman, 2001). Like Jenn, many IWRID student participants initially exhibited notable resistance in the form of denial, defensiveness, and anger at the intragroup nature of the dialogue. In the end, however, these students demonstrated script changes that reflected a nuanced personal and theoretical understanding of whiteness, white privilege, and white identity development. White students in the POC-WHITE courses also reported substantial growth; their learning, however, often involved a broader focus on race relations (generally) rather than whiteness (specifically). More concretely, Table 1 outlines six primary themes, and the related white ideological scripts, that changed from pre- to postdialogue; it also lists three major themes that only emerged in the final papers, and delineates Inter- (POC-WHITE) and Intragroup (IWRID) Dialogue differences.

What follows is a more extensive account of the pre- and postdialogue categories and representative examples from each. In particular, significant themes across the POC-WHITE and IWRID included understanding: (a) how they were socialized to view or not view race; (b) the meaning and significance of whiteness; (c) feelings of shame and guilt; (d) white privilege and power; (e) intersecting agent and target social identities; and, (f) personal accountability and responsibility for creating social change. Further, in contrast to the IWRID dialogue, POC-WHITE participants grappled with owning their

personal prejudices and biases over the course of the semester. IWRID participants, on the other hand, wrestled with: (a) racial terminology and definitions; and (b) the sociohistorical process of becoming white. These themes will be elaborated on in the following subsections. Although racial identity development is not necessarily a linear process (Hardiman & Jackson, 1992; Hardiman, 1994; Helms, 1990, 1995, 2008; Rowe et al., 1994; Tatum, 2003), for the sake of organizational coherence, the categories will be presented in the same order as Table 1.

How They Were Socialized to View (Or Not View) Race

Generally, postdialogue white students, in both sections, had a much more sophisticated understanding of how they were socialized to minimize race, or to view race through a “colorblind” lens (Bonilla-Silva, 2010). Consequently, the white ideological script, “I do not see race . . . we are all human,” in the preliminary papers drastically shifted by the end of the semester. In the ensuing predialogue example, Emily recognizes her previous naïveté around race, but still does not make an effort to increase her racial awareness; in the postdialogue examples, Anne recognizes the privileges inherent in the hegemonic nature of whiteness, and Collin is able to critically unpack his lived reality as a White man:

Predialogue: What this meant was that I was almost blind to my own skin color and naively wanted to believe that everyone was equal. And even now as I am aware of the falsehood in that reality and are well aware of myself and my identity it is not the main component, my race and ethnicity, is not the first thing I think of when asked to describe myself nor do I see it as the most important nor the most defining characteristic about myself. (Emily, POC-WHITE)

Postdialogue: Through discussions I realized that my race was not necessarily something I thought about all the time. I know it is something that is a large part of who I am, but because the majority of the time I am in places where being white is the majority I rarely think about my race. I am only fully aware of my race when I become the minority in a situation. (Anne, POC-WHITE)

Postdialogue: It separates us significantly from race issues because Whites tend to wonder, “what’s the big deal?” and that allows Whites to minimize race issues and remain dominant without even understanding what they are doing. In learning extensively about my own white culture, however, I have come to realize how big

Table 1
White Student Learning Outcomes

	POC-WHITE	IWRID
(a) Predialogue themes		
(b) Postdialogue themes		
(c) New scripts, postdialogue		
1. Socialization process and recognizing race	✓	✓
a. "I do not see race . . . we are all human."		
b. "I now understand how I was socialized to (not) see race."		
2. Defining whiteness/importance of whiteness	✓	✓
a. "I have never been taught what it means to be White . . ."/ "Whiteness is not significant . . ."		
b. "I am now beginning to understand the meaning, complexity, and importance of being White."		
3. Sociohistorical context		✓
c. "I now understand the history of how my family became White."		
4. Feelings of shame and guilt	✓	✓
a. "I feel guilty about how whites have historically treated people of color."		
b. "I have learned from my guilt and am using it to create change." "I am working to develop pride in my White identity."		
5. White power and privilege	✓	✓
a. "Being White is a privilege, but we have also worked hard for what we have . . ."		
b. "Being White is a privilege; I must take ownership of that and use my power to create change."		
6. Intersecting agent and target social identity memberships	✓	✓
a. "I am oppressed in other ways . . ."		
b. "Although I might be oppressed for other target group identities, I am still privileged to be White."		
7. Personal prejudices and biases	✓	
c. "I recognize that I am also racist . . ."		
8. Terminology and definitions		✓
c. "I now have the language to discuss race and racism . . ."		
9. Personal accountability/challenging racism/taking action	✓	✓
a. "I am not like other White people . . ."		
b. "It is my responsibility to take action, develop white allies, and create social change."		

Note. ✓ = theme present in the corresponding dialogue section. IWRID = Intra-Group White Racial Identity Dialogues; POC-WHITE = Intergroup People of Color-White People Dialogues.

a part of my identity it really is. Reexamining my life with whiteness being an important quality, and understanding what it meant to grow up white led to a stronger personal foundation. (Collin, IWRID)

In Anne's statement, she relies heavily on recognizing whiteness when in the presence of non-Whites, which is typical within interracial settings (McKinney, 2005; Tatum, 2003); in contrast, Collin's IWRID experience provides him with a stronger foundational understanding of whiteness. This trend reemerges in the subsequent sections: the meaning and significance

of whiteness and the sociohistorical process of becoming white.

Meaning and Significance of Whiteness

Like Collin, most white students were better able to articulate the meaning and significance of whiteness by the conclusion of the dialogue. More concretely, similar to McKinney's (2005) findings, predialogue papers suggest that students were largely unable to name explicit lessons they were taught about whiteness:

Predialogue: Right now, the only understanding of what being white means is not being anything else. I feel like I have learned “how to be white” simply by being taught not to do stereotypical behaviors of other races/ethnicity (e.g., White people should not talk in Ebonics or listen to rap) and to watch how I act around other races (don’t be racist, don’t say certain words . . .). (Jillian, POC-WHITE)

Predialogue: I recently called my mom and asked her if she ever taught us about our racial identity. She hesitantly admitted that she never did. However, she quickly emphasized that when we grew up she constantly taught us about being nice to everyone—there was no reason to differentiate between being nice to White people and people of color. I was never taught to be white—I was taught to be me, and being white is just one of the many aspects of who I am . . . I have always known I was white, but it’s like knowing I have legs—it’s just there. (Jenn, IWRID)

For White people socialized into U.S. society, a society dominated by racial hegemony, it often is hard to identify the ubiquitous nature of whiteness—as Jenn explains, “it’s just there.” As a result, prior to their dialogue experience, students either report seeing white culture as “pervasive” or, like Jillian, as culturally “empty” (McKinney, 2005; Perry, 2001; 2002). To that end, Kelly notes, “white was blank, white was not Black, or Hispanic or something worth mentioning, it was just bland” (Kelly, IWRID). McKinney (2005) describes the pervasive nature of whiteness as a “prompted identity” because respondents in her study indicated that “being white goes unnoticed” unless they are specifically asked to discuss it (p. 20). According to Perry (2001; 2002) this mentality allows Whites to construct an objective truth that is dislocated from the sociohistorical context of race relations in the U.S.

In comparison with the predialogue, however, white students in this study were more readily able to acknowledge the significance and importance of whiteness by the end of the semester:

Postdialogue: Broadly speaking, to be a White person for me means that I hold privilege and that I hold certain opportunities that other people do not, solely based on the color of my skin and the economic circumstances that I was born into. I did nothing to earn my skin color, but society dictated to me that life would not be very hard. (Emerson, POC-WHITE)

Postdialogue: Prior to this course, I would have said that I had no culture—that people all claim that white culture is the everyday culture and so I have no culture to call my own really. This course actually forced me to reexamine my life and my upbringing in a way that

made me realize the effects of my own cultural background on how I was raised, how my family acts and how we celebrate holidays, and from all that how I am today. Through that lens it was a lot clearer for me to see how I was a product of a very ingrained and defined cultural context, and not some vague “white culture” that blanketed my worldview prior to now. The week where we dealt specifically with the concept of white ethnics and the “whitening of America” was major because it forced me to go look at my family heritage and ask my parents and grandparents where exactly we came from. Outside of the family of my culture, I’ve also gained a much deeper understanding of the culture that revolves around me as a White person interacting in a predominantly white country and a subsequently predominantly white upper-middle class private liberal arts college. My beliefs, who I hang out with, what we talk about, and what we enjoy also in some ways comes from a culture that is definable, but at the same time it is this constant back-and-forth between understanding the individual and understanding the greater culture because I think neither wholly defines any person or group. (Collin, IWRID)

While this theme is consistent across the various dialogue sections, the learning was distinct. In particular, POC-WHITE participants, like Emerson, focus more on white skin privilege and the implications for people of color; in contrast, Collin and other IWRID participants are more able to articulate the meaning of white culture, independent of a reference group. Instead of relying on a “mirrored white identity” (defining whiteness in contrast to the Other) or “usable ethnic identity” (relying on a symbolic white ethnic identity) (McKinney, 2005), they are able to own the sociohistorical process of becoming white within the U.S. context (p. 82, 95).

Sociohistorical Process of Becoming White

Waters (1990) posits the notion of “optional ethnicities” (p. 202) or the ability for White people to selectively choose when to invoke certain cultural/ethnic signifiers (e.g., Jewish, Italian American, Irish American, etc.). Consequently, she contends, “for white students, the ethnicity they claim is more often than not a symbolic one—with all of the voluntary, enjoyable, and intermittent characteristics I have described.” Likewise, many white students in the sample entered with an “I am not like ‘other’ Whites” script; instead, other marginalized ethnic identities were emphasized, while their whiteness (and the privileges therein) were minimized and/or ignored (Johnson, 2006). This pattern is described by Kivel (2000) in the fol-

lowing manner: some White people “claim some other identity that will give [them] legitimate victim status” (p. 90). In contrast, in comparison to POC-WHITE pre-/postdialogue papers, the pre-/postdialogue papers of the IWRID participants demonstrated a much greater understanding of optional ethnicity and appreciation for the process that historically marginalized white ethnic groups underwent in order to “become white.” The following quotations illustrate this point:

Predialogue: Because I was born a full-blooded Jew with ancestral origins in Russia, Poland, and Austria, my parents (and more specifically, my father) have reminded me that my whiteness is not like “other” (normative) whiteness. From this, I learned that my Jewish and European blood served as significant markers of difference, as reminders that my family’s history mattered. Concurrently, my skin became a potential mask to that history, where in lay the potential of losing my ethnic and religious identity within the sea of “white Anglo Saxons.” Though my parents did not constantly reinforce this “lesson,” I still understood the deep significance of this complicated aspect of my identity. As my parents had taught me, my whiteness was not what connected me to my ancestral past, but what obscured the recognition of my “unique” religious and (white) ethnic identity. (Daniel, POC-WHITE)

Postdialogue: A WASP identity of being Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, and a native English speaker is the epitome of whiteness in an American context. My racial ancestry would be classified as being a “white ethnic.” After years of living in the U.S. my family was able to assimilate to American white culture and achieve whiteness and the privileges attached to that identity. While I have never experienced racial or ethnic discrimination personally, my family has . . . Irish immigrants were viewed as subhuman and often portrayed in a similar way as African Americans were. Likewise, my [Hispanic] heritage is viewed as less white because of their dark skin color and more ethnic culture, food, and language. These groups were, however, able to eventually claim whiteness and overcome this ethnic discrimination. Now I can claim the identity of being an American without hyphenation or explanation. I have the freedom of being viewed as the norm because my whiteness is now legitimate. (Shawn, IWRID)

The assimilative process in which white ethnic groups “became white” is a well-documented phenomenon in the relevant literature (Alba & Nee, 2003; Ignatiev, 1995; Roediger, 1991). Specifically, through case studies of European immigrant groups, Roediger (1991) identifies the ways in which white urban workers, like the Irish, strategically developed a raced and classed identity separate from Blacks. Likewise, while Shawn recognizes that his mul-

tiethnic family was previously discriminated against based on their Irish and/or Hispanic roots, he also acknowledges that his white skin has allowed him to assimilate into (white) U.S. culture and claim the privileges inherent in whiteness. Although both the POC-WHITE and IWRID dialogues included readings on the topic, this change in white ideological script was only prominent for the latter group. This suggests that an intragroup focus may result in a more critical dissection and theoretically focused examination of whiteness that is less present within intergroup settings.

Feelings of Shame and Guilt

For all students, this newfound awareness of race also came with related emotions; in particular, feelings of shame and guilt were prevalent across the white student preliminary and final papers. While a typical emotional response, particularly during the earlier stages of racial identity development (Hardiman, 1994; Helms, 1990; 1995; 2008; Tatum, 2003), Jensen (2005) describes guilt as “irrational and counterproductive” and identifies two reasons why many White people have difficulty moving forward: (a) guilt seemingly absolves Whites of responsibility; and (b) guilt discourages action (p. 47). He also extends Bonilla-Silva’s (2010) color-blind framework—arguing that some Whites acknowledge their privilege, but minimize it (and the resulting guilt) by suggesting that all groups benefit from unearned privileges. Instead of evading responsibility, Jensen (2005) challenges White people “to live on the edge of the guilt, to use it to challenge ourselves and each other to do better” (p. 51).

By the end of the semester, many of the white students in this study better understood Jensen’s (2005) fundamental argument; in particular, they realized that feeling guilty was not productive and had made steps to resolve this internal conflict and move forward. In addition, it is evident that the course provided many white students with the tools to bridge theory and practice; they better understood how one person could create change by challenging a derogatory comment or participating in inter- and intragroup alliances. Evidence of these ideological script changes is illustrated in the following series of quotations:

Predialogue: I've entered a stage in which I constantly either feel bad about being white, or I'm beating myself up for this white guilt. I want to enter a state in which I can feel empathy without guilt, and simultaneously have pride in my own heritage without it feeling disproportionate compared to others. (Kelly, IWRID)

Predialogue: I am a very sympathetic person and in a lot of situations I will do small things for people of color. When I work retail I tell them about every deal possible and give them my discount when my boss isn't looking, or hold the door for them. There are many small actions, but it does not feel like enough. Nothing will ever make the pain from those times vanish. (Jolie, POC-WHITE)

In the first example, Kelly acknowledges her guilt and hopes to move beyond it. In the second, Jolie's comment is reflective of the disintegration stage of white identity development; she feels guilty and thus decides to "help" people of color. Her manner of helping, however, is patronizing and, in many ways, reinforces racial structures of power and privilege. In contrast, reflections from the final papers represent a change in emotional mind-set:

Postdialogue: At the time I felt very guilty for being white and the idea that I needed to be made into a victim to care about racism was borderline offensive to both me as a White person and to people of color. (Kelly, IWRID)

Postdialogue: I have only recently come to realize that guilt does nothing but make me feel bad. By feeling guilty I am in no way helping those who have been oppressed. Instead of wallowing in my own sense of guilt for something that I had no say in, I should actually go out into the world and do something productive. (Lisa, POC-WHITE)

As these quotations suggest, Lisa is able to identify the source, function, and limitations of guilt. And, Kelly recognizes how racism, irrespective of guilt, affects everyone—affirming that we need to collectively work for a more socially just society (see Goodman, 2001; Kendall, 2006; Tatum, 2003 for further discussion on the costs of racism). Deconstructing the implications of white power and privilege was integral to the participants' transition from affective immobilization to mobilization and (eventually) action.

White Privilege and Power

For many students, the preliminary papers that discussed white privilege read like a summary from McIntosh's (2007) "knapsack of

white privilege" list (e.g., "I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group.") In other words, white POC-WHITE and IWRID students generally understood that it was intellectually appropriate to mention privilege, but did not necessarily have any investment in it, or even believe that systematic advantage based on race applied to them. Others, as noted in the previous section, were overwhelmed by feelings of shame and guilt: "I am from a very privileged background . . . and sometimes I feel a bit disgusted by it" (Ashley, POC-WHITE). Consequently, predialogue discussion of privilege was often abstract—absent of personal examples—or couched within a meritocracy narrative of hard work: "It is important to me that people recognize that I have earned the things that I have accomplished, regardless of being white" (Jenn, IWRID). This phenomenon is also documented in McKinney (2005) and Tatum's (2003) books; they explain that statements like Jenn's reinforce the agentic American myth of individualism, while simultaneously denying structural realities. McKinney (2005), for instance, notes that white college students in her study either view whiteness as a liability or a privilege, and describes the tendency for White people to normalize their raced experiences and related feelings of entitlement in the following passage: "I find that most white students are committed to the myth that we live in a complete meritocracy—that all who work hard enough will receive the economic returns they deserve, whatever their racial or ethnic classification" (p. xx). Moreover, Bush (2004) argues, "by incorporating the language of standards, merit, individual responsibility, and civility, racially coded language provides justification for reestablishing more privileged populations" (p. 10).

A critical script change, however, occurred in the final papers; students not only meaningfully grappled with the concept of white privilege, but they were also able to move beyond shame and guilt—enabling them to take responsibility for their white identity and the privileges inherent in it:

Postdialogue: My whiteness has been so invisible to me, that I can't even remember more times when my white privilege was addressed . . . I am not proud that I cannot remember these times, I am embarrassed and distressed. Embarrassed because as an up and coming white ally, I should be able to define what it means to

me to be white, and without the memory of times in which it was wrongly taught to me, how can I attempt to combat those teachings now? . . . I am constantly working to better define my whiteness, and a large part of that definition is putting my experiences under a microscope . . . I have struggles and stressors about race but I can choose to have them. I have this ability to decide to care. People of color have less of a choice and it is because all of the white privilege that has yet to be realized by those who abuse it. (Kaitlyn, IWRID)

Postdialogue: Because of this course, I feel more capable of rationally looking at my racial identity in a constructive manner. The question that plagued me for so long, “how can White people have pride in their whiteness,” is beginning to become more easy to answer: White people can have pride in their whiteness when they are willing to challenge, and help others challenge, white privilege. (Daniel, POC-WHITE)

The shift that occurred in the final papers demonstrates how these students moved from simply recognizing that whiteness comes with privilege, to understanding that white privilege is unearned and that their privilege makes them the beneficiary of systemic racism that needs to be challenged (Johnson, 2006).

Intersecting Agent and Target Social Identities

Additionally, by the end of the semester, white students critically examined the complexity of intersecting target group identities in relation to their white privilege. In the preliminary papers, students used what Rich and Cargile (2004) refer to as “diversion strategies” (p. 360) to avoid discussions of race (e.g., White female students focused on sexism; white gay and bisexual students focused on homophobia; white Jewish students focused on anti-Semitism). In contrast, the final papers reflected awareness of this tendency. Elaborating this point, Jolie, reveals: “this class has made me realize the power I do have, and the power I do not” (POC-WHITE), and Shawn realizes, “I focused so much on my sexuality [gay] and class status [working class] as if to feign a claim to some sort of extreme social oppression, ignoring the extreme privileges I possess simply by being white” (IWRID). Finally, Maria states:

Postdialogue: Because of the discomfort I felt being aware of my race, I found myself often trying to complicate issues so that I could call upon my minority status as female and Jewish and not feel so much like a villain . . . However, as I became more aware of the comfort I found in my marginalized identities, I realized that this stopped me from really confronting my

whiteness . . . I came to terms with a lot of demons this semester and learned to not hide from my discomfort with my whiteness, but to hold it, own it, and move on from it. I learned to keep myself in check. (Maria, POC-WHITE)

Like, Jolie, Maria, and Shawn, instead of focusing exclusively on their target identities, most of the white students in the POC-WHITE and IWRID dialogues were much more aware of also owning their agent or privileged identities, including whiteness.

Personal Prejudices and Biases

As POC-WHITE students discussed whiteness, race, and racism with students of color, many reported that they carried elements of the society’s racism in their own thoughts, and that participation in the dialogues had helped them to understand and identify their own unconscious bias or implicit racism (Bonilla-Silva & Forman, 2000):

Postdialogue: Through this class, I have come to realize that I may be using my gay target identity as a means of avoiding my own racial prejudices. In one dialogue Session I brought up how in high school, I had experienced homophobia from a variety of my black friends. These experiences, combined with the depiction of black homophobia in the media, led me to inductive reason that Black people were more likely to be homophobic than other racial groups . . . While it is important that my sexuality be acknowledged, it cannot prevent me from fully addressing the ways my racist mind has and continues to function. When I think about the other racist beliefs I hold toward Black people (i.e., “they” are inherently more violent than White people) I am reminded that I have a lot of work to do before I can say that I have divested myself of racist beliefs. Knowing the “right answer” isn’t enough. I need to continue to admit my assumptions, to me and especially to other people, in order to rise above them. (Daniel, POC-WHITE)

Postdialogue: My “fear of sounding racist” is probably because I am a little racist. I’ve always known that there is a little barrier up between me and people of color (POC), and (although I’m still trying to figure this out) I think it’s based off my lack of closeness with any POC when I was younger, as well as the hierarchical positioning of the people I did interact with. In no way do I ever see a person of color and think he or she is valued less, not as capable, intelligent or driven as I am; it’s not that tangible or obvious. I’ve just always felt a little bit of separation in my relationships with POC. My fear of saying something racist is potentially rooted in the part of me that still sees POC with a little less potential. (Regan, POC-WHITE)

As Tatum (2003) describes in her smog analogy, it is common for whites to not recognize their own biases:

While they have been breathing the “smog” and have internalized many of the prevailing societal stereotypes of people of color, they typically are unaware of this socialization process. They often perceive themselves as color-blind, completely free of prejudice, unaware of their own assumptions about other racial groups. In addition, they usually think of racism as the prejudiced behaviors of individuals rather than as an institutionalized system of advantage benefiting Whites in subtle as well as blatant ways (p. 95).

While these biases are often unconscious, the Intergroup Dialogues provided white students with the opportunity for deep self-reflection to uncover some of their underlying prejudices and challenge their open-minded liberal identity. In the relevant literature, scholars cite “symbolic racism” (Kinder & Sears, 1981), “aversive racism” (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986), “racial resentment” (Kinder & Sanders, 1996), or “colorblind racism” (Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Brown, 2003; Bush, 2004) when discussing the racial views and prejudices of self-identified liberal Whites. The terms refer to more subtle forms of present-day racism that are often less recognized than the more overt “old-fashioned” racism of the past. White people who are aversively racist, for instance, tend to exhibit “a particular type of ambivalence in which the conflict is between feelings and beliefs associated with a sincerely egalitarian value system and unacknowledged negative feelings and beliefs about Blacks” (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986, p. 62). Because aversive racism may be unconscious (or subconscious), it is not surprising that many white students are unaware of their racial biases, prior to the dialogues. Sullivan (2006) further explains this trend: “far from being merely innocent, ignorance can operate as a shield that protects a person from realizing her complicity in an oppressive situation” (p. 128). By making their complicity visible, as these examples clearly demonstrate, white students’ level of self-awareness increased in the Intergroup Dialogues as they came to terms with the fact they, like all individuals socialized into U.S. systems of racial power and privilege, have not fully evaded the societal “smog” of racism. This revelation was, in part, possible because Whites in the POC-WHITE had a reference group, students of color, to share their lived experiences with race and racism. Rachel, for instance, notes: “it was necessary, I think, to get the per-

spectives of students of color . . . [who] talked about [the] racial profiling that they have experienced” (POC-WHITE), and Jason agrees: “my whiteness was made visible to me by the people of color group when they discussed the extent to which they are judged on a daily basis at the College” (POC-WHITE). Without the personal narratives of students of color, the IWRID students, in contrast, did not come to the same type of profound emotional realizations within the dialogue process. Instead, they were able to articulate similar themes through theoretical content.

Terminology and Definitions: Colorblind Racism

In addition to engaging with the process, white students in the IWRID better utilized the course content to help them make connections between theory and practice. Relying on the intellectual expertise of prominent scholars, the theory of color-blind racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2010), among others, particularly resonated with them:

Postdialogue: This is where the idea of color-blind racism comes in, something I am beginning to believe is responsible for a lot of the problems concerning racism in our country. Overt racism has become less obvious as color-blind racism replaces it. I believe that it is no less destructive. (Kelly, IWRID)

Postdialogue: The problem of racism still persists today though. It is difficult for me to try and quantify a concept like racism because it exists in ways that numbers cannot record. Actions related to racism in the United States can be recorded, and they probably are going down, but subtle discrimination is impossible to record. (Matt, IWRID)

As Kelly and Matt’s comments suggest, the readings helped them understand the changing nature of U.S. racism—from overt to subtle—over time. In doing so, through a slightly different methodological approach, the white IWRID students were also able to acknowledge their role in (un)intentionally perpetuating racial inequality. To that end, Chelsea concedes: “When I started my white racial identity work, I was surprised to learn that technically, as someone who was colorblind, I was racist” (IWRID). In her study of self-identified “non-racist” white women, Trepagnier (2007) determines that the oppositional categories of racist and nonracist are outdated and must be replaced by a continuum model that can raise racial

awareness among well-meaning White people. This premise also seems appropriate when describing the societally ingrained racist tendencies of the white students in this sample—open-minded students who have come to conceptually and experientially understand their complicity with the racial system.

Personal Accountability and Responsibility in Creating Social Change

Recent scholarship has focused on the perspectives and actions of white antiracist allies and activists (Alcoff, 1998; Eichstedt, 2001; Goodman, 2001; Kivel, 1996). Alcoff (1998), for instance, argues that Whites need to develop a form of “double consciousness,” which requires “an acknowledgment of the historical legacy of white identity constructions in the persistent structures of inequality and exploitation, as well as a newly awakened memory of the many white traitors to white privilege who have struggled to contribute to the building of an inclusive human community” (pp. 24–25). In congruence with this premise, most of the white students in this study, regardless of group context, also recognized the importance of developing a double consciousness, or awareness of both social structures and individual agency/responsibility, in an effort to create social change:

Postdialogue: Now my race means I have two choices: I can decide to continue ignoring my race, which is unlikely and almost impossible due to my experiences in the racial dialogues, or to confront my white racial identity and fulfill my obligation to reconcile my privilege and become a white ally. Now my race means I have to do something about the racism, discrimination, and oppression that I am an agent of. I now know that identifying as a White person is important for confronting this institution of oppression . . . We have an obligation to use our white privilege in a positive way to combat all forms of discrimination. I hope I will now be able to become a white ally and recruit others to do the same. I hope I will be able to confront all forms of racism, challenge them from a well-educated perspective, and explore my own stereotypes and privileges, somehow reconciling my privilege as a white individual. (Shawn, IWRID)

Further, many of the students were better able to articulate the meaning and importance of being a white ally; they gained a more sophisticated understanding of how to be an effective ally by empowering, rather than undermining, the groups they seek to support (Brandyberry,

1999). Relating a scenario in which she intervened on behalf of a person of color who was consistently ignored by taxi cabs in the City, Maria, comes to the following realization:

Postdialogue: I realized I had committed the cardinal sin of being an ally - I had assumed control of the situation without acting as an aid for the rightful owner of the situation. I was suddenly aware of my social activist shortsightedness, and was reminded that I cannot run into a situation waving my civil rights flag, but that in order to really challenge my privilege, I have to give control of the situation to the person with the least control, that is, the person of color. (Maria, POC-WHITE)

Likewise, Ian, a White man, acknowledges that “allies are often more successful advocates for a cause than members of the target group,” but nonetheless questions: “are they getting the right message out? . . . A potential concern that I raised was that in advocacy, an ally might impose their cultural values on someone else.” He concludes by suggesting that: “The only way for successful allies to appropriately advocate for what others actually want is through meaningful dialogue. During interactions such as those that have taken place in Intergroup Dialogue, an ally may best understand the true problems of a target group and how s/he may best help” (POC-WHITE). Like Shawn, Collin, Maria, and Ian, many of the white students in the sample not only articulated a new desire to take action, but also had a much better understanding of how they could do this by using their power to create change on individual and interpersonal levels. Moreover, a few of the white POC-WHITE students also began to appreciate the importance of engaging in intragroup work while simultaneously participating in cross-racial alliances:

Postdialogue: I have learned that a common perception among White people is that they often feel that the only way to learn about their own identities is to learn about people different than themselves. In reality, I have learned that while this does help facilitate growth in many ways, it is also important to question oneself and other White people to reach optimal progression. (Dylan, POC-WHITE)

In accordance with Dylan’s remarks, Kendall (2006) encourages Whites to internally examine their path toward an autonomous white racial identity (Helms, 1990, 1995, 2008), and related motivations, before allying or engaging in cross-racial social justice work.

In sum, white students in the POC-WHITE and IWRID underwent an important journey; a

journey that has helped them to discover and reconnect with the meaning and importance of whiteness in a more nuanced way. By revising their traditionalist white ideological scripts (e.g., “I do not see race”; “I am oppressed in other ways”; “I am not like other White people”), they are more willing (and able) to acknowledge their prejudices without guilt (e.g., “I recognize that I am also racist”), grapple with their unearned power and privilege (e.g., “Being white is a privilege; I must take ownership of that”), and use this newly acquired knowledge to create change in their lives and the lives of others (e.g., “It is my responsibility to take action, develop white allies, and create social change”). Accordingly, Emily notes:

Postdialogue: As I begin to write this final culminating essay about this Intergroup Dialogue course, I feel overwhelmed by the amount of thoughts, reflections, and feelings that fill my head. It seems impossible to articulate the growing experience that this course turned into over the course of this past semester . . . Only now because of my engagement with this course do I feel as though I am “dipping my pinky toe” into the “Autonomy” stage, hoping to use this growth and development of my identity to take more direct action toward these issues of social justice. (Emily, POC-WHITE)

McKinney (2005) refers to the moments that facilitate a change in white students’ perspectives on whiteness as “racial turning points” (p. 24); when these insights result in a more dramatic change in outlook or related actions, they are labeled “racial epiphanies.” Through this process, Emily—and the other white POC-WHITE/IWRID students—have indeed been transformed in both subtle and more explicit ways; the revisionist white ideological scripts are one indicator of the progress they have made in their understanding of their white racial identity (Helms, 1990, 1995, 2008; Tatum, 2003).

Conclusion

Postdialogue: This class has taught me profound things about my social and racial identity. It has been a consistent Monday night outlet to express my feeling about issues that would often be overlooked in social situations. In many ways Intergroup Dialogue has been my Monday moderator between my life in academia and my personal experience. It has bridged that critical gap between theory and method. College students often become disenchanted with the material they read about in textbooks, and rarely does that information profoundly affect their lives. Often in college, I have found myself struggling to maintain a balance—to combine a theory with a practice. For me I found a

haven in extracurricular activities, in academic material I find to feel contemporary, and in friends and colleagues that share the same interests as I do. Intergroup Dialogue has provided me with a positive example of what such a compound ought to look like. (Erin, POC-WHITE)

As Lewis (2004) notes, “all Whites in racialized societies ‘have race’” (p. 635) and all Whites are affected by race; white students, however, often enter college without being consciously aware of their white identity (and related power/privilege) because it is the societal norm (Lewis, 2004; McKinney, 2005; Tatum, 2003). Given the racial segregation patterns in many cities across the U.S. (Blumenfeld & Raymond, 2000; Krysan & Farley, 2002; Massey & Denton, 1993), it is important that college/universities provide white students with the opportunity to critically engage with race issues. As Erin’s above quotation indicates, by bridging intellectual (content) and emotional (process) learning, the Inter-/Intra-Group Dialogues are effective in helping students make important connections between racial identity theory and their own lived experiences.

More concretely, the data presented in this article complement existing studies’ quantitative findings that Intergroup Dialogue pedagogy is demonstrably effective in attaining desired student learning outcomes related to engagement with racial identity and social justice (e.g., Lopez, Gurin, & Nagda, 1998; Nagda & Zúñiga, 2003; Sorensen et al., 2009). In these courses, students not only gain new knowledge about social and cultural diversity, but more importantly, they learn to interact effectively and collaboratively within and across social identities; and just as importantly, through a colearning model, they learn to interrogate their own values in relation to those of others.

Moreover, this study expands upon previous research on the relationship between white racial identity and Inter-/Intra-Group Dialogue; this document analysis reveals important, identity-specific learning for white students in both dialogue contexts—thus advancing our understanding of how white college students make sense of their own racial group membership and how they apply this knowledge to the world around them. Most notably, and in opposition to persistent perspectives on race relations that commonly focus on cross-racial interaction (Bobo & Kluegel, 1993; Kinder & Sanders,

1996; Schuman et al., 1997), this exploratory study suggests that Whites can also effectively engage with issues of race, racism, and privilege through structured intragroup experiences. In particular, curricular initiatives like the IWRID provide white students with the unique opportunity to grapple with sensitive race-related topics, independent of students of color (also see Rich & Cargile, 2004); in doing so, white students in the Intra-Group Dialogue demonstrate a sophisticated and nuanced understanding of whiteness and its complexities (e.g., symbolic ethnicity; white identity and in-group differences; colorblind racism). Interestingly, through their experience with caucus groups, students in the POC-WHITE came to appreciate the value of intraracial dialogue as well. Returning to one of the initial questions motivating this research—Can white students effectively learn about whiteness by themselves as well as in collaboration with students of diverse racial backgrounds?—the data from this study affirms this premise, suggesting that intentionally structured inter- and intragroup dialogic pedagogies can produce similar results. By connecting theory and practice, white students completed the POC-WHITE and IWRID courses with significant content knowledge and process skills related to race (generally) and whiteness (specifically).

While these results are promising, it is also important to acknowledge that the results from this small, nonrandom sample, which includes an unequal number of POC-WHITE and IWRID participants as well as women and men, are not intended to be generalizable across various institutional contexts or representative of all college-aged white students at PWIs. The benefit of qualitative research is the nuance of empirical evidence that it provides—knowledge that can be subsequently adapted, expanded, and applied to future studies in the field. For instance, while the white students in this sample articulated an understanding of intersectionality (for more, see the “Intersecting Agent and Target Social Identities” section of this article.) and represented a range of other target and agent social identities, the numerical variations were not large enough to draw preliminary conclusions about the potential within-group differences in experience based on gender, religion, social class, or sexuality. In addition, because Inter-/Intra-Group Dialogue

courses are voluntary, this project focuses on a self-selected group of white students; notably, regardless of their potential willingness or previous engagement with these issues, the white students in this study still benefited from these dialogic courses on race. Finally, it is unclear, without additional longitudinal data, if these documented changes are sustainable over an extended period of time. This will be the focus of a subsequent study by the principle researcher.

Despite these potential limitations, the qualitative data suggest notable script changes in white students’ attitudes and behaviors over the course of the semester. These findings not only have significant implications for predominately white higher educational institutions, but can also potentially impact the way racially segregated secondary schools engage with issues of race in the classroom. Future research can build on these results by further exploring the nuances of white student learning across pedagogical approach, institutional context, demographic setting, and age cohorts; it should also integrate a post-post-dialogue component to assess the sustainability of these outcomes over time.

Duster (2001) uses the image of water, and its multiple properties (vapor/liquid/solid), to explain the complexities and ever-changing nature of race (shifting and undetectable/fluid/rigid and visible); current manifestations of race in the U.S.—the colorblind perspective—often surface as a vapor or liquid. As educators and social justice activists, it is our responsibility to continue to make race, including whiteness, visible and relevant in our lives, interpersonal interactions, and institutional practices. Accordingly, Lewis (2001) rightly notes: “In short, education that is critical, multicultural, and focused on racial justice cannot be reserved only for students of color” (p. 804). In order to maximize learning opportunities within diverse communities, McKinney (2005) also contends that reeducation of Whites is necessary through antiracist theory and practice, and that the college classroom is a particularly good space for this reeducation to occur. It is to be expected that many Whites, like Jenn, will resist and question (Goodman, 2001; Ortiz & Rhoads, 2000): “What can I learn from other White people”? As this article reveals, meaningful inter- and intrarace dialogues, like POC-WHITE and IWRID, can result in a “transformational

critical consciousness” or a “paradigm shift” when a person’s egalitarian values no longer align with social norms and structures (Pewewardy, 2007, p. 30). Indeed, critical shifts in these white college students’ ideological scripts demonstrate the possibilities of social justice education in helping to transform race relations within (and possibly) beyond the academy.

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