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Gettin' good with ourselves : White caucus groups as emergent anti-racism pedagogy

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Ourselves: White Caucus
Groups as Emergent Anti-
Racism Pedagogy

ABSTRACT

This exploratory study examined the impact of participating in White caucus

groups with the UNtraining, a program based in Berkeley, California, on the racial

identity formation of its participants. Twelve participants were interviewed and narrative

data gathered. Participants were asked what shifts in their thoughts, feelings, and

behaviors related to their Whiteness, they recognized as a result of participating.

Additionally, participants were asked to identify and critically reflect upon which

pedagogical elements of the program influenced these shifts.

Findings revealed that the relative emotional safety of an all White group, coupled

with a supportive community of like-minded individuals, and a programmatic culture of

risk taking and compassion, provided significant cognitive, affective, and behavioral

shifts in participants. Two cognitive shifts were particularly noteworthy. The first was

an internalization of the concept of White cultural conditioning and the second was an

increased ability to cognitively hold the contradictory notion that Whites may harbor

unintentional racism and be deeply committed to equity simultaneously. These shifts

correlated with a decrease in feelings of guilt and shame, and an increase in compassion

for themselves and other Whites. As a result of these shifts participants noted an

increased ability and willingness to engage in dialogue about race and racism with other

Whites and People of Color.

This study indicates that White caucus groups may be an underutilized resource in

anti-racism pedagogy, particularly for Whites seeking to develop and enact privilege-

cognizant White identities.

GETTIN' GOOD WITH OURSELVES: WHITE CAUCUS GROUPS AS EMERGENT

ANTI-RACISM PEDAGOGY

A project based upon independent investigation,
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Social Work.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"I have been performing whiteness, and having whiteness performed upon me, since – or actually before – the moment I was born. But the question is, what does that mean?"

-Ruth Frankenburg

This question lies at the very center of this study on White racial identity

formation. Racial identity has been defined as, "a sense of group or collective identity

based on one's perception that he or she shares a common racial heritage with a particular

racial group"(Helms 1990, p3). In common parlance, the racial identity formation

process refers to the sense one makes of the race they feel to be, and how this sense

evolves over time. This study accompanies twelve White individuals on part of their

meaning-making journey around this topic. This study specifically explores the role of

White caucus groups in the racial identity development of its participants. All twelve of

the participants in this study have been involved in a program based in Berkeley,

California called the UNtraining, which gathers small groups of White individuals

together to "unlearn White liberal racism." The study is exploratory and qualitative in

nature. It specifically asks participants to self-reflect upon changes in their thoughts,

feelings, and behaviors related to their Whiteness as a result of participating in the

program. It further asks participants to identify and critically reflect upon to which

pedagogical elements of the program they attribute these changes.

This study falls in a particular moment in history; arguably a tide-shifting moment for race relations and the study of Whiteness in the United States. It comes in a year where we collectively achieved a feat many thought impossible, the election of an African American to our nation's highest office. It also comes in a moment where significant demographic changes are underway such by 2025 nearly 50% of all children in the U. S. and 40% of adults will be People of Color (U.S Department of Health and Human Services). As a result of these changes Whiteness is no longer an unmarked marker that people of other races are compared to, but is increasingly recognized as a race in and of itself, with its own beliefs, values, cultural expectations, and societal benefits. As a result of these factors, a tipping point seems to have been reached where more Whites than ever are pondering Frankenburg's opening question of what it means to be White in the U. S. today.

This shift is reflected in a significant upsurge of theoretical attention to Whites and Whiteness in the last fifteen years. This has been a cross-disciplinary movement with writers and thinkers ranging from multicultural education (Giroux, 1999; Raible and Irizarry, 2007), to anti-racism pedagogy (Miller & Garran, 2008), to social work (Abrams & Gibson, 2007), to psychology (Tatum, 1997), to cultural studies (Alcoff 1998; hooks 1996), only to name a few fields. This has been called the "third wave" of Whiteness studies (Twine & Gallagher 2008) and stands on the intellectual shoulders of a long legacy of scholarly work done by mostly African American scholars dating back to the groundbreaking work of W.E.B. DuBois at the turn of last century (1868/2007).

There has been a growing theoretical consensus that recognizing White racial privilege is a key piece of understanding the dynamics of racism and how it is

perpetuated in our society (Abrams & Gibson, 2007; Miller & Garran, 2008). An important element of this recognition is that Whites do indeed have a race, and a racial identity, and have undergone a racial socialization process, a racialization, just as People of Color have. For many White individuals, this racialization process is almost entirely unconscious, and may remain so for their entire lives. Such is often the case with elements of our social identities where we receive societal privileges (Frankenburg, 1993). Frankenburg noted, "The self, where it is part of a dominant cultural group, does not have to name itself"(p.196). This leads to the common experience of many Whites who experience themselves as "just normal," and who feel that race does not play a significant role in their lives.

However, as noted above, the tide of this not-knowing appears to be shifting. This shift in consciousness is not without effect. It is well documented that when Whites are confronted with ideas of White privilege, it brings up feelings of discomfort and cognitive dissonance (Helms, 1990; Miller & Garran, 2008; Alcoff, 1998;Tatum, 1997). A recent empirical study on White racism done over fifteen years found that anger, apathy, and intellectual detachment were the most common reactions to being confronted with issues of White privilege and racism (D'Andrea & Daniels, 2001). This study was specifically conducted with White counselors and counseling students indicating that empirical studies pertaining to such issues are greatly needed in the field of mental health. The present study seeks to contribute to this body of scholarly work.

The need for such empirical studies are underscored by the reality that social work is still a field of predominantly White clinicians (Pack-Brown,1999). These clinicians frequently serve populations of color, and will do so increasingly as our

nation's demographics continue to shift. As such, much of social work is inter-racial, cross-cultural work by definition. These realities directly connect to the current emphasis in the field toward providing culturally competent care. Both the American Counseling Association and the American Psychological Association adopted guidelines to this end, with specific competencies surrounding racial self-awareness (ACA 2005, 2005; APA, 2003). There is, however, theoretical debate as to the most effective strategies to foster such self-awareness, particularly of White clinicians and clinicians in training.

Scholars in social work education are setting even higher sights than cultural competency, and are calling for curriculum with an active anti-racism sensibility. (Abrams & Gibson, 2007; Miller & Garran, 2008). These theorists argue that clinicians need to understand the systems that perpetuate the very inequities our profession seeks to redress, and to examine their personal role in such perpetuation. They call for the explicit inclusion of content discussing White privilege and its impact on clinical encounters. A similar charge has been forwarded by scholars in multicultural education (Giroux 1999, Raible & Irizarry, 2007).

Within this larger cultural and theoretical context lies a relatively recent upsurge in the presence of White caucus groups like the UNtraining. Such programs vary greatly in design, duration, and intent but are generally designed to support Whites in understanding the effects of their skin privilege, and in addressing the cognitive dissonance that frequently accompanies this awareness. Such efforts are arguably a part of supporting these Whites in developing a more positive White identity.

This author feels that White caucus group methodologies, like the one at the center of this study, can potentially play a key role in anti-racism efforts, in so far as they

can help participants build concrete capacities for enhancing racial self-awareness by providing a safe space to unpack and explore their socialization as Whites. In addition to increasing racial self-awareness, White caucus groups can help Whites develop greater capacities for communication regarding issues of race and racism. For many Whites, race is not an issue they feel comfortable speaking of, or have had much practice with. Caucus groups can offer a safe space to begin to practice such conversations with supportive peers.

Background

This study has been approached from its inception with the spirit and intention of transparency and collaboration. As a participant in UNtraining programs for the last two years, I recognized the potential merit of an empirical study researching the work of this learning community, and wanted to locate it within the larger context of White caucus work and anti-racism pedagogy.

I approached the leadership of the program last Fall with an idea for the present study. The particular research question was then developed in collaboration with founder Robert Horton, co-director Janet Carter, and the teaching team of program facilitators. This body of individuals also reviewed the interview questions and all recruitment materials pertaining to the study.

This study is based in a belief that research can and should be used as a vehicle for individual and community self-reflection. This is in keeping with Paulo Freire's admonition that social change processes are most effective when participants are actively engaged in cycles of action and reflection, or *praxis,* as he called it (1970). This study is an attempt to contribute to this community's ongoing process of self-reflection. It is also

a part of the researcher's ongoing process of self-reflection, in efforts to understand her own racial identity formation process.

The title phrase, "gettin' good with ourselves" comes directly from an interview in this study. My understanding of this participant's words acknowledges the critical role of White people engaging in their own healing in order to be in true solidarity with People of Color in the fight against racism. It is in this spirit that this paper was written.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study of White racial identity formation is unavoidably embedded in larger conversations of race and racism in the United States. It comes in a landmark year for race relations with the historic election of our first African American president. Acknowledging this, the first area of this review will attempt to set the scene for this study of White racial identity formation by briefly reviewing current theories on how the nature of racism has shifted in the post Civil Rights era from a former emphasis on individual prejudiced actions to a more contemporary focus on subtler interpersonal behaviors and larger institutional structures. The section will be followed by a review of theories of racial identity formation with an emphasis on White racial identity development. The last section will explore anti-racism theory and pedagogy with an emphasis on the role of same-race caucuses, like that of the UNtraining.

Contemporary Racism

It is not an understatement to say that we have collectively entered a new era of American history with the election of President Barack Obama: an individual who described himself in his inaugural address as a "man whose father less than sixty years ago might not have been served at a local restaurant." This sentiment unequivocally addressed the enormity of the shift his election has represented. His electrifying presidential race and sweeping victory have left many wondering if we have entered a "post-racial" era, where race is no longer an impediment to achieving one's full station in

life. The day after the election, pundit Shelby Steele wrote in the LA Times the question that was perhaps on many people's minds: "Does his victory mean that America is now officially beyond racism?" (Steele, 2008, p. A6). Steele goes on to cite significant, ongoing disparities between Blacks and Whites that would imply otherwise, including educational and income gaps.   Still, the election of President Obama has left many speculating on claims that affirmative action policies are no longer necessary. Other academicians, like Troy Duster, renowned sociology professor at Georgetown University, have said "the idea of post-race is old wine in new bottles"(as cited in Lum, 2009, p. 14). likening it to conversations of "color-blindness" in the nineties which often ignored the very real, unchanging racial disparities under a blanket of sameness. The thrust of Steele's article however, was less about whether we have achieved a "post-racial" society, and more about the hope that such a concept embodies – a hope which he argues Obama strategically harnessed in this election. Steele posits, "Obama's post-racial idealism told Whites the one thing they most wanted to hear: America had essentially contained the evil of racism to the point at which it was no longer a serious barrier to black (sic) advancement" (Steele, 2008, p. A6).

This question of the extent to which racism remains in our country is not a new issue. It continues to be the focus of much theoretical debate and empirical study as it has for decades. Recent studies indicate that the response to this question largely depends upon one's race. So what might this indicate? Do People of Color imagine racial slights and insults? Are Whites unaware of the lived reality people of color have in this country? A third alternative may be that the nature of racism itself has shifted, and is therefore less recognizable as such, particularly to Whites, who are not the targets of it.

Many theorists and academicians have argued that such a shift has indeed occurred in the post-Civil Rights era. This phenomenon has been labeled modern racism (McConahay, 1986), symbolic racism (Sears, 1988), aversive racism (Dovidio, Gaertner, Kawakami & Hodson, 2002), and more recently unintentional racism (Ridley, 2005). Derald Wing Sue, counseling psychologist and researcher at Columbia University, recognized key similarities between these modern expressions of racism. He and colleagues write,

> They [modern forms of racism] emphasize that racism (a) is more likely than ever to be disguised and covert and (b) has evolved from the 'old fashioned' form, in which overt racial hatred and bigotry is consciously and publicly displayed, to a more ambiguous and nebulous form that is more difficult to identify and acknowledge (2007, p. 272).

All of these theorists recognize that much of this modern racism is unintentional, often unconscious, and likely not recognized as racism at all. This is a distinct departure from the blatant bigotry of Jim Crow segregation in which noxious signs in windows and water fountains were salient and intentional signifiers of racism on a very conscious level.

James M. Jones, social psychologist, offers a theoretical frame to describe these shifts in the post Civil Rights era (Jones, 1997). In his classic work *Prejudice and Racism,* Jones identifies three forms of contemporary racism: (a) *individual*, (b) *institutional*, and (c) *cultural*. *Individual* racism is most similar to the so-called, "old fashioned" forms of racism, and is typified by actions of individuals who believe their group to be superior (e.g. hate crimes, slurs). *Institutional* racism is more systemic and characterized by the interplay of social systems and policies that result in inequalities among racial groups (e.g. racial profiling, health care disparities). *Cultural* racism occurs when White cultural norms are seen as superior to those of other racial groups (e.g.

expressing preference for Eurocentric standards of beauty or dress and embracing White cultural norms about what constitutes appropriate emotional and interpersonal expressivity) (Jones, 1997). Jones argues that while *individual* expressions of overt racism and bigotry surely still exist, more subtle, nuanced expressions occur at all three levels. He notes Whites do not often recognize these more nuanced expressions as racism. This is a theme resonated by many other theorists that will be explored in depth in the next section.

Aversive Racism

Trying to identify, understand, and counteract these contemporary forms of racism has been the focus of numerous studies by theorists in a variety of disciplines. Since the 1970's social psychologists, Gaertner and Dovidio (2005) have researched the extent of what they call "aversive racism" and have studied its impact in a variety of social arenas from hiring to the criminal justice system (p. 619). The term "aversive racism" was originally coined by Joel Kovel (1970) to describe individuals who "sympathize with victims of past injustice, support the principal of racial equality, and regard themselves as non-prejudiced, but at the same time, possess negative feelings and beliefs about Blacks, which may be unconscious"(Gaertner & Dovidio, 2005, p. 618). Gaertner and Dovidio have conducted numerous empirical studies that found Whites often act in biased manners towards African Americans unconsciously, contrary to their stated egalitarian beliefs. What they typically found was that in circumstances where it was clear what the egalitarian things to do was, aversive racists actually favored African Americans, in line with their liberal values, but when it was unclear what the normative response was they favored Whites.

For these liberal-minded individuals, harboring such biases is a thought to which they would be completely averse, hence the term. In empirical tests Gaertner and Dovidio often found that individuals were surprised to learn that they had differing responses based on race thus implying that individuals' self-perceptions and their actions may differ (2005).

This begs the following questions; where do such biases come from? Are they unavoidable? How do we become aware of our unconscious biases and what can we do about them? If they are unavoidable, is harboring unconscious racism unavoidable?

Gaertner and Dovidio argue that most well-educated liberal Whites in the United States are likely aversive racists (2005). They argue that these attitudes are the normative result of socialization. They assert, "These unconscious negative feelings and beliefs develop as a consequence of normal, almost unavoidable and frequently functional, cognitive, motivational, and social-cultural processes"(2005, p. 618). Such biases spring from normative ingroup/outgroup differentiation that humans employ to meet their basic needs for power, status, and control for themselves as well as their group. According to Gaertner and Dovidio these normative differentiations fuel intergroup bias. One recommendation they have for overcoming such bias is to foster association with "superordinate entities" such as schools or by "introducing factors (e.g. common goals) that are perceived to be shared by the membership" thus creating a sense of "common ingroup membership" (2005, p. 629).

Microaggressions

Derald Wing Sue and his colleagues at Columbia University have been at the forefront of researching the often unintentional racial slights that result from such

"aversive racism". They use the term "microaggression", originally coined by Pierce (1970), to describe "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward People of Color" (2007, p. 271). Sue et al describe three main subtypes of microaggressions: *microassault*, *microinvalidation*, and *microinsult*. *Microassaults* are most similar to 'old fashioned' displays of overt bigotry and are characterized by "a verbal or non-verbal attack meant to hurt the intended victim through name-calling, avoidant behavior, or purposeful discriminatory actions"(2007, p. 274). *Microinvalidations* involve communications that "exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a person of color"(2007, p. 274). *Microinsults* include statements or communications that "convey rudeness and insensitivity and demean a person's racial heritage or identity"(2007, p. 274). This final category would include nonverbal messages like not calling on students of color as frequently as their White peers, which often occurs unconsciously, and would likely not be recognized as racist behavior. Similar to aversive racists, perpetrators of microaggresssions are often unaware that they have done so and would not consider themselves racist or prejudiced. Particularly with microinvalidations and microinsulsts these actions are unintentional and unconscious on the part of the perpetrator.

They contend, "These types of racism are difficult to identify, quantify, and rectify because of their subtle, nebulous, and unnamed nature"(2007, p. 272). Sue et al argue that Whites are often unaware of the presence of these aggressions. They argue this is likely because Whites perceive the interaction as a solitary and independent incident, whereas people of color recognize these individual actions as part of an obvious and

ongoing pattern of similar interactions (2007). This tendency for White individuals to view their behavior as individualized and not part of a larger White pattern has been noted by other theorists including feminist theorist Martha Mahoney (1994). She writes the following:

> White women see ourselves as acting as individuals rather than as members of a culture in part because we do not see much of the dominant culture at all. Our own lives are therefore part of a racialized world in ways we do not see. This happens when we interact with people of color thinking we are acting as individuals but are in fact acting as part of a white (sic) pattern (p. 306).

There are theorists, however, who challenge the validity of the concept of microaggressions and argue vehemently against the notion (Harris, 2008; Schacht, 2008; Thomas, 2008). Schacht argues that such daily indignities and interpersonal slights are not limited to inter-racial dyads, and are in fact, commonplace in human interactions in general, indicating that microaggressions may be over attributed to race. Following this line of thinking, Schacht argues that the "attributional ambiguity"(Sue et al, 2007, p. 279) which causes the victim of the microaggression to ask "Is this behavior racism" is not unique to people of color in inter-racial interactions, but is a present phenomena after any form of "disturbed or disturbing relating"(p. 273). He also takes issue with the presumption that Whites are always the "perpetrators" of such interactions recognizing that in any interaction there are two players. He writes, "Each member of a therapeutic dyad acts and reacts, remembers and constructs, projects and internalizes, in a complex, cyclical, and recursive interpersonal and psychodynamic dance that defies simple reductive description or ascription of responsibility to one actor"(p. 273). He further disagrees that the presence of "microinteractions" in cross-racial dyads are evidence of "underlying racist attitudes"(p. 273).

In a similar vein, Thomas (2008) argues that Sue et al "want to have it both ways" in so far as "they want recognition as being different from the majority Caucasian population, but when any conversation acknowledges that difference, the speaker is alleged to be committing a microinvalidation" (p. 274). He suggests that the recommendations to avoid microaggressions suggested by Sue et al could have "a chilling effect on free speech and on the willingness of White people…to interact with people of color"(p. 275). He names his fear directly:

> Nor will it be possible to practice effectively if one is constantly afraid that one will say something that can not only be interpreted as racist but also be used as an example of inappropriate professional behavior in some future malpractice or other type of disciplinary hearing (p. 275).

Sue et al respond to these charges by naming the challenges themselves as a reflection of the defensiveness many liberal Whites feel when confronted with the painful dissonance between how they want to perceive themselves as without bias, and how others, namely people of color, perceive them. They counter,

> To accept the racial reality of people of color inevitably means confronting one's own unintentional complicity in the perpetuation of racism. As a result, it is easier for whites to find other reasons for their beliefs and actions rather than entertain the possibility of racial bias (2008, p. 277).

Sue et al make the explicit link between "aversive racism" and microaggressions by saying, "the invisible nature of acts of aversive racism prevents perpetrators from realizing and confronting (a) their own complicity in creating psychological dilemmas for minorities and (b) their role in creating disparities in employment, healthcare, and education"(2007, p. 272). This assertion highlights the relationship between individual actions, in this case microaggressions, and their cumulative impact on macro societal systems such as employment, healthcare, and education. This argument also offers a

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conceptual link between Jones' (1997) three interlocking levels of racism - individual, institutional, and cultural.

Sue writes elsewhere that "this contemporary form of racism is many times over more problematic, damaging, and injurious to persons of color than overt racist acts"(Sue 2003, p. 48) particularly because of their nebulous nature which often leaves people of color wondering whether they have imagined such slights causing its own psychological toll. Gaertner and Dovidio similarly observe. They write, "although the bias of aversive racists may be subtle and unintentional, its consequences may ultimately be just as debilitating"(p.626). Miller and Garran's (2008) recently published book, *Racism in the United States* further reinforces this argument. They write, "They [microaggressions] occur repetitively, and their impact can be cumulative, like a thousand paper cuts as opposed to one deep wound"(2008, p. 97). While Miller and Garran seem to be focusing on the individual psychological impact of such slights, Sue and Gaertner and Dovidio suggest there are far reaching consequences on larger societal systems as well.

Each of these researchers has addressed the critical role White racial self-awareness plays in confronting unconscious White bias and each has recognized the need to explore training methodologies to address this challenge. This study lies squarely within this body of scholarly work as it explores the efficacy of pedagogy particularly intended to increase White racial self-awareness.

Racial Identity Models

> "The process of racial identity development, often beginning in adolescence and continuing into adulthood, is not so much linear as circular. It's like moving up a spiral staircase: As you proceed up each level, you have a sense that you have passed this way before, but you are not in exactly the same spot."
>
> -Beverly Tatum, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? And Other Conversations About Race*

Theory about White racial identity formation has evolved rapidly in the last twenty years and continues to evolve in the current era. In 1990 Janet Helms outlined an exemplary model of White racial identify formation in her book *Black and White racial identity: Theory, formation and practice*. Her model was inspired by a wave of racial identity models created by theorists of color in the late sixties and early seventies that was developed in response to the Eurocentric identity models originally posited by Erik Erikson (1968). These theorists highlighted how Erikson's model assumed an unnamed heterosexual, White, Western, male norm which did not accurately describe the identity development experience of many people of color in the United States—individuals who often had different developmental experiences due to the direct effects of racism (Cross 1971; Dizard 1970). Chief among these early models was Cross' prominent or distinctive model of nigresence, or black racial identity formation (1971).

Crafted by psychologists, these early models, also known as stage models, assume a more or less linear developmental progression with discrete phases or stages that White individuals in the U.S. often undergo. These models have received a good deal of critique by a more recent wave of theorists who suggest, among other things, that the racial identity development process is much more nuanced, non-linear, and abstract than these earlier models suggest or can account for (La Fleur, Rowe, & Leach 2002; Leach, Behrens, &La Fleur 2002). These recent theorists focus on identifying common attitudes held by Whites toward people of color and ultimately, offer a vastly different conceptualization of White identify formation than what is presented in the stage model. Their critiques and conceptual model, the race consciousness model, will be briefly

reviewed later in this section; however, the stage theories are worthy of further

examination in order to illuminate this juxtaposition.

Stage Theories

Since the original conception of the Helms model, numerous other models of

White racial identity development have built upon its conceptual foundation. Among

them are Ponterotto (1988), Sabnani, Ponterotto, and Borodovsky (1991), and more

recently Sue et al (1998). Sue et al's model is a hybrid of the earlier stage models and the

race consciousness models mentioned above. Miller and Garran (2008) reviewed the

stage models and noted similarities between them including the following: individuals

starting from a place of racial unawareness (or non cognizance), moving to inter-racial

encounters that cause distress and confusion, often then integrating a growing awareness

of racism and White racial privilege, to potentially evolving into some form of positive

White racial identity. These phases will be evident in the delineation of Helms' model

below. Sue et al (1998) also reviewed the stage models and identified the following

theoretical assumptions inherent in them.

- Racism is integral to U.S. life and permeates all aspects of our institutions and culture.
- Whites are socialized into society and therefore inherit the biases, stereotypes, and racist attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of the larger society.
- How Whites perceive themselves and process their reactions as racial beings follows an identifiable sequence that can occur in progressive (linear) or nonprogressive (nonlinear) fashion.
- White racial identity status will affect an individual's interracial interactions and relationships.
- The desirable outcome of the White racial identity development process is that individuals accept their status as White persons in a racist society and define their identity in a non-racist manner

(as cited in Ponterotto 2006, p. 89).

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As the most empirically tested and critiqued (construct of identity theory), Helm's model represents the standard in stage model theories.

Helms' model delineates seven major stages: *contact, disintegration, reintegration, pseudo-independent, immersion, emersion,* and *autonomy*. The two main developmental tasks in her model are for Whites 1) to abandon individual racism, and 2) to recognize and oppose institutional and cultural racism (Helms 1990). The overarching developmental goal of this model is for Whites to internalize a positive view of what it means to be White in the United States.

In the *contact* stage Whites pay little attention to the significance of their racial identity. Often individuals in this phase see themselves as "normal' or "colorblind" and rarely describe themselves as White (Tatum, 1997). Whites in this phase often perceive of racism as the prejudiced behaviors of individuals. *Disintegration* is marked by a growing awareness of the effects of racism on people of color and of the presence of White privilege. This may be the result of forming a close friendship or association with a person of color and learning of their first hand experiences with racism, or witnessing the differential treatment they receive based upon their race. This awareness often causes cognitive dissonance and is often accompanied by feelings of guilt or shame. Individuals in this stage begin to question the promise of meritocracy as one that offers equal opportunity for advancement to all people based on their merits, regardless of their race. How Whites manage this dissonance varies considerably. Some Whites in this phase use this discomfort as fuel for action and may be seen as overly driven to "educate" others about the presence of racism. For example, zealously interrupting family members telling racist jokes or the like would be considered an attempt to edify another. Others may

question the truth of the claims of racism shared by people of color, instead of ascribing the experiences to other causes. Still, others may withdraw from participation in conversations around race and racism due solely to the unpleasant feelings that arise.

The next phase, *reintegration,* is also a reaction to the cognitive dissonance created by greater awareness of racial disparity and White privilege. It is described by Ponterrotto (2006), another of the stage theorists, as "the purest racist status in the Helms model" and is characterized by intolerance toward non-white groups (p. 95). Whites in this phase recognize there is racial inequality but rationalize it by "blaming the victim". Psychologist and race theorist Beverly Tatum describes it this way; "The logic is, 'If there is a problem with racism, then you people of color must have done something to cause it. And if you would just change your behavior, the problem would go away'" (1997, p. 101). Tatum argues that this position serves to relieve some of the cognitive dissonance Whites feel in this stage while relieving them of responsibility for social change.

The next three phases of Helms' model reflect a move into a positive White identity. The first of these, her fourth phase overall, *pseudo-independence,* reflects a deepening awareness of institutionalized racism and a commitment to unlearning one's racism. Tatum notes, however, "Whiteness (in this phase) is still experienced as a source of shame rather than as a source of pride"(p. 107). Ponterotto recognizes key aspects of this phase that are immediately pertinent to this study. He writes,

> In this status Whites operate more from an intellectual understanding of racism than from a sense of personal responsibility based on their own racism. Attention is directed more toward dissatisfaction with other whites than a deep level of personal self-analysis with regard to their own socialized racism. (2006, p. 95).

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The acknowledgement of the need to develop a more positive White identity marks the transition into the next phase, *immersion,* where individuals actively immerse themselves in understanding their socialization. In this phase individuals are charged to move beyond perceiving themselves as merely oppressors. It is in this phase and the next, *emersion,* that Whites often seek the support of other Whites who are working actively on developing their antiracism practice. They may join support groups of Whites working on their racism or may seek the stories of prominent White allies. In these phases, the feelings of guilt and shame begin to fade. Helms' final phase, deemed *autonomy,* is characterized by individuals who have worked through these uncomfortable feelings and who are now enacting a positive White identity. Individuals in this stage are often involved in activism addressing multiple forms of oppression, including but not limited to racism. Tatum refers to this phase as racial self-actualization but notes that the process of racial identity formation is never really complete as even individuals in this phase are continually being exposed to new experiences and information and may even revisit earlier stages.

Race Consciousness Model

Helms' model has received much critique. La Fleur, Rowe, and Leach (2002) argue that her model was not originally empirically based and that her measurement tool, the WRAIS, has shown mixed results. Still others have noted that most of the empirical studies that have been done on the stage models have been done with White college students and that such a sample describes a very particular, nongeneralizable subset of Whites, weakening the validity of her argument. These theorists also contend that developmental models like Helms' are, in fact, not the best conceptual angle with which

to understand racial beliefs as often such beliefs do not follow a linear, developmental progression as implied by the stage models. They propose a different model altogether which they call the *racial consciousness* model (La Fleur, Rowe, & Leach 2002; Leach, Behrens, & La Fleur 2002) that focuses on the racial attitudes held by Whites about people of color. Their model is described as an attitude typology model as opposed to a progressive developmental model, and comes out of social-cognitive psychological research on attitude development.

Their scale is non-linear, and instead identifies seven constellations of typically held attitudes about race held by White people in the United States. These constellations fit into two main constructs; *racial acceptance* and *racial justice.* Each of these constructs in turn has its' own spectrum of attitudes. Within the *racial acceptance* construct, there are two poles: one with strong positive views of people of color, and the other with grossly negative views. Within the *racial justice* construct there are a similar range of attitudes regarding the presence of racial oppression and the best means to ameliorate it (e.g recognizing inequality exists but not agreeing that affirmative action is the best means to address it). A strength of this model is that it has been strongly tied to empirical studies from its inception and has evolved to incorporate new data over time.

Multidimensional Social Development Model

Miller and Garran (2008) review the stage models mentioned above and offer their own Multidimensional Social Development Model that attempts to include multiple aspects of our social identities, not limited to race alone. They argue that multiple aspects of our social identities and their various developmental processes are unavoidably interconnected processes and cannot be wholly separated from one another. Similar to

Sue et al's model (1998) this conception appears to be a hybrid of the stage models and the more postmodern, nuanced theories of identity; it indicates common phases that Whites, or other "agent identities", or those with relative societal privilege, move through, and they also include what they call *resolutions* or *stances* that transcend any one social identity axis (e.g. age, class, sexual orientation). These *resolutions* or *stances* include the degree to which various elements of one's social identity are binary: *integrated versus unintegrated, complex versus simple, stable versus fluid, flexible/adaptable versus fixed/rigid, active versus passive, and collaborative versus confrontational.* These additional considerations allow for and explain a much wider array of conceptualizations of self.

Non-linear racial identity models have also been called for by other postmodern theorists in other academic disciplines including education (Raible & Irizarry 2007). Raible and Irizarry, who are teacher educators, highlight the fact that identity is often more fluid and idiosyncratic than the stage models can account for. They write,

> We share an understanding of identity that views it not as a static entity possessed by individuals, but rather as a dynamic, shifting, contested process of multiple identifications over time (and, of course, understood to be contingent on the changing specifics of the social contexts in which those identifications become enacted (p.187).

These theorists argue that individuals can potentially occupy multiple subject positions at the same time, and that these positions can even be competing or even contradictory. They make an argument for the possibility of what they call *transracialization* as a growth process for Whites who are seeking to develop non-oppressive identities that leads to engagement. According to Raible and Irizarry this cannot be done without the participation of People of Color and to constantly instill that this is a gradual process just as the process of racialization was. It is enacted by choosing antiracist acts again and

again and is described by them as "better understood as a habit evolving over time"(p.191).   They argue that such engagement over time can ultimately evolve into what they refer to as a *post-white identity* that they describe as follows:

> Post-whiteness signals a break from normative whiteness as prescribed by racialization. Post-whiteness comes not necessarily 'after', but builds on and transforms whiteness in innovative ways in conjunction with racial others, ultimately rejecting white superiority. Post-whiteness refers not to some enlightened state finally arrived at by individuals, but rather it is conceived as intentional movement towards the enactment of transracialized selves through active identification with racial others made in interracial discourses (p. 195).

These postmodern conceptualizations challenge even Tatum's more fluid metaphor of the spiral staircase, indicating that we could be at multiple places on the never-ending staircase at the same time. It simply begs the creation of new metaphors to describe the seemingly indescribable, and unavoidably idiosyncratic nature of our individual and collective identity development as White people.

Anti-Racism Pedagogy

"Not everything that is faced can be changed. But nothing can be changed until it is faced".   -James Baldwin

This section will briefly highlight current thinking in the field of antiracism pedagogy. It will also review the available literature on White caucus group work.

Trainings which specifically target White racial self-awareness fall under the larger theoretical umbrella of more general anti-bias or anti-racism trainings. Given that stereotypes are not new phenomena, writers and theorists have researched techniques for addressing them for some time.   Gordon Allport wrote a foundational work entitled *Nature of Prejudice* (1954), which laid the groundwork for many of the more contemporary methodologies now employed. His Contact Hypothesis states that under appropriate conditions interpersonal contact is one of the most effective ways to reduce

prejudice between majority and minority group members. A comprehensive study of anti-bias curriculum is beyond the scope of this study, but as White caucus groups are a pedagogical methodology, key theories and empirical studies will be reviewed. Theories have evolved over time and vary considerably depending on the context, program goals, population involved, duration, and current socio-political climate, among other variables.

Miller and Garran (2008) review many of these theories. They include a thorough section on theories of overcoming stereotypes and also review key elements of various dialogue centered pedagogies. They review literature from social psychologists who have studied confronting stereotypes and offer a list of empirically proven strategies including: monitoring dissonance with conscious beliefs, monitoring thoughts and feelings associated with the stereotype, taking the perspective of the target to foster empathy, using replacement thoughts, practicing, developing egalitarian goals, and surrounding oneself with allies.

Addressing Stereotypes

Miller and Garran (2008) illuminate the work of Montieth, Sherman & Devine (1998) and Moskowitz, Gollwitzer, Wael and Shaal (1999) to address the importance of airing and acknowledging stereotypes.

> To create the dissonance necessary to motivate people to work to dispel their stereotypes and to enable self-monitoring, people have to acknowledge, examine, and explore a stereotype rather than try to suppress it and act as if it does not exist. (Miller & Garran, 2008, p. 99)

The airing of stereotypes is often quite emotionally challenging, arguably, the privacy of an all White group can foster an atmosphere of relative safety for such exploration, where it will not be directly witnessed and experienced by people of color. This argument is

reinforced by the work of Gaertner and Dovidio on aversive racism as appearing unbiased is a chief concern of most liberal Whites (2005).

Multimodal

Miller and Garran also argue that anti-racism trainings need to be multimodal to be most effective. They write, "Learning about racism and how to challenge it must be experiential and affective, in addition to being cognitive"(2008, p. xix). This opinion is widely held in the literature (Abreu et al, 2000; Aveling, 2006; Helms, 1990; Kiselica, 1998; Ridley, 2005). Ridley writes about conducting trainings with mental health professionals and calls for a balance between didactic and experiential methods with the former designed chiefly to impart information and the latter to help trainees changes their feelings and behaviors. Abreu et al (2000) suggest that beginning such trainings with the didactic and moving to the experiential helps to minimize trainees' resistance to the training.

Developmentally Matched

Another recurring theme in the anti-racism literature is to tailor curricula to match the racial identity development of the trainees involved. Janet Helms (1990) describes two main types of theory-based interventions; the "environmental congruence model" and the "racial identity perspective". Both, she offers, can be modified to be effective with "homoracial" groups, like White caucuses. Trainings in the congruence model pay explicit attention to matching interventions with trainees' stages of identity development arguing that there are different socio-emotional and cognitive challenges present for Whites at different stages. She writes, "When an intervention is appropriately matched, that is congruent, then the trainee does not feel threatened by new information and is

willing to let it into his or her belief system"(p. 206). Trainings that fall into the racial

identity perspective "specifically assume that interracial conflict has personal racial

identity developmental issues at its source, and therefore, if interracial communication is

to be encouraged, then the individual must first come to understand her or his own racial

identity issues "(p. 206). Trainings that fall into this category include J. Katz's (1976)

White Awareness Workshop and Helm's Interactive Counselor Training Workshop

(1990).

Because these models unanimously suggest different interventions for different

levels of racial development, Helms cites the need to develop measures to test the identity

development of participants prior to trainings, where possible. In the case of the

UNtraining, because of the program description and its optional nature, participants of

similar identity development stages tend to self-select to be involved. In addition, all

interested participants in the UNtraining undergo an interview over the phone as part of

the application process that acts as a further assessment of identity development level.

Dialogue

Miller and Garran (2008) discuss in some depth racial dialogues as a central

curricular methodology in the field of contemporary anti-racism pedagogy. They define a

racial dialogue as "structured, group conversations and discussions that focus on race,

racism, ethnicity, and culture"(p. 64). They refer to racial dialogues throughout their

writing in a way that suggests that the dialogues they are referring to are, in fact,

interracial dialogues, but given the definition above, same race caucus work like that of

the UNtraining would fall into this category. They write, "all racial dialogues have in

common a commitment by all participants to listen respectfully, accompanied by a desire

to learn about oneself and others in the milieu of a racialized society"(p.165). This further description would also include same race caucus work. Arguably, the airing out of stereotypes and other biases that are fostered in White caucus groups can lessen the fear, anxiety and awkwardness that many Whites feel in intergroup dialogues therefore making them ultimately more productive exchanges with fewer defense mechanisms employed. This is an argument for same race caucus work as a complementary modality to intergroup dialogues with each reinforcing the work of the other.

Zuniga, Nagda, and Sevig (2002) who have written extensively about intergroup dialogues, recognize three beneficial results of dialogues: sustained communication, consciousness raising, and bridging differences. While their text is primarily focused on intergroup dialogues, many of these elements are utilized in white caucus groups as well. They discuss the import of having sustained communication with other group members from diverse backgrounds with an emphasis on practicing communication skills including; listening, taking risks, raising questions, and moving beyond static positions. Miller and Donner (2000) suggest that beyond concrete skill acquisition and practice, other benefits of dialogues include hope and optimism, which in turn encourage further risk taking on the part of participants (p. 46).

Analysis of Privilege

As early as 1994, Frankenburg offered critiques to models of multicultural/anti-bias trainings that identify people of color as cultural but which leave whites as an unnamed, presumably non-cultural norm. She explains,

> A dualistic framework is retained, for example, in new curricular programs that
> include attention to nondominant cultures but do not simultaneously
> reconceptualize or reexamine the status, content, and formation of whiteness.
> Similarly, references to women of color, but not white women, as 'racial-ethnic

women,' implicitly suggest that race does not shape white identities or experience (1993, p. 243).

Such programs that do not acknowledge the racial and cultural experience of Whiteness reinforce White as the unspoken norm. This type of training that examines difference without acknowledging power, essentially reinforces the power/color "evasive discursive repertoire" explained earlier in this review. It also supports the pattern of racism without racists, as it does not implicate Whites as recipients of privilege and therefore participants in systems of inequitable distributions of power. The overall efficacy of such programs is sharply criticized as well by Adrienne Davis who argues that while such programs may be more comfortable for White participants, they do not get at the roots of the problem, and thus elicit no real change (1996). She explains,

> Domination, subordination, and privilege are like the three heads of a hydra. Attacking the most visible heads, domination and subordination, trying bravely to chop them up into little pieces, will not kill the third head, privilege. Like a mythic multi-headed hydra, which will inevitably grow another head if all its heads are not slain, discrimination cannot be ended by focusing only on subordination and domination (2000, p. 55).

Denial-Threat to Self

Ridley names the tendency for many Whites to avoid acknowledging subtler forms of racism squarely as denial. He writes,

> Unintentional racists perpetuate racism not because they are prejudiced but because they deny that they are racists. Denial – the refusal to recognize the reality of external threats – is the essence of the unintentional racists mind-set. For the unintentional racist, admitting to racism is a threat to the individual's conception of him-or herself as a nonracist person (p.161).

Tim Wise advises accepting this existential challenge head on. He writes,

> By owning our collaboration we can regularly see our own shortcomings, place them within the larger context of our culture's subsidizing of those shortcomings, and then commit ourselves to doing better next time. The most dangerous person

is the one who refuses to admit that he does not in fact contribute to injustice at least as often, if not more so than he truly rebels against it (Wise, 2005, p. 102).

He supports this with his own experience stating, "It was only by being forced to confront my own failures, my own collaboration with racism, that I ever came to understand my privilege and how easy it is to abuse it"(2005, p. 108).

Kiselica (1998) cites a lack of literature regarding how to help Whites manage the difficult emotions that frequently occur in training environments, and offers the following suggestions from his experience training White pre-service teachers. He suggests reassuring trainees that making mistakes is part of learning, explain that moving from ethnocentrism to multiculturalism is a developmental process that unfolds over time, and to forewarn trainees that this process is likely to be unsettling and to evoke powerful emotions and possible approach/avoidance reactions (1998). He shares the possible negative consequences from not offering such scaffolding. He writes,

> Anglos who were forced to explore their ethnocentrism and racism under highly faultfinding circumstances tended to merely conform to the task at hand without undergoing any genuine characterlogical change while privately defending White culture. As a result, they never embraced in their hearts the notion that racism hurts everybody and, consequently, were unlikely to develop heightened multicultural sensitivity (p. 20).

An overarching message from Kiselica is to approach these conflicts with sensitivity and empathy as opposed to judgment, minimization or denial. "Although Anglos should be challenged to change their ethnocentric and racist ways, they must somehow be given a message that they are okay as people in spite of their imperfections"(p. 20). This leads to another training method evident in much of the literature; the importance of trainer self-disclosure.

Trainer Self-Disclosure and Modeling

Kiselica explains that timely and appropriate self-disclosure models managing the difficult emotions that may arise for Whites in training encounters. He notes that such disclosures also show how racism hurts Whites as well as people of color. "I have found that such candid sharing encourages Anglo trainees to openly mourn the destructive effects of racism in their lives"(p. 21) This strategy is well documented throughout current anti-racism literature (Aveling, 2006). A correlate to this truth is recognized by Tim Wise who writes, "One of the biggest problems in sustaining white resistance is the apparent lack of role models to whom we can look to for inspiration, advice, and even lessons of what not to do"(2005, p. 62). Trainer self-disclosure meets this need as well. Wise writes,

> Although it shouldn't take seeing people like you doing that work to make you want to do it, let's be realistic: if one never sees persons like oneself challenging the system of racism, it becomes pretty dammed easy to think it's not your place, to conclude that the civil rights and anti-racism movements are for black and brown folks, and that we can and should do no more than perhaps cheer them on from the sidelines (p. 84).

Like Helms, Kiselica cites Reynolds (1995) who also suggests matching the developmental level of participants with interventions. He writes, "The trainer must strike a delicate balance between support and confrontation. Too much challenge causes trainees to withdraw because they feel overwhelmed. Too much support leads to complacency and detachment because there is nothing testing or challenging the trainees"(p. 318). Acknowledging how difficult this is, Wise reminds, "resistance takes work, it takes practice, and it helps to have as much support as possible"(2005, p. 85).

Problem of Self-Reports

A fundamental problem with much of the research on the efficacy of such anti-bias curricula is identified by Utsey, Ponterotto, and Porter (2008) who draw attention to the fact that the vast majority of research studies of anti-bias programs is based upon self-report. This observation offers a significant challenge to the validity of the results of such studies, considering the unconscious nature of much of the contemporary racism described earlier in the review. Unfortunately, given the nature of the present study, it will suffer from the same biases, but it identifies an interesting and important area for further research. Such research is already underway by Devos and Banaji (2005), and others, who are measuring physiological responses to monitor the implicit bias of research participants to balance with their self-reports.

White caucus groups

Caucusing smaller groups of individuals with shared characteristics has long been a staple of anti-racism and anti-bias curriculum. Long term, White on White caucus methodologies, however, are somewhat recent and rather rare across the country. In an internet search for such groups – most have surfaced in the last ten to fifteen years. The UNtraining originated in this same period and will be reviewed at the end of this section.

The rationale for White caucus groups is primarily twofold; the first being that the emotionally challenging work of examining one's own biases is eased by the presence of others engaged in a similar process, and the second is concern that such an exploration could be hurtful to people of color is not an issue. Arguably, the emotional safety such a group affords its members allows for deeper bias exploration. Researchers have found

that such exploration is very helpful in combating and overcoming stereotypes (Montieth,

Sherman & Devine,1998; Moskowitz, Gollwitzer, Wael and Shaal,1999).

Empirical research on specifically White caucus methodologies is extremely rare.

The only study found by this researcher was written by a group called the European-

American Collaborative Challenging Whiteness (2002). Based in San Francisco,

California this group studied thirteen groups, totaling fifty participants, who met in nine

month cycles. All groups employed co-operative inquiry (CI) strategies. These

particular White caucus groups were borne out of a multiracial scholarly community at

The California Institute of Integral Studies where it was decided that a White only caucus

group might be beneficial to help White students and faculty examine the impacts of

White supremacy on their consciousnesses. Such a White only caucus was seen as "a

complement to, not a replacement for, other multicultural learning experiences"(p. 73).

This same group conducted a qualitative case study analysis after its first year (Barlas et

al, 2000a, 2000b). They found that participation increased participants' capacities to be

trusting, vulnerable, and self-reflective; offered participants new language for conversing

about race; increased their knowledge about White norms; changed their behavior in

work and personal settings, and increased their sense of community with White people

and their compassion for themselves and others (European-American Collaborative

Challenging Whiteness, 2002, p. 76). These findings are possibly limited in their validity

due to researcher bias, as the study was conducted by the organizers of the project.

There are critiques and limitations of such White on White methodologies. Many

theorists argue that interracial dialogue is an absolutely critical component to helping

Whites develop privilege-cognizant White identities (hooks 1996; Raible & Irizarry 2007). hooks offers:

> It is a utopian dream to imagine that White women will divest of White supremacist thinking in isolation without critical engagement and dialectical exchange with non-White peers. It is concrete interaction between groups that is the proving ground, where our commitments to anti-racist behavior are tested and realized. While White women can and must assume a major voice speaking to and about anti-racist struggle to other White women, it is equally important that they learn to speak to and speak with, and if need be, make it necessary to speak for women of color in ways that do not reinscribe and perpetuate White supremacy (p.105).

While this does not negate the role of White caucus work, as it, in fact, speaks to the import of White women "assuming a major voice speaking to and about anti-racist struggle with other white women", it does clearly state that such methodology cannot stand alone.

This argument it reiterated by multicultural educators Raible and Irizarrry. They write,

> Since all identities, even racial ones, are enacted discursively and in dialogic relationships with the various discourse communities in which we participate, for individual subjects to transform their racialized selves requires the active participation of people of other races. We cannot simply will ourselves to be in new and different ways without negotiating and gaining the validation of others who differ from us racially (2007, p.174).

Other theorists offer general critiques of Whiteness studies that are not specific to White caucus groups but offer important considerations relevant here. Clark and O'Donnel (1999)(cited in Raible & Irizarrry, 2007) for example, caution about the possible re-centering of whiteness by focusing researcher interest on White identity, which ultimately, "runs the risk of reinforcing the ideological hegemony of White domination"(Raible & Irizarry, 2007).

Cultural Competency

"The prerequisite for cultural competence has always been racial self-awareness"

(Sue et al, 2007, p. 283.)

The notion of cultural competence and the push to foster culturally competent clinicians has grown steadily in research and application for the last thirty years. In 1992 Sue, Arredondo, and Davis published a landmark article simultaneously in the *Journal of Counseling and Development* and the *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development* that delineated thirty-one discrete skills that a culturally competent clinician should have. This watershed piece held that with the growing diversification of the US population many clinical interactions were now intercultural by definition, a trend noted by other theorists as well (Leuwerke & Wade 2005). They noted a lukewarm commitment to addressing issues of cultural diversity by the larger psychological community and argued forcefully for these competencies to be formally accepted by the profession. Such an acknowledgement, they argued, would provide mandates for changes in training and certification that would that would have a rippling effect throughout the profession (Sue, Arredondo , & Davis1992). Largely because of their work, these competencies were adopted by the American Psychological Association in 2003.

The guidelines delineated by Sue et al (1992) include three general areas: (a) counselor awareness of own assumptions, values, and biases, (b) understanding the worldview of the culturally different client without negative judgments and (c) developing appropriate intervention strategies and techniques. Specifically relevant to this study, section (a) reads:

> A culturally skilled counselor is one who is actively in the process of becoming aware of his or her own assumptions about human behavior, values, biases,

preconceived notions, personal limitations and so forth. They understand their own worldviews, how they are the product of their cultural conditioning, and how it may be reflected in their counseling and work with racial and ethnic minorities (p. 481).

Sue et al (1992) specifically mention the need for White mental health clinicians to increase their racial self-awareness. "For White clinicians, it means addressing the question 'What does it mean to be White?' and being fully cognizant of their own White racial identity development and how it may intrude on people of color"(p. 283).

The adoption of these standards by the APA has provided renewed interest in research pertaining to anti-racism curriculum and programming. Studies that fall under this umbrella include research exploring White clinicians' reactions to curricular content about White racism (D'Andrea, M. & Daniels, 2001) and those identifying typical behavioral and cognitive responses to similar content (Smith, Constantine, Graham, & Dize, 2008). These two studies indicate there is more research to be done around how to help White clinicians manage the cognitive dissonance that accompanies heightened awareness of White privilege and racism. This is a call reiterated by Stanley Sue (2006) who has written extensively about multicultural issues in counseling. He argues that the next major phase in the area of cultural competency is to concretize and operationalize its aims. Researching training methodologies would fall under this category. He writes, "The most critical problem facing the cultural competency movement is to progress from a *philosophical* definition to a *practice-* or *research-oriented* one" (2006, p. 238). The present empirical study responds to this call.

The UNtraining

The UNtraining program traces its origins to a conversation between founder Robert Horton and his friend and colleague Rita Shimmin at a weeklong Process Work

seminar with Arnold Mindell in 1993. After several days of charged inter-racial dialogue at the workshop, a call was voiced numerous times by participants of color for Whites to work on racism "with themselves," remembers Horton (Hebbar, 2007, p.1). Horton, a White man, was challenged then by Shimmin, a woman of African/Filipino descent, to develop just such a program.

Horton created a pilot group in 1994 in close consultation with Shimmin, after which time the program gradually evolved to its present state. The program now has a series of three sequential training Phases that each last six months, and a core curriculum that is used by each Phase. Each Phase has a limit of ten participants and two facilitators. The groups meet once a month for five hours. In between monthly meetings, participants meet once or twice with another participant in a "buddy system" to review, reflect, and support one another around program content.

After the first two Phases are completed, individuals can participate in Phase III as many times as they wish, and a number of participants continue year after year developing a base community of committed participants. Since 1994 close to 250 individuals have participated in the program. The program also hosts an annual two-day workshop entitled, "The Risk of Self, " for participants who have completed at least Phase II and who are interested in more intensive self-reflection and group process.

The UNtraining utilizes a range of pedagogical methods including; critical readings of books and articles pertaining to Whiteness and racism, experiential exercises that foster deep self-reflection, mindfulness practices, somatic and theatrical exercises, and group process. There are a few core principles used throughout the program. Many of them are informed by Buddhist principles as founder Horton has been a practitioner of

Tibetan Buddhism for thirty years. The core principles are: *basic goodness*,

multidimensionality, *cultural conditioning*, *tracking*, and *core issue*.

Basic goodness, is an existential concept discussed in Tibetan Buddhism that

essentially recognizes the value of each human life, and all sentient life, simply in its

basic state of Being. Sometimes this is referred to as someone's Buddha nature. This

idea informs a central program emphasis on compassion for oneself and others. This

concept is used in tandem in the program with the concept of White *cultural*

conditioning. He and Shimmin explain the concept this way,

> White people are culturally conditioned to be White by parents,
> teachers, peers, textbooks, media, and other institutions and by
> continual feedback from people around them. This conditioning
> is presented as normal. Because these values are the "norm" they
> are often invisible to those who hold them and can cause
> unintended harm (2007, p. 3).

The concept of *multidimensionality* builds upon these other two concepts. As it is

used in the UNtraining, *multidimensionality* describes a common postmodern notion that

there isn't one monodimensional Truth about any perceptual awareness or circumstance,

but instead many possible truths. The example most frequently referred to in the

UNtraining, is the conceptual framing that White people can both be racist, as an

unavoidable part of our White cultural conditioning, *and* essentially good at the same

time.

In the UNtraining, this concept is also used as a central pedagogical exercise. The

exercise, done several times a session and recommended for individuals to practice

between sessions, is essentially a guided meditation that brings mindfulness and

compassion to race-related stereotypical thoughts, feelings, or interactions *and* one's

basic human goodness in the same sitting.   This exercise is designed to help participants

practice cognitively and affectively holding both truths at once.

Tracking is essentially an exercise of increasing one's metacognitive capacities with regard to race and racism. Participants are urged to revisit and review difficult race related interactions recognizing thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that emerged. Participants are encouraged to hold these discoveries multidimensionally, with both accountability and compassion. Finally, *core issue* is a concept and exercise introduced by Rita Shimmin which essentially encourages participants to familiarize themselves with places of particular interpersonal emotional vulnerability as these are often the places, she argues, where White cultural conditioning erupts into unintentionally racist behavior. Participants are encouraged to recognize such emotionally triggering processes as they are occurring. This conceptualization is often used in tandem with the *tracking* exercise. These are the core pedagogical principles employed by the program.

Conclusion

This review of the literature indicates that the nature and manifestations of racism in the post-Civil Rights era have changed toward more subtle and nuanced forms (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2005; Jones, 1997; Ridley, 2005). Theorists have argued that such manifestations are often not recognized as racism by Whites (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2005; Sue et al, 2007). This potential discrepancy has significant implications for clinical work, especially in light of microaggressions noted by many theorists (Constantine, 2007; Tinsley-Jones, 2001). These same theorists acknowledge that often such microaggressions are unintentional and unconscious.

Stage model theorists and other writers in Whiteness studies have noted that Whites who acknowledge the presence of White privilege and its role in maintaining

cultural and institutional racism often experience cognitive dissonance (Alcoff, 1998;

Bailey, 2001; Helms, 1990; Tatum, 1997). Multiple theorists have also noted the

importance of forging a practical vision for a positive, race-cognizant White identity

(Frankenburg, 1993; Giroux, 1999; Helms, 1990; Tatum, 1997). Other theorists have

noted a need for empirical studies regarding the mechanisms and pedagogies necessary to

help Whites explore and develop such identities (Sue 2006; Tinsley-Jones, 2001). The

present exploratory study of one White caucus model seeks to contribute to this body of

scholarly research.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of participation in a white caucus group named the UNtraining, on the racial identity formation process of its participants. Specific attention was paid to identifying shifts in the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of participants as a result of their participation in the program. Participants were further asked to reflect upon particular pedagogical aspects of the program they felt influenced these changes. As there are currently very few empirical studies of the effects of specifically white caucus methodologies (Barlas, Kasl, Kyle, MacLeod, Paxton, Rosenwasser, & Sartor, 2000), the current study employed an exploratory method to begin to illuminate this new area of empirical research. The study was qualitative and gathered narrative data from thirteen interviews. Unfortunately, given the small sample size and the geographic specificity of the program, results of the study are not generalizable.

Central questions that guided this study included: How does the all white nature of these trainings effect participants' participation and experience? How do participants perceive this to be different than their experience in mixed racial trainings and what potential implications for anti-racism pedagogy are implied? Did participants thinking or feeling about their whiteness change as a result of completing a Phase with the UNtraining? If so, how? Were there any behavioral changes they noticed as a result of

their participation, either with other whites or with people of color? Was their

understanding of racism impacted in any way?

<center>*Sample*</center>

The sample selection was purposive. I used current and former participants in the

UNtraining, who had completed at least one full Phase, or six-month cycle, in the last

three years. Participants in this study all self-identified as white. They were at least

eighteen years of age at the time of the study. All graduates of any of the UNtraining

Phases in the last three years whom the organization had contact information for received

an email advertising the study (Appendix A). They were invited in this email to read an

attached recruitment letter written by the researcher that further explained the study

(Appendix B). The first twelve respondents who met the selection criteria were

interviewed. Demographic information gathered will be presented in the following

chapter.

<center>*Data Collection*</center>

This study received approval by the SCSSW Human Subjects Review in February

2009 (Appendix C) and data collection began in March 2009. Participation in the study

involved participants filling out a brief, ten-item demographic questionnaire (Appendix

D) and completing an hour to an hour and a half interview with the researcher.

<center>*Instrument*</center>

A sixteen question interview guide was used to conduct interviews (Appendix E).

The interview questions were designed with feedback from the UNtraining director, co-

director, and the teaching team of the program along with my research advisor. The

interview questions contained sections pertaining specifically to shifts in thoughts,

<center>41</center>

feelings, and behaviors of participants as well as identifying pedagogical elements of the training that informed such shifts. Additionally, there were questions that asked about outside influences that may have contributed to the shifts identified. There was also a question that addressed the possible influence of other elements of one's social identity (e.g. class, sexual orientation, age, etc.) on their participation.

All participants were informed that they would be asked to fill out a demographic questionnaire at the start of the interview after reviewing and signing an informed consent (Appendix F). The informed consent outlined the study and delineated some of its potential risks and benefits to participants. The primary risk identified was that participation in an interview might bring up uncomfortable feelings related to one's white racial identity formation process. Potential benefits of participating included the opportunity to reflect upon their racial identity formation process, as well as having the satisfaction of contributing to the larger body of empirical research on whiteness and white caucus pedagogies.

Interview Process

Interviews were conducted in various locations chosen by the interviewees for maximum comfort. Three interviews took place in coffee shops, two in the interviewee's automobiles, one in a participant's home, and two others in the home of the interviewer. Interviewees were given the opportunity to ask questions regarding the study prior to the start of the interviews. After this, the interviewer reviewed the informed consent form including the voluntary nature of participation, the fact that participants could drop out of the study at any time before May 2009, or refuse to answer any question, and that all material obtained would in no way connect the individual to his or her comments in a

way that would compromise their anonymity. All participants agreed and signed the informed consent form before their interviews. Participants were then given a brief ten-item questionnaire to fill out. They were informed they could refuse to answer any questions they chose to. Finally, all interviewees were asked for input in how to share the data gathered with the larger UNtraining community and to what other uses they thought the research could be applied. All interviews took place in March and April of 2009 and were digitally audiotaped by the researcher. Interviews were from and hour to and an hour and a half in length.

Data Analysis

This research was exploratory in purpose. Participants' responses to interview questions were transcribed and coded by hand by the researcher. Data was analyzed by grouping together responses and identifying main themes that arose. Categories of common responses were created in order to draw comparisons between the answers. Some categories were already established through the questions and others arose through the data provided by participants. The final step was for the researcher to analyze similarities, contradictory information, and differences as a means to testing preliminary assumptions from the literature.

The following chapter presents the findings of this study.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This was an exploratory study designed to assess the impact of participating in White caucus groups on the racial identity formation of their participants. It specifically asked twelve interviewees to reflect upon shifts in their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors related to their Whiteness as a result of participating in the UNtraining, a White caucus group based in Berkeley, California. Participants were also asked to identify and critically reflect upon which pedagogical elements of the program contributed to these changes.

The findings will be organized in the following manner. The participants' demographic information will be offered first, followed by a brief section highlighting participants' initial motivation to join the program. Then there will be three main sections covering participants' reported changes in their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors related to their Whiteness. The final section will report findings on the UNtraining pedagogy. This organization was chosen to reflect the interview questions themselves, but this writer recognizes that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to separate thinking, feeling, and behaving as they are such inter-related processes. As such there will be some overlap between sections.

Participants

The demographic information collected from the questionnaire provided the following information. To ensure the confidentiality of participants not all of the

information requested in the questionnaire will be presented.

There were a total of twelve participants. Participants ranged in age from their early thirties to their mid sixties, with a mean age of 47.1 years. There were eight female and four male participants. All participants racially identified as White. Six participants described their sexual orientation as straight/heterosexual/or "heterosexual mainly". Four described themselves as bisexual/"queer-bisexual", and two participants identified as gay or lesbian.

Participants were also asked about their highest level of education and current and former class backgrounds. Five participants had BA or BS degrees, five earned masters degrees, and two had two masters degrees and/or a PhD. Ten participants described their current class background as middle or professional class. The remaining two participants described their class status as upper middle. One participant described their class status growing up as lower class, three as lower middle, five as middle, and three as upper-middle.

Participants were also asked about which geographical region(s) they grew up in and whether they were urban, rural, or suburban. Additionally, they were asked if these places were predominantly White, somewhat multiracial, highly multiracial, or had mostly neighbors of color. Ten out of 12 participants described their growing up environments as predominantly white, one as somewhat multiracial, and one as highly multiracial. To protect confidentiality, regions of the country will not be stated. Four described these environments as urban, two as small towns, one as rural suburban, one as rural small town, two simply as "rural", and another described living in several locations.

Participants were asked if they had a religious/spiritual affiliation. The results are provided in the table below.

Spiritual/not religious	1
Jewish	2
Jewish/NA	1
Raised Christian/ Not religious now	1
Cultural Christian/Returning Episcopalian	1
Buddhist	2
None	4

Participants were also asked what was the last six-month Phase of the UNtraining they completed. Per the selection criteria, all participants had to have completed a Phase within the last three years in order to participate in the study. Three participants had completed a Phase I, two participants had completed a Phase II, and seven participants had completed a Phase III. Eight participants reported attending at least one "Risk of the Self" weekend workshop. Three participants have also taught or been teacher's assistants in the program. While the demographic questionnaire did not specifically ask how long participants have been involved with the program, interviewees indicated at least eight of the participants have been involved with the program for at least three years, with several of those participants having five or more years of direct involvement.

<div align="center">Motivations</div>

Close Personal Relationships

More than half of the participants initially became involved with the UNtraining due to a close personal relationship with a person of color. Relationships mentioned were

with partners, other family members, dear friends, fellow activists, and co-workers. These individuals all cited a desire to fulfill this role more responsibly as a primary motivation to enrolling in the program. Responses ranged from the very personal to the professional. Participant #1 was unequivocal in her motivations, sharing "The major motivating force in my doing the UNtraining at all, was my utter love for my friend Charlotte, and my developing love for my friend Krystal." This woman went further to explain,

> I could see, particularly thanks to Krystal, how many times that I had screwed up and that I had hurt her, that she was risking caring about me in some way, and that I was repaying her by exhibiting racism all over the place.

> Participant #11 who is partnered with a Person of Color offered, "I felt like it was

a pre-requisite. I had to. I wanted to do it to be in relationship with her in a more

authentic way."

> Participant #1 also spoke as a supervisor. She shared,

> The more I understood the sorts of handicaps I was working under, the lack of awareness, and skill – the more concerned I was about whether I was offering a decent workplace and opportunities for people who were actually my staff.

Addressing Cognitive Dissonance

All but one participant mentioned some pre-existing awareness of White privilege prior to entering the program and all of these participants noted a degree of emotional discomfort or cognitive dissonance around their Whiteness when they began. This is important to establish as an affective baseline from which to compare the shifts noted by participants as a result of participating in the program.

Participant #1 described it this way: "I was just far enough along to be really uncomfortable, always checking with [friends of color] about my racism, my training, and feeling like it really wasn't up to them, but I didn't know where else to go." This

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participant also said, "I knew just enough to know how much I didn't know, and I was really embarrassed and ashamed about it." Participant #11 cited discomfort around difficult conversations about race with fellow activists as a primary motivator. She said, "I felt just completely inept, felt really underequipped to be useful in that process…I came to [the UNtraining] feeling really wounded and kind of fucked up and traumatized…and just realizing, 'Wow. I have all this conditioning.'"

A third participant, # 9, explained her cognitive dissonance this way:

I knew that I was trying to pretend X, Y, and Z. I was fronting in a lot of ways. I knew the right things to say, the right way to be, the right ways to produce an identity for the world, but internally it was just like a pressure cooker, and I felt very alienated, and isolated, and lonely and then this just like dam burst one day.

The bursting of this metaphorical identity dam was the catalyst for this participant to seek out other Whites to discuss issues of race and racism with.

Six participants mentioned the appeal of a program deliberately designed to help them explore these issues and feelings. Four of these individuals reported recent difficult interactions with people of color that called attention to the possibility of their unintentional racism. These challenges elicited difficult emotions for those individuals and a heightened desire to self-reflect. Participant # 6 described, "[The interaction] got me thinking, 'Well maybe there is something about the things I say, that I'm not even aware of have to do with race, that are derogatory, or that hurt people, and that I should look at.'"

Participant #10 echoed this sentiment: "It was kind of a wake up call for me that I just really didn't know very much about whiteness and my whiteness."

Changes in Thinking

Three main themes emerged regarding changes in participants' thinking.   The first was a marked reduction in judgment of other White people whose race-related ideas differed from theirs. This change was described by participants as "less Otherizing." The second was an internalization of the idea that as Whites we are socialized to think, feel, and behave in particular culturally conditioned ways. Participants referred to this cultural conditioning as "the training." The third theme was a shift in thinking, referred to here as *multidimensionality,* that allowed participants to hold the seemingly contradictory truths that they can both harbor unintentional stereotypes *and* still be good people simultaneously.   They will be reported in turn.

Less "Otherizing"

More than half of the interviewees recognized that prior to the UNtraining they had often judged other White people whose ideas about race and racism differed from theirs. Participant #4 defined "Otherizing" this way; "judging other people, thinking that I know better than they are, or they do, thinking they are a 'good' White person or a 'bad' White person; distancing myself from them." This participant mentioned a profound moment of self-awareness during an UNtraining session while watching the documentary film *The Color of Fear*. Participants were encouraged by facilitators in this session to recognize the tendency to want to judge the White participant who challenges the existence of White privilege. This participant commented, "That was like the best moment of all for me. That was like, 'Wow! That's what I do!' So that was really helpful."

Participant #7 recognized the tendency to "Otherize" as a tactic to avoid looking at her own racism. She reflected,

> That whole separating out the "good" and the "bad" White people was another big awareness of like, "You can't do that." It's really easy to do that and then that let's me off of the hook for whatever I am thinking or doing because I, for whatever reason, am 'more evolved' or whatever, or aware, or 'doing better' than somebody else.

Participant #9 noted her cognitive shift this way,

> I lead less with like a machete of, "How can I find a flaw in this person's way of walking in the world, because they aren't as 'gettin it' as I am?" I don't do that anywhere near as much.

Internalizing the Idea of "The Training"

As mentioned above, almost all participants mentioned the positive impact of the concept of White socialization, or cultural conditioning. This conceptualization appeared to give these participants a conceptual framework within which to understand the presence of stereotypical thoughts or feelings that were seemingly incongruous with their egalitarian beliefs. A key element of this conceptualization appeared to be participants' internalizing the idea that such conditioning is unavoidably transmitted to them by virtue of being born and raised as a White person in the United States. As such, this conceptualization argues, this conditioning is not a fault of their own per se, releasing participants from some of the intense cognitive dissonance associated with it.

Participant #9 described the impact of this conceptualization on her thinking and her self-concept:

> The whole notion of "the training" was really liberating because it gets you to see, it got me to see, that, you know, I am this good, decent being who has gone through this really intense process of inscription, of being culturally coded…I just didn't know how to, prior to the UNtraining, to deal with that, cause I thought that was *my* thinking that was wrong. "Why am I thinking that? I'm horrible!" Horrible thoughts still go through my mind.

Participant #2 described it similarly:

> The idea of " the training", White conditioning, that I've been conditioned as a
> White person. To me that was like, "Oh!" Just like separating that from my sense
> of my basic goodness as a human being has let me really see how I *am* [culturally
> conditioned], see all the ways that I do have it, that I do reflect my White culture,
> or reflect this conditioning.

Both of these comments reflect the role this conceptualization played for many

participants in being able to separate their inherent goodness as a human beings from

their White cultural conditioning that contains racial stereotypes.

Participant #2 explained how this conceptualization facilitated even deeper

introspection into her White cultural conditioning. She offered, "I feel like 'the training'

is something that was imposed on me, something that I didn't have a choice about. Now

my curiosity can be turned on because it's not a judgment about me or who I

fundamentally am." Participant #1 described a similar shift toward heightened curiosity,

and also specified that it this shift was away from self-criticism. She shared,

> Where I used to be like, "Oh shit, dang! Why didn't I see that?" and blaming
> myself, and suffering over making a mistake, now it's more like, "Whoa, there's
> another one. There's another place where I can be working on. I'm so glad I saw
> it. I'm so glad I've now got it to work on." That's a real difference.

As specifically indicated in the two comments above, this conceptualization of

"the training" appears to have given some participants emotional room to explore

attitudes, stereotypes, and emotions related to race and racism without threatening their

individual character, something that can quickly shut down an introspective process.

An example of this type of deeper exploration, facilitated by the internalization of

the idea of "the training," was described by participant #2 in an interaction she had with a

new co-worker who had a very dark skin. She described,

It was because of the UNtraining that I could hear that voice [which recognized her skin color] and how loud it was, and actually what happened was it actually just made it easier to relax with her, cause I wasn't having to push down whatever part of me was trying to not recognize that, that was just blaring. So that's where the idea of "the training" was so helpful, because, it was like, "Oh, there's my conditioning. Wow, look at that"…It was one of those moments of seeing "the training" just in an instant interaction; just the back of the mind suddenly coming to the fore.

Many participants linked this cognitive shift with their tendency to "less Otherize" as they described having developed an understanding that other Whites are acting out of their White cultural conditioning as well. Participant #8 described it this way: "When I witness White people speaking ignorantly about race, that is 'the training' that's speaking. So that has been very helpful in my being able to hang in there better, and deal with things."

Despite the emotional distance offered by this conceptualization, such thoughts "suddenly coming to the fore," as described in the vignette above, often elicited difficult emotions from participants, particularly in individuals in the earlier Phases of the program. Many participants described the conceptual and pedagogical tool described in the next section as a key aid in managing difficult emotions as they arose.

Multidimensionality

At least half of the participants mentioned the conceptual and pedagogical tool of *multidimensionality* as helpful in managing race-related self-hatred, guilt, hopelessness, or shame. As it is used in the UNtraining as both a concept and a practice, it was sometimes difficult to discern which use participants were referring to when they mentioned its positive impact. Here, participant #8 describes her experience with practicing *multidimensionality* as a guided visualization/meditation; a method frequently used in UNtraining sessions:

When I'm practicing Multi-D, it works for me that I am part of it all, in that beautiful place one imagines, and goes back to [in the guided meditation]. I am a part of it. And so it kind of rewires my body from, you know, guilt and stress. I hone into right this moment and I feel connected to life, and a sense that things are far more flexible. And I get out of myself, feel a part of something bigger, so it doesn't feel so…(long pause) it just feels like there is space to work on my feelings about being White, that there is space and time and there's just more. There's just more. There's more a sense of allowing. It just totally diminishes the intensity.

Changes in Feeling

"The biggest changes weren't conceptual, but in here (*pats her heart*)."

- Participant #2

Every participant but one noted shifts in their feelings about themselves as White people as a result of participating in the UNtraining. The most often cited shift was a general increase in compassion for themselves as unintentional inheritors of skin privilege and racist cultural conditioning. This shift was matched by a stated increase in compassion for other Whites as well. Almost all of these participants also noted that this shift toward greater self-acceptance of their Whiteness had a broader impact on their general self-image and many noted an increase in their self-confidence.

Increased Compassion

More than half the participants noted an increase in compassion for themselves and away from judgment, self-recrimination, and blame with regard to their Whiteness. Participant #6 eloquently described her shift towards increased compassion this way:

Before [the UNtraining] I felt like my privilege of being White was one of the things I could hit myself over the head with, but now, after being in, and doing the UNtraining for a while, the idea of using my privilege as a lever is more tangible. It's more palpable than it used to be.

This change in metaphor to describe her privilege from a weapon of self-harm to a tool to effect change suggested not only deep emotional shifts had occurred within this

individual regarding her Whiteness, but cognitive ones as well. This cognitive shift is implied in her mention of strategically leveraging her White skin privilege.

Similarly, participant #3 shared, "Now I recognize just how much damage I can do by hating myself, or hating a part of myself, you know, my Whiteness." She continued, "I just learned to be a lot more gentle with myself and not to be so self-critical." This latter comment suggests the shift was not limited to her feelings about her Whiteness, but that this gentleness carried over into other parts of her life as well, highlighting the blurry line between her sense of self concept as a White person and her sense of self more generally.

Participant #9 described her shift in self-confidence as a result of participating:

It's been very empowering, because before I was so afraid of doing the wrong thing, thinking the wrong thing, being the wrong thing, that I was just hemming myself in. I didn't have any capacity for my own humanity to flower and flow into natural curiosity cause there was a right thing always to be doing.

Changes in Behaving

Data from this study suggests that the most significant behavioral change participants experienced as a result of being involved with the UNtraining was a generally enhanced capacity to discuss issues of race and racism. All but one participant made this claim. The two major subthemes in this category were an increased comfort with interracial dialogue, and an increased ability and willingness to stay in dialogue with other Whites about race and racism. Two related subthemes included an appreciation for new language and concepts to use in such conversations, and a place to practice engaging in, or debriefing about, such conversations. They will be reported in turn.

Talking to Other White People: From Judgment to Joining

Almost all participants noted an increased willingness to participate in conversations with Whites whose race-related opinions differed from theirs. Notably, six participants mentioned a deliberate attitude of openness and curiosity in those conversations rather than one of judgment. These participants mentioned the strategic import of intentionally staying in dialogue with other Whites. The following quotes reflect this trend.

Participant #2 shared, "Maybe [other White people] are going to be mad, or upset, but it's about relationship. I said to myself, 'Invite them into your process rather than somehow seeing them as Other, or outside it.'" Participant #1 echoed this sentiment, and offered an illustrative example. She described an interaction with a "conservative, White, male neighbor."

> There was a time when I would have basically have had one conversation with him, written him off, and avoided him for the rest of the time. Now, I'm really interested to hear what he's thinking. I'm interested to hear where did he get this position…The difference is I'm interested. I'm curious about him. I can't say I'm not still a little judgmental…but if I'm curious about him, he's a lot more likely to be curious about me, and to my viewpoint, and maybe then it might be a way in – a way to make some type of impact or difference that would be positive.

Participant # 4 offered another example of this shift from judgment to compassion and curiosity. She shared,

> [The increase in compassion] helped me have the nerve to really talk to White people who were disagreeing with me, and to go get coffee, and to listen, and that person is on the task force now. I think it helped me to listen more and not to feel so urgent about changing people, and not so anxious when people would say things I found upsetting.

Participant # 9 described her behavioral shift towards staying in dialogue as an intentional strategy. She shared,

I've loosened up on myself and been like, you choose your battles, be more patient, be strategic in how I relate to folks and not blurt out every time, "How can you say that? What's wrong with you?" but just find more constructive ways to be in this like, each one teach one kind of way of being…being able to hold someone else's humanity and engage them.

She continued and explained in more depth how this is a strategic anti-racism tactic;

Things happen on a platform of a relationship, and so I can't just come in and smash on somebody and tell them how they should be and assume that longstanding change can come from that. You have to be in a relationship and stay in a relationship with someone to really see someone change and grow. You have to be willing to change and grow too. So in order to do that, you really have to hold your own and the other person's humanity.

This quote highlights the inter-relatedness of the change processes discussed so far in this chapter, as it reflects not only a behavioral change, but also a cognitive shift toward "less Otherizing," conceptual use of the idea of *multidimensionality* to hold both of their humanities, and a general overlay of increased compassion.

A final participant, # 12, shared a concrete example of the positive result of one such a dialogue. He described a conversation with an acquaintance that had shared racist feelings about Latinos and which he addressed directly. After the conversation with this man he shared,

It just sort of shifted something. You never know exactly when somebody is done with a conversation like that if they are ever going to go back to it, or if they are going to carry it forward or something, but he actually came up to me later in the gathering and said something to me. He thanked me for the conversation. I don't know that I'd have had the wherewithal to sort of see him as, you know, "He's a White brother who's struggling with these issues". So how do I do him *that* way? Treat him *that* way? Deal with him *that* way instead of as a fool, or a jerk, or a something like that which is just my categorizing him just the way he was categorizing Latinos.

Here again, multiple previous themes are present; most notably his shift toward "less Otherizing" this other man, and having compassion for him as his "White brother."

Talking With People of Color: Boldness and Responsibility

Roughly half of the respondents also described an increased comfort in talking with People of Color around issues of race and racism as a result of participating in the UNtraining. The data from this study suggests that this is partly due to an increased comfort with themselves as Whites; new language and concepts to use in such conversations, and an increased willingness to "make mistakes" and take responsibility for them with People of Color. Here again, these themes appeared to reinforce one another.

Participant # 12 described his shift towards a willingness to make mistakes in dialogue with People of Color in this way;

> [Before the UNtraining] I know there were times when I wanted to say something that I was afraid that I was gonna say it wrong, and I so I held back. But with [the teacher's] encouragement to be able to say it, of course frame it well, but to say it, and to be ready to apologize if you offended somebody. I think that was a really powerful thing, so I think in that way I have been more able to talk about race and racism with People of Color. So that's been good.

Participant #1 shared a similar shift and linked it to her increased comfort with her whiteness. She shared, "I'm very comfortable in my White skin now. If I do a real faux pas in front of a Person of Color, I just go, like, 'Whoops!' and own it."

Participant #11 tied her willingness to accept responsibility for a recent racial faux pas directly to an increased capacity to forgive herself and offer herself compassion for making her mistake. She shared,

> In this last thing that happened, it happened in a meeting context and I wasn't eating myself alive like I would have, really. I just would have, and I have, a little bit, but [in the past] I would have been made that mistake, and I would have had the immediate feedback and I would've said, "You're right. I'm a fucking asshole. I should die. Where's the next bus I can throw myself under?"

Some participants made the correlation between an increased ability to engage in such dialogue with a capacity for deeper relationships with People of Color. Participant #1 reflected,

> I never worry about what I'm going to say [now], cause I know that if I screw it up, I can clean it up, but I don't even think that far anymore. It's just like she's my friend, she knows I get the issue, I might miss some of the fine points still, but we are partners in building community, in building community and shifting how the world works. That's what we are together now.

This participant noted that with the same friend, prior to her years of work with the UNtraining, "[she] would always be on edge, worried, overly sensitive, constantly monitoring everything that I said." Finally she offered, "I am just completely at home with her now in a way that I never thought I would be. I wouldn't have ever thought of that as a possibility."

Pedagogy

In analyzing the data, four major themes emerged regarding which elements of the UNtraining pedagogy were most influential in the shifts participants recognized in their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. They included the relative emotional safety of an all White group, an organizational culture that encourages bold self-exploration in the name of combating racism, pedagogical exercises designed to increase participant self-awareness, and the impact of a loving, supportive community.

The Safety of All White Groups

More than half of the participants explicitly mentioned the word "safety" in regard to having an all White group. This safety was often described in contrast to difficult inter-racial dialogues that they had had in the past. Three or four participants directly linked this perception of "safety" with their ability or willingness to go deeper into their racial self-exploration. Participant #7 described it this way: "The realness or

the rawness of the stuff that felt uncomfortable for me is less likely to come up [in an mixed race group]. I'm less likely to push for fear of hurting, offending, creating conflict, or struggle."   This fear of hurting, offending, or burdening people of color in mixed-race dialogues was voiced by over half of the participants. Participant #1 exemplified this sentiment sharing, "What a relief that I can talk with other White people about this stuff and not sort off get it all over people of color."

Participant #9 described the freedom that such a space offered her:

For White folks to have a space to not perform, to not be reactive, but to have a space to explore outside of the potential factors that could hinder any kind of growth or progress… So again, performing, projecting, shrinking, all those distortions of oneself that don't allow one to be present to oneself, or to the space.

Participant # 7 made an explicit connection between the emotional safety of an all white group, the group's ability to take emotional risks, and her healing around her Whiteness. She shared,

Watching [the sharing of stereotypes] happen in a safe group of White people was a really big moment, cause we were all there because we really wanted to be, and we were all really committed to this work and despite that, there was still a lot of really intense, dirty, gross, horrible stuff, that comes up. So like actually giving light, or giving space for that piece, as uncomfortable as it felt, was a big "ah-ha" moment. Just to sort of say, all of this is within me and within us, and it's so tamped down and so like forbidden, it's so like the good liberal White people to say all the right things but still feel and experience all the griminess of racism, like to actually have the space to say that shed a lot of light on like, just that process that is happening within so many people that's never talked about.

The nature of having an all White group appeared to help break this participants' experiences of White silence about race and racism that in turn helped her feelings of isolation and guilt around these feelings.

There were, however, a few respondents that cited misgivings about an all White group methodology. Participant #9 shared that while such caucus work was a critical component of her racial identity development, it now felt lacking, or limited in some

important regards. She shared, "After a while, it became too safe, too comfortable…It's like learning to be a musician but never playing with other musicians." She continued, "To only be doing it in a White setting *always*, I think is a flaw." She acknowledged, however, the critical role that the all White setting had on building her capacities around this work. She reflected, "At the same time, I know that I wouldn't be prepared necessarily to engage in multi-racial conversation and it be as productive if I hadn't developed some capacity [with the UNtraining]."

Participant #7 spoke of the need for inter-racial spaces for reconciliation not possible in an all White setting. She commented,

> When people [of different races] can stay in themselves and stay connected to their truth and compassion for one another and have hard conversations, I think there's something about that that wasn't possible in an all White group. Like that kind of reconciliation for both sides couldn't really occur to that extent.

Culture of Bold Self-Exploration: A Risk of Self

"UNtraining; I'm unwrapping myself. Like how could that not be a risk?"

- Participant # 6

Three quarters of all participants resonated with the idea that working with the UNtraining was a "risk of self" in some regards.   The nature of this risk was described differently by different respondents but all pertained to enhancing self-awareness and fostering personal growth.

Some connected the "risk of self" with the emotional difficulty of exploring their own racism: Participant # 7 described it this way; "The UNtraining in itself was a huge, huge risk, and an uncomfortable, mucky, dirty, hard process…I have the privilege to say, I'm not sure I'm gonna take the risk if I don't want to."

Participant #1 describes a slightly different understanding that speaks to the fine line between personal growth pertaining to one's Whiteness, and personal growth more generally:

> Coming to the UNtraining required that I constantly step up to the plate and risk the self – the identity that I know, for the possibility of learning something about myself which might mean that I'm not who I thought I was…Risking yourself constantly really means learning about yourself constantly, but it also means you have to be willing to give up what you think you are and sometimes it feels very safe to just be who you are and not risk learning more about yourself…Risking those treasured ideas you have about yourself, or risking those treasured things that you've hidden that you don't want anyone to know about. It's risking having all of that out, and be seen, and maybe reveal that you're not quite who you're representing yourself, or who you thought you were.

Participant #6 echoed this sentiment:

> For me every session of every Phase has felt like I'm being asked and encouraged to put myself out there and say stuff that I wouldn't say with a group of friends…To be challenged by peers is a constant risk of self.

Pedagogical Exercises to Increase Self-Awareness

Two thirds of the participants mentioned the impact of one particular UNtraining exercise and formulation referred to as the "core issue*"* exercise. This set of exercises, as described in the literature review, essentially encourages participant exploration of an area of past emotional wounding and thus vulnerability, in order to increase their interpersonal effectiveness. The UNtraining encourages participants to become fully acquainted with these areas of vulnerability as Participant #2 explains "Core issue is where we're vulnerable to 'the training', because it's where we are feeling insecure about ourselves." Participant #1 described a relationship between "core issue," emotional risk taking, and her personal growth by sharing, "Core issue is that which says, all the time, 'Don't do that! Oh, don't do that. Don't risk that. Don't go there. Don't say that. Don't

look there. You don't have to.'" She made an explicit connection between "core issue" and anti-racism practice in this quote:

> If I'm stuck inside of [core issue] and wallowing in it and not able to see beyond it, then what do I care that somebody who's another race is suffering in this country? I'm way bound up with my own stuff. So being able to work with, not get rid of, but work with, and get familiar with my core issue and how it operates and recognize when it's on the scene more often, rather than just letting it run the show. That's been a major piece.

Participant #9 described the concept of the "core issue" exercise in this way;

> It's like learning how to critically engage a text, but the text is yourself…so that you're able to not just go with the, "Oh, I'm having this feeling." It's like, "Oh, (*said with a different inflection*) I'm having this feeling because I'm feeling really small right now and when I'm feeling really small I can be embarrassed and ashamed."

This individual went on to explain how this increase in self-awareness had a significant impact on her interpersonal effectiveness in general. Other participants recognized a similar general increase in capacity for interpersonal relatedness with all people regardless of race. Participant #3 commented, "This work has literally affected hundreds of relationships." This participant described how her practice with her "core issue" had direct behavioral effects on her anti-racism practice. She explained that due to this heightened self-awareness she was able to engage in dialogue with her sister around a racially pejorative comment that she made, where previously she would have judged her, shut down emotionally, or avoided the conversation altogether.

Community

Almost all participants mentioned the positive impact of having a community of other White people to engage in this work with. This was a major finding. Some participants mentioned the relief from isolation, others appreciated having White antiracist role models, and others still relied on the community for practical support in

debriefing difficult race-related interactions or in strategizing anti-racism change efforts.

Another subset of four individuals specifically mentioned the positive role of simply

knowing that the UNtraining community existed, and was continuing to do this work.

Most notably of all, however, was the repeated mention of the effect of love and support

offered by this community for its members. At least two thirds of participants spoke to

this theme.

The following quotes reflect this finding. Participant #7 shared,

It was really, really touching and really amazing to feel supported by other allies, other White people, and to recognize too that as a White person my Whiteness separates me from many, many things and how the uncomfortableness, and the awkwardness of privilege creates a lot of distance between people.

Participant # 4 offered a similar experience.

The experience of being loved on by other White people was just magnificent, and by Rita in the "Risk of Self." Those were just tremendously healing experiences, and I think viscerally, not learning-wise in my head but the *feeling* of that, I think is really profound.

Participant # 6 similarly mentioned love directly.

The sort of backdrop of the UNtraining is about love, it's all about love and it sounds kind of cliché, but it really was this moment of like, "Wow, it's not about learning the vocabulary we get on our handouts.

Participant #11 directly connected the love and support of this community with her

ability to go deeper into her self-reflective work. She shared,

Just having community, sangha, whatever you want to say, having people. Especially for me, making mistakes, fucking up in the room and still being loved. That was really huge. I could be myself. I could let things hang out and I would be held. That was a big thing for me. The [conceptual] tools are great, but living it, being it, experiencing it. I feel like that is where you are changing your neural pathways. You know what I mean? You can learn a new way.

Notably, this participant speaks to the critical role of shifting her feelings and not just her

cognitions as critical to her overall change process.

Participant #1 echoes this sentiment and describes the overlap that occurred for her between a community that helps her grow in her awareness around her Whiteness and racism and one that helps her grow in any regard. She described,

> At some point it was community. It was where I could go with anything in my life, not just racism. It's where I'd go to grow. It's where I'd go for support. It's where I'd go when I'm struggling with something in my own life, when I'm on an edge and I can't break through.

> One person had a very different experience with the UNtraining community, however. This participant did not feel accepted or included by this community, much less loved, and, in fact, described feeling quite judged by members of it. She explained a difficult interaction with facilitators,

> I don't remember what the details were, but basically I think that I was saying something, that I was complaining about something, about some level of weirdness of what I thought was going on, and I think I got cracked down on. I was put in my place, and not only was I put in my place, but the entire group colluded with this; the entire group.

Two other participants shared internal disputes within the community and offered critiques of some of the programming, but both of these individuals also described in detail the feeling of love and support despite these differences of opinion.

These were the major findings that emerged from an analysis of the data. Possible implications of these findings for the field of social work and anti-racism curricula will be discussed in the next section.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

> I think the hard work of a non-racist sensibility is the boundary
> crossing, from a safe circle into wilderness;…to travel from the safe
> to the unsafe…This willing transgression of a line, which takes one
> into a new awareness, a secret, lonely and tabooed world – to survive
> the transgression is terrifying and addictive. To know that everything
> has changed and yet that nothing has changed; and in leaping the chasm
> of this impossible division of self, a discovery of the self surviving, still
> well, still strong, and, as a curious consequence, renewed.

Patricia J. Williams, The Alchemy of Race and Rights (1991)

This study followed twelve individuals on just such a journey. Formally, it was a

qualitative study that sought to explore the impact of participating in White caucus

groups with the UNtraining program on participants' racial identity development

processes. Informally, it accompanied these brave individuals in "leaping the chasm" of

"the impossible division of self" implied by attempting to challenge their own racism

head-on. Participants were asked to identify and explore shifts in their thoughts, feelings,

and behaviors related to their Whiteness as a result of participating in this program. The

study also asked these participants to identify and critically reflect upon which

pedagogical elements they believed influenced these shifts.

This researcher believes that the findings presented offer up a signal flare,

indicating an area of relatively unexplored empirical territory in the larger field of anti-

racism pedagogy. Generally, the findings indicate that White caucus methodologies are a

highly underutilized pedagogical resource with much potential for fostering not only the

racial self-awareness of Whites but also providing them a crucible for the forging of privilege-cognizant White identities and the interpersonal capacities to enact them. Such racial self-awareness is a critical component of developing true cultural competence of White clinicians and counselors and is arguably a base prerequisite (Sue et al, 2007).

Enacting a Positive White Identity

Tatum (1997) describes the need to find a more positive self-definition of Whiteness as a "hallmark" of the immersion/emersion stage of Helms' model of White racial identity development. She writes, "White people must seek new ways of thinking about Whiteness…that take them beyond the role of victimizer"(1997, p.108). Findings from this study indicate that participating in the UNtraining *is* helping these individuals make such a shift in their thinking. The finding regarding learning to think multidimensionally is one aspect of this shift as it holds that individuals can be both unintentionally racist and firmly committed to justice and equity at the same time. This shift in thinking acknowledges the "victimizer" training while separating it from individuals' unique sense of themselves. This concept, coupled with the finding regarding "the training" as unavoidable cultural conditioning, appeared to help these participants begin to think about their Whiteness in new ways. This shift in thinking "beyond the role of the victimizer" is arguably a key element of developing a privilege-cognizant White identity.

Data from this study suggests that this shift in thinking and the shifts in feeling it fostered informed changes in how participants thought of themselves. In essence, most participants could not separate the growth processes of their individual selves from that of their White-selves, but recognized these as inseparably connected processes. For

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example, more than half of the participants noted that a shift in feeling more comfortable with their Whiteness was paired with shifts toward greater self-acceptance in general. It is unclear which element begets the other, but data from this study suggests they are clearly inter-related processes. Participant # 6 described it this way:

> It's easier to talk about being White, and so its just easier to be me, cuz I am White. So, it's pretty rewarding. (*laughs*) It's easier to be me. Yeah, and in that, be more grounded in relating to other people, People of Color specifically.

Notably, this participant links this shift in self-concept directly to behavioral changes.

Numerous psychological theories have noted that a shift in self-concept influences a shift in behavior. One possible theoretical frame through which to consider these findings is a Cognitive Behavior Therapeutic (CBT) lens. CBT recognizes the intimate interplay between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. It places a strong emphasis on identifying the automatic thoughts that engender particular feelings that inform behavior. The UNtraining draws out these connections encouraging participants to increase their awareness of semi-conscious thoughts and feelings and to notice how these in turn affect their interpersonal relating.

Another key formulation in CBT is the notion of deeply rooted "schema" in our psyches that elicit strong feelings and fuel automatic thoughts. Schema are described by Wright, Basco, and Thase (2006) as "enduring principles of thinking that start to take shape in early childhood and are influenced by a multitude of life experiences, including parental teaching and modeling, formal and informal educational activities, peer experiences, traumas, and successes"(p. 16). These "schema" or "core beliefs" as they are also referred to in CBT, can be adaptive or maladaptive, and have significant consequences on one's self-esteem. For example, a "core belief" or "schema" of feeling inherently unworthy will have definite ramifications for an individual's thoughts, feelings

and behaviors.

This conceptualization is very similar to that of the UNtraining's "core issue" exercise that three quarters of the participants mentioned had a significant impact on them. CBT would argue that identifying and acquainting oneself with such "core issues" are critical aspects in behavior change, which are reflected in the findings of this study.

Findings suggest that for these individuals enacting a positive White identity is a composite of changes in thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Shifts in one arena appear to influence others. For example, if an individual is feeling more comfortable about being White, he or she may be more apt to engage in conversations regarding race and racism. Provided such conversations go well, this success would act as reinforcement of this behavior, further encouraging it. Findings from this study indicate that such concrete shifts have been made in these individuals.

Implications for Pedagogy

The findings suggest that there are several pedagogical elements employed by the UNtraining that foster growth in participants White racial identities. They are: the emotional safety of an all White group, conceptual tools to reframe the presence of stereotypical thoughts and feelings, a programmatic culture of risk taking and compassion, and the support of a loving community.

Elements of these findings are reflected in the anti-racism literature. Kiselica (1998) cites the importance of a compassionate or "non-faultfinding" atmosphere in multicultural training environments and describes the importance of modeling emotional risk taking in the name of increasing racial self-awareness (p. 19). Tatum (1997) recognizes the role of all White "consciousness raising groups" in helping Whites

examine their racism (p. 109). She also notes the importance of "allies having allies" to combat feelings of isolation that many anti-racist Whites feel. She writes, "[Anti-racist Whites] need others who will support their efforts to swim against the tide of culture and institutional racism"(p. 108).

While these theorists mentioned the importance of having other Whites to engage in this work with, none of the literature reviewed by this researcher spoke directly to the need for, or possibility of, a *community* of Whites committed to supporting one another in an ongoing and intentional fashion. This is a unique aspect of the UNtraining that warrants further study.

Findings also indicate that conceptual tools can significantly help privilege-cognizant Whites frame their privilege and cultural conditioning in non-shaming ways. This, in turn, has a positive effect on their self–concept as Whites. The two most evident examples in the data were the conceptualizations of multidimensionality and "the training."

Another unique pedagogical contribution that was not reflected in the literature was the "core issue" exercise created by Rita Shimmin. This exercise that recognizes the connection between participants' personal places of emotional vulnerability and their stereotypical thoughts, feelings, or behaviors also warrants further study. This is particularly the case as three quarters of the participants made a connection between the "core issue" exercise, their enhanced racial self-awareness, and behavioral changes.

The findings also imply that the culture of emotional risk taking had a significant impact on the personal growth of many participants. Many participants experienced significant internal shifts from feelings of guilt or shame regarding their Whiteness

towards feelings of empowerment. One participant described it as being her "Big self."

This shift in feeling appeared to be directly connected to an increase in interpersonal

boldness and a willingness to use one's voice to speak up and out about racism.

Implications for social work

Data shows that the social work profession continues to be largely dominated by

the presence of White female clinicians (Abrams & Gibson, 2007). This fact, in addition

to demographic trends indicating our country is becoming increasingly diverse, suggests

that clinical interactions will become increasingly inter-racial. This reality fits squarely

into the larger conversation of how to prepare clinicians to become culturally competent.

Kiselica (1998) makes an explicit link between the forging of a non-racist White

identity and providing culturally competent care to clients. He recognizes that many

Whites, and particularly those new to acknowledging their racial privilege, or those who

have limited contact with culturally different populations, may fear unintentionally

offending a culturally different individual. He notes that this fear often leads to

disengagement from conversations regarding multiculturalism altogether. This fear and

disengagement has obvious implications for a variety of inter-racial clinical interactions.

In this context, the major finding of this paper regarding an increased ability and

willingness to engage in conversations about race and racism, deserves special attention.

This enhanced ability to remain in dialogue with others around race is arguably a critical

capacity to develop in beginning and seasoned clinicians alike. As we know from

personal and professional experience, difficulties that we cannot talk about cannot readily

be remedied or transformed. Without such capacities the likelihood of intercultural

miscommunications rises exponentially, leading to unintended microaggressions, rifts in

therapeutic alliances, difficulty processing racial transference and countertransference, and general distancing between culturally different individuals in clinical settings. By contrast, clinicians who are racially self-aware and versed in the nuances of inter-cultural dialogue can open spaces for communication, connection, and hopefully reconciliation.

Limitations of the Study

The small sample size limits the generalizability of the findings. Barriers to the generalizability of this study include the relative homogeneity of the group's participants in terms of geography, class, educational backgrounds, and political affiliation.   All but two of the participants resided primarily in the same geographic region of the San Francisco Bay Area, all had at least a BA or BS degree, and all self-identified as middle-class or above. Additionally, all participant self-identified to some extent as "liberals" as this is a stated target population in the program's mission statement. Participants with significantly different experiences on any of these axes of social identity might result in different findings.

Another limitation to this study was that the changes noted by participants were self-reported and therefore unavoidably biased by the lenses of their own experiences. This is especially true in light of studies that indicate that despite egalitarian views, White people often behave unconsciously in manners contrary to those views (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2005).

Recommendations for Further Research

Findings from this study indicate that there is much work to be done in exploring the development of privilege-cognizant White identities, and the potential role of White caucuses in fostering such identities. Studies exploring the relationship between such

caucus work and cultural competency are a natural next empirical step as are studies

exploring White caucuses with individuals from a variety of sub-cultural backgrounds.

Also, as the UNtraining represents a composite of different teaching methodologies in a

very specific format, studies investigating particular pedagogies might prove

illuminating.

Conclusion

In his landmark text, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* Brazilian popular educator

Paulo Freire argued that systems of oppression dehumanize both the oppressed *and* the

oppressors. He charged that dehumanizing another, as even unintentional racism

arguably does, is unavoidably dehumanizing to the actors themselves (1970). Through

this theoretical lens, perhaps the process of coming to awareness of one's White cultural

conditioning and metabolizing it into a privilege-cognizant White identity has been

profoundly re-humanizing to these individuals, in a Freirian sense. Arguably, the process

of unearthing the ways in which this dehumanizing cultural conditioning is present within

Whites, and learning to hold such findings with compassion is re-humanizing.   In

reclaiming the cast off parts of ourselves, we unavoidably become more whole, more

human.

Tatum (1997) reinforces the idea that such dehumanizing cultural conditioning is

not the fault of White individuals per se, but unavoidably ingested in the smog of cultural

racism. She writes,

> Cultural racism – the cultural images and messages that affirm the assumed
> superiority of Whites and the assumed inferiority of People of Color is like smog
> in the air. Sometimes it is so thick it is visible, other times it is less apparent, but
> always, day in and day out, we are breathing it in. None of us would introduce
> ourselves as "smog breathers"…but if we live in a smoggy place, how can we
> avoid breathing the air?(1997, p.6)

Using this metaphor, findings from this study suggest that the UNtraining has helped these participants to develop capacities to recognize the effects of years of cultural smog inhalation and to accept such effects without guilt or shame. Instead it encourages Whites to go forth with their racial self-exploration with an attitude of compassion and curiosity.

It follows, then, that the more adept we are at recognizing the effects of such cultural inhalation in ourselves, the more adept we will be at recognizing its effects in others and in larger societal systems of which we are a part. An additional and related task before us is to identify and transform the sources of the smog so that there is less for all our kin to breathe in. Arguably, by recognizing the effects of this cultural smog on us, we will produce less smog ourselves through these very same outlets. Findings from this study suggest that White caucus groups can aid in such transformations.

Such shifts toward enacting privilege-cognizant White identities could have rippling and revolutionary potential. At the close of the recent annual retreat of the UNtraining community, the lead facilitator Rita Shimmin said, "This work will affect our great grandchildren." After a short pause, a longstanding member of the UNtraining community in her sixties raised her hand and said, "It already *has* affected my great grandchildren."

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Appendix A

Email for Recruitment

Greetings,

My name is Nathalie Torrens. For partial completion of a master's degree in social work at Smith College School for Social Work, I am conducting an investigation into the impact of the UNtraining on its participants' white racial identity formation processes. I am looking for participants for my study.

My research is specifically looking to examine and better understand how participation in the UNtraining affects individuals' thoughts, feelings, and actions in relation to their developing white racial identity, and to which element(s) of the program they ascribe these changes. What changes, if any, have **you** noticed in yourself as a result of being in this process? Have you stopped to think about it lately? Would you be willing to share some of these reflections with others?

White on white anti-racism methodologies, like those of the UNtraining, are somewhat rare across the country, and empirical studies about their impact are even rarer. You can help fill this research gap. Information from this study will add to the growing body of knowledge on white racial identity theory and will hopefully be used to increase the cultural competency of white social workers at Smith College and beyond.

If you are interested, and you are at least eighteen years of age, self-identify as white, and have completed at least one full Phase of the UNtraining in the last three years, please contact me by phone or email to learn more about the study or to arrange for an interview.

I will interview the first, twelve to fifteen former and current UNtraining participants who fit the selection criteria, so if you are interested in being a part of the study, don't delay. The deadline for expressing interest in being interviewed is March 1st. Interviews will last from sixty to ninety minutes and will begin with a brief ten-item demographic questionnaire. If you are no longer living in the immediate area, interviews can be conducted by phone. Your identity and demographic information will be kept confidential throughout the study.

Ultimately, the aim of this study is to elicit thoughtful, constructive feedback in the form of deep reflection. This will only strengthen the UNtraining and the larger work of developing effective anti-racism pedagogy.

Thank you for your time, consideration and commitment to this work.

Sincerely,

Nathalie Torrens

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

December 1, 2008

Dear Potential Research Participant:

My name is Nathalie Torrens. I am conducting a qualitative study of the role of white consciousness raising groups in participants' racial identity formation processes for partial completion of the Master of Social Work degree at Smith College School for Social Work. My particular study is exploring the impacts of participation in the UNtraining, a white consciousness raising group based in Berkeley, CA, on its participants' thoughts, feelings, and actions related to their whiteness. Additionally, the study seeks to understand which elements of the UNtraining may have influenced these changes.

Your participation is requested because you have completed at least one full Phase of the Untraining in the last three years. In order to participate, you must also be at least eighteen years of age, and self-identify as white. If you consent to being interviewed you will be asked fill out a brief demographic questionnaire at the time of the interview. This questionnaire should take five minutes or less to complete. This information is being sought to reflect the diversity of participants in terms of social identity factors represented (e.g. age, gender, sexual orientation, current and past socioeconomic status, religion, etc.).

Interviews will either be in person or over the telephone. Participants will be asked to sign this consent form at the time of their interview (if in person) or in advance of a telephone interview.

Interviews will be strictly confidential and taped with your consent. Tapes will be coded numerically and your name removed to ensure confidentiality. Your name will never be associated with the information you provide in the questionnaire or the interview. If quotes are used in the thesis itself, or in public presentations of the data, they will be not be used with any personally identifying information. The data from this study may be used in other educational activities in addition to the preparation for my master's thesis. After three years have passed, the audiotapes and their transcriptions will be destroyed if they are no longer in use. If they are still in use, they will be kept secured until no longer needed, at which point they will be destroyed.

The potential risk of participating in this study may be that some of the interview questions could evoke difficult thoughts and feelings in regards to your racial identity formation process. In case you feel you need additional support after participating in the

study, there is a list of resources for mental health services in your area and relevant literature attached to this consent.

You will receive no financial benefit for your participation in this study. However, you may gain new insights in regards to your white racial identity formation process and your experience with the UNtraining. You may also benefit from reading the results of the study and seeing your experience within the larger context of emerging theory on white racial identity development. This may offer you inspiration to continue to deepen your work with anti-racism. You may also feel good about contributing to a study designed to enhance the cultural competency of white social workers.

Your participation is completely voluntary. You are free to refuse to answer specific questions, and to withdraw from the study at any time before April 1, 2009. If you decide to withdraw, all materials pertaining to you will be immediately destroyed. If you have additional questions about the study or wish to withdraw, please feel free to contact me at the contact information below. If you have any concerns about your rights I encourage you to contact me, or the Chair of the Smith College School For Social Work Human Subjects Review Committee at (413) 585-7974.

Sincerely,

Nathalie Torrens

(510) 290-1879

ntorrens@email.smith.edu

YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE ABOVE INFORMATION AND THAT YOU HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, YOUR PARTICIPATION, AND YOUR RIGHTS AND THAT YOU AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY.

_____ _____

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT SIGNATURE OF RESEARCHER

_____ _____

DATE   DATE

Please keep a copy of this consent form for your records.

-

Psychotherapy Referrals:

The Psychotherapy Institute, Berkeley, CA   (510) 548-2250

New Leaf: Services For Our Community, San Francisco, CA(415) 626-7000

Related Literature:

Kivel, Paul. <u>Uprooting Racism: How White People Can Work For Racial Justice</u>

Frankenburg, Ruth. <u>White Women Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness</u>

Appendix C

Interview Questions

1)What motivated you to first become involved with the UNtraining?

Feeling

2) To the best of your recollection, how did you feel about being White before participating in the UNtraining? What are your current feelings?

3) Has the UNtraining affected these feelings? If so, which aspects of the program specifically influenced this?

Behaving

4) Have your interactions and/or relationships with people of color been affected by being involved with the UNtraining? If so, how? Can you give an example?

5) Have your interactions and/or relationships with other Whites been affected by being involved with the UNtraining? If so, how? Can you give an example?

Thinking

6)How has your thinking about your identity as a White person been affected by participating in the UNtraining?

7) How has your understanding of racism changed as a result?

8)Rita Shimmin, Robert Horton's (the founder of the UNtraining) teacher and collaborator, talks about this work as a "risk of self". Does this apply to you? If so, how?

Pedagogy of the UNtraining

9) Please describe an "ah – ha" moment you experienced during the UNtraining.

10) How did it feel to be in an all White group discussing issues of race? How do you think this aspect of the program influenced your participation and experience?

11) If you have been in mixed-race dialogue groups in the past, how was this similar or different (in terms of feeling, impact, outcome)?

12) Have other elements of your social identity (e.g. age, class, etc.) influenced your experience in the UNtraining? If so, in which regards?

13) During the time you were involved with the UNtraining, were there other influences or experiences in your life that may have contributed to the shifts in thinking, feeling, and behaving that you have described? How did these other influences inform or affect your experience of the UNtraining?

14) If you are willing to share it, what was the most challenging aspect of the program for you?

15) And the most rewarding?

16) What do you see as the next step in your White racial identity formation process? In other words, where are your growth edges currently in this work?

Appendix D

Human Subjects Review Committee Approval Letter

January 28, 2009
Nathalie Torrens

Dear Nathalie,

Your revised materials have been reviewed and your application and accompanying materials are now complete, with one exception. All of your materials are fine but we do need a letter from the UN training people saying that they give permission for you to do the study. We are happy to approve your project with the understanding that you will send us a copy of such a letter.

Please note the following requirements:

Consent Forms: All subjects should be given a copy of the consent form.

Maintaining Data: You must retain all data and other documents for at least three (3) years past completion of the research activity.

In addition, these requirements may also be applicable:

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of the study (such as design, procedures, consent forms or subject population), please submit these changes to the Committee.

Renewal: You are required to apply for renewal of approval every year for as long as the study is active.

Completion: You are required to notify the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Committee when your study is completed (data collection finished). This requirement is met by completion of the thesis project during the Third Summer.

Good luck with your very interesting and useful study.

Sincerely,

Ann Hartman, D.S.W.

Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

CC: Fred Newdom, Research Advisor

Appendix E

Demographic Questionnaire

1. What is your name and a phone or email at which you can be reached?

2. What is your current age?

3. How do you describe your gender?

4. What is your sexual orientation?

5. What is your religious/spiritual affiliation, if you have one?

6. What was/were your class status/statuses growing up? What is your current class status?

7. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

8. What is your current job or profession?

9. In what geographical region(s) of the country did you grow up? Would you describe it/them as urban, rural, suburban? Would you describe them as predominantly white, somewhat multiracial, highly multiracial, or mostly neighbors of color?

10. What was the last Untraining Phase you completed, and the approximate date of it's completion?