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REFLECTION TO ACTION: A GROUNDED CASE STUDY  
OF AN INTENTIONALLY DESIGNED RACIAL JUSTICE CURRICULUM

A Thesis in  
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by  
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## ABSTRACT

This study addresses the problem of enlisting support from the white majority to combat racism. Innovative educational interventions are needed within higher education to promote the development of racial justice allies. Racial justice allies are individuals of the white race who purposefully project attitudes and actions that promote positive interracial interactions in an attempt to eliminate race-based inequality (Reason, Roosa Millar, & Scales, 2005).

The research illuminated how an intentionally designed racial justice curriculum influences the racial justice ally development process during college by addressing the following questions. How do white, undergraduate students at a predominantly white institution experience an intentionally designed racial justice curriculum? And, how do these educational interventions influence their racial justice ally development?

The qualitative paradigm of this study consists of a case study research design and data collection methods, and a grounded theory approach to analysis. The data is presented in the voices of the nine participants who richly describe their attitudes, values, and influential learning experiences related to racial diversity, race relations, and racial justice occurring before and during college. From the emergent themes and sub-themes, the influences of a racial justice curriculum on racial justice ally development are revealed. The racial justice curriculum consists of two formal educational interventions, SOC 119 and SOC 300, which contain various learning contexts.

The results of the study revealed that a complex set of influences contribute to the racial justice ally development of white students experiencing an intentionally designed

racial justice curriculum. The following concepts play a predominant role in this process: the developmental complexity/intercultural maturity of the learner; an invitation from a trusted other providing an opportunity to participate in racial justice activities; and the distinctive educational conditions found within the varying learning contexts of SOC 119 and SOC 300 i.e., support from others and racial justice role models; “minority” experiences; interracial interactions and racially diverse friendships; and the opportunity to practice varying degrees of racial justice action.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Many higher education scholars, practitioners, and institutional leaders consider the 2003 Supreme Court rulings on the Michigan cases, which upheld the use of race-conscious admissions practices, a victory for Affirmative Action and diversity initiatives across the country (Schmidt, 2003). For example, following the court decisions, the president of the Pennsylvania State University (Penn State) remarked:

The Supreme Court has acknowledged that racial diversity is a compelling educational purpose. This provides welcome clarification and support for practices that came out of the 1978 Bakke decision...Penn State's active recruitment and retention efforts have resulted in a 50 percent increase in minority enrollments during the past eight years. The Supreme Court rulings in the Michigan cases reaffirm Penn State's approach to inclusiveness. (Graham B. Spanier, June 26, 2003)

The debate, however, over whether this race-conscious public policy and practice is Constitutional, or necessary, remains a heated issue within higher education and society at large. Reiterating the tenuous footing of legal efforts such as Affirmative Action, Penn State's *2004-2009 Framework to Foster Diversity* states:

Still, despite the educational and pragmatic arguments for diversity in higher education, regressive forces have been marshaled to stem progress. Diversity efforts will likely continue to be challenged, despite the Supreme Court's



affirmation of diversity as a compelling interest and its deference to universities' ability to shape their student bodies to create the most dynamic learning communities and educational opportunities. What is at stake is far more than legal determination of specific admissions procedures: the academy must remain free to educate all the nation, opening doors of opportunity to all our fellow citizens. (2005)

Generally speaking, most scholars agree that American society has seen *progress* in racial equality efforts since the civil rights movement which abolished publicly sanctioned racist laws. However, some argue that the face of racism has only become less visible, "gone underground" due to the socially accepted state of colorblindness, thus becoming a greater threat to people of color (Brown et al., 2003). An abundance of evidence reveals the persistent racial inequalities of American life after the civil rights revolution; gross discrepancies according to race in economic and social well-being such as family income, wages, wealth, housing, health care, and education. Despite the laws and government interventions enacted in the 1960s to end racial inequalities, these inequalities remain a significant part of American society. In addition, as racism goes underground, the traditional mechanisms for combating it become less effective.

Diversity initiatives on college campuses meet resistance from white majority students who do not believe racism exists (Chizhik & Chizhik, 2002), which it may not in the racially homogenous neighborhood where they grew up; therefore, they do not readily accept responsibility for eradicating racial inequities (Hurtado *et al.*, 2002). To enlist the necessary support from the white majority to combat racism, new and innovative educational interventions during college are necessary.

Critical race scholars argue that the elimination of racial inequality at the societal level can only happen if the white majority acknowledges racism still exists and that they are an essential part of the problem and solution (Delgado & Stefancic, 1997; Omi & Winant, 2002). According to Eichstedt (2001) and Giroux (1997) whites must assume an antiracism perspective and become active alongside the racially oppressed in the fight against racism. Colleges today have the potential to provide the educational setting and innovative interventions where students can learn and develop the competencies to actively resist racism and take part in social change efforts as racial justice allies. Drawing from Broido's (2000) definition of "social justice allies," racial justice allies are individuals of the white race who purposefully project attitudes and actions that promote positive interracial interactions in an attempt to eliminate race-based inequality (Reason, Roosa Millar, & Scales, 2005).

Leaders and visionaries within contemporary higher education claim they anticipate recreating colleges and universities in response to increased societal diversity and the increased diversity within higher education; recreating higher education institutions into multicultural institutions, where cultural difference is more than "tolerated" but is valued as a fundamental part of the institution (Tanaka, 2002). Such institutional change requires higher education rethink its conventional remedies for racism, which do not address the covert racism students of color face today. These conventional remedies, which focus primarily on increasing numerical diversity and assimilating racial difference, are no longer viable solutions to modern-day racism. The elimination of systemic racism within higher education requires a critical assessment and reinvention of the connections between culture, power, and knowledge often inherent

within the institutional core. Put simply, institutions must change by uprooting the systems that strategically situate one racial group over another, and legitimates this inequality through socially prescribed norms.

Multiple themes evolved from the literature regarding the educational benefits of racial diversity and educational interventions designed to eliminate racial bias specifically within the context of higher education (Engberg, 2004; Milem, 2003). Similar to views of critical scholars such as Giroux (1997), these researchers reject the assumption that today's racism is an acceptable status quo. Higher education institutions have dutifully responded to the increase in historically underrepresented students, such as women and students of color, by providing educational interventions (Engberg, 2004). These efforts evolved in response to the campus unrest and oft times violent challenges presented by a racially diverse student population of the 1960s (Astin, Astin, Bayer, & Bisconti, 1997 as cited in Engberg, 2004). Early interventions often focused on assimilating, or acculturating the racial minority to fit the white social norms of higher education. The idea was, once students of color were properly assimilated, whites would no longer feel threatened and behave violently toward them.

As racism became less overt, the educational interventions conceived of by colleges and universities became less effective. They acknowledged that assimilation was not enough to address the racial bias found within higher education and the larger society; evidence revealed that racial bias related incidents, ranging from verbal and physical intimidation to insensitive stereotyping of racial minority students ("macroaggressions"), increased since *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision in 1954 (Dalton, 1991). Dalton claims the following factors contributed to this increase in racial tensions: lack of

knowledge, experience, and contact with racially diverse students; peer-group influence; increased competition and stress; changing values; fear of diversity; and the perception of unfair treatment.

During the last ten years, campuses continued to observe increased levels of racial conflict (Pettigrew, 1998) although more commonly in the form of “microaggressions” (Solorzano et al., 2000) rather than the “macroaggressions” of 40 years ago.

Microaggressions are subtle and often go unnoticed by most whites (white privilege, racial biases, and systemic racism); they are symptoms that the larger problem of racism still exists although it manifests itself differently. Increases in reported episodes of interracial conflict resulted in many of the conventional educational interventions of today such as multicultural courses, diversity workshops and training, peer-facilitated interventions, and service interventions (Engberg, 2004). Engberg concluded that of the 73 interventions he reviewed, 52 were effective in reducing racial bias. However, he called into question the overall quality of most of the studies due to the numerous limitations found (conceptualization, measurement, research design, and analytic approach) and the under studied long-term effects of the interventions.

The purpose of this study is to further illuminate how an intentionally designed racial justice curriculum influences the development of racial justice allies during college. I argue that purposefully engaging white undergraduate students in an intentionally designed racial justice curriculum, which incorporates learning process such as intergroup dialogue, may develop their capabilities to combat racism. Racial justice ally development may be encouraged through non-traditional learning processes such as intergroup dialogue. Intergroup dialogue is based on a form of democratic practice; it

involves problem solving, face-to-face, facilitated, and confidential discussions between two or more groups of people defined by different social identities (Schoem & Hurtado, 2001), such as race. Further, the dialogue course under investigation in this study (Sociology 300) includes an experiential component where the students are peer-facilitators of other discussion groups focused on race relations.

Given milestone decisions such as the Michigan cases, institutions of higher education realize they must extend their vigilance from not only recruiting and retaining a diverse student body, but also to cultivating a positive and inclusive climate ("A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State 2004-2009", 2005). Thus, the awareness of racial diversity is a start but may not be enough to create lasting change in the struggle against today's racism. This study advances the extant knowledge by exploring the influences of educational interventions, which are part of a larger racial justice curriculum, on the racial justice ally development process experienced by white college students. The results will indicate a theoretical link between various components of a racial justice curriculum and the development of racial justice allies during college. Practically applied, these results could provide higher education personnel with a better understanding of the development of racial justice allies and how to facilitate this development through less traditional educational interventions such as intergroup dialogue, which can be part of an intentionally designed racial justice curriculum.

### *Research Questions*

How do white, undergraduate students at a predominantly white institution experience an intentionally designed racial justice curriculum? How do these educational interventions influence their racial justice ally development?

## Definition of Terms

### *People of Color*

“Person of color” or “people of color” are synonyms for people who are not white and for members of a non-white minority group. Although some find this term equally offensive as the term “colored”, primarily because it fixes whites as the benchmark for racial division, fostering an allegedly “us-versus-them” view of race relations. Proponents of the term maintain that it must be realistically acknowledged that race domination is primarily caucasian, and that the term “person of color” is a better generic term for the racial underclass than “black person” as it includes ethnicities other than those strictly of African descent. This would include Latinos, Asians and many indigenous groups that also experience racism. I also extend this definition to multiracial/multiethnic individuals who predominantly appear to be non-white. (adapted from Wikipedia, 2006)

### *Social Justice Ally*

A social justice ally is a member of a dominant social group such as, men, whites, and heterosexuals who consciously chooses to actively support the rights of members of a targeted social group such as, women, people of color, people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. Further, she or he attempts to decrease or eradicate particular forms of oppression such as, racism, sexism, or heterosexism on a personal, institutional, and/or societal level (Broido, 1997, 2000).

### *Racial Justice Ally*

An individual of the white race who purposefully projects attitudes and actions that promote positive interracial interactions in an attempt to eliminate race-based inequality (Reason *et al.*, 2005).

### *Intergroup Dialogue*

Schoem (2003) defined an intergroup dialogue as a process not an event, about relationship-building and thoughtful engagement around difficult issues such as race. It involves face-to-face interactions and is focused on intergroup conflict and community building. Thus, it may be intense difficult work and only occasionally a “feel good” experience. Intergroup dialogues are led by skilled facilitators and are about inquiry and understanding of self and others through an integration of content and process. They are primarily focused on talking, but authentic dialogue often leads to action.

### *Whiteness*

Whiteness signifies a “respondents’ understandings of what it means to be White in contemporary society...how their own identities have been shaped within a broader racist culture and the responsibilities Whites assume because they live in a society that privileges them based on their racial features” (Giroux, 1997, p. 314). One’s sense of whiteness is directly linked to unearned racial privilege i.e., white privilege. Whites are taught to recognize racism in individual acts done by other whites. This prevents them realizing invisible systems exist within society that confer unsought racial dominance on whites since birth (McIntosh, 2003).

### *Intercultural Maturity*

Intercultural maturity is the developmental aptitude that provides the foundation for the way learners approach, understand, and behave related to cultural and racial differences. King and Baxter Magolda (2005) define “maturity” as “the developmental capacity that undergirds the ways learners come to make meaning, that is, the way they approach, understand, and act on their concerns” (p. 574), which includes the cognitive,

personal or “identity” (intrapersonal), and interpersonal or social development and their interconnections. Intercultural maturity is necessary when determining intercultural competence, which involves a variety of mutually reinforcing skills including cross-cultural knowledge, reasoning abilities, complex problem analysis resulting in solutions, and personal attributes that enhance the application of knowledge and skills.

#### Study Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions

This study was conducted at the Pennsylvania State University, focused primarily on the experiences of nine undergraduates during Sociology 300 (SOC 300) “Preceptorship in Sociology” and explored how this learning process influenced their racial justice ally development. The understandings revealed from these students within this particular context allows others to observe similarities in new and foreign contexts and apply what was learned from this study (Stake, 1995). The following assumptions underlie the research questions of this study: the majority of whites attending this predominantly white institution have had minimal interracial interactions previous to college; white students experience racialized spaces differently than students of color; whites are responsible for disrupting racism at all levels (personal, social, and systemic); becoming a racial justice ally is a complex process which requires an active resistance to the status quo, which insists that racial equality has been achieved within the United States; a racial justice ally disposition is not an “identity,” rather it implies a multicultural orientation and set of developmental capabilities that may or may not be enacted within varying contexts and at different intensity levels; coursework has the potential to create transformative learning experiences for students, although the transformation may not occur instantly.



## Chapter 2

### Review of the Literature

I reviewed the higher education literature related to social and racial justice, broadly defined. By including the theoretical and empirical research I holistically explored the scholarship linking white college students to antiracism and diversity initiatives within curricular and cocurricular contexts, since educational scholars share the belief that student learning cannot be delegated to a single educational environment, influence, or experience. (Terenzini & Reason, 2005).

This literature review explores many sources from multiple disciplines and fields of study to understand how the development of racial justice allies may be a potential avenue for combating racism and illuminating how this developmental process occurs for white college students enrolled in a race relations peer-facilitator training course (SOC 300). The literature includes empirically tested research, theory and practice-based writings, and synthesized information located primarily within higher education and sociological scholarship.

The literature reviewed fits within and is presented through the following thematic structures: (1) racial diversity in higher education; (2) educational experiences and interventions affecting racial diversity attitudes and racial bias; (3) student development theory and models; and (4) social and racial justice ally development. The literature review is intentionally inductive. Thus, it concludes with the Reason, Roosa Millar, and Scales (2005) conceptual model of racial justice ally development, which was utilized as a framework for this study.

*Racial Diversity in Higher Education*

For the purposes of this literature review, I did *not* adopt the generally accepted definition of the term “diversity” from the American Association of Colleges and Universities i.e., diversity beyond merely structural diversity, or numerically-based racial composition, which signifies “a set of campus-based educational activities designed to include students from all backgrounds and to enhance the educational experience of all students” (Garcia *et al.*, 2001, p. 2). This definition envelops diversity activities in their broadest sense by not excluding any cultural background, lifestyle choice, tradition, or set of values, whereas the focus of this literature review is purposely narrow to address only racial diversity and its outcomes related to campus race relations, racial attitudes, and antiracism efforts.

The importance of diversity to this research is the conjectured relationship a positive racial diversity outlook, or antiracism perspective, has with the students’ development as racial justice allies. The definition I use for a racial justice ally is adapted from Broido’s (1997) definition of a social justice ally:

a person who is a member of a dominant social group (e.g., men, Whites, heterosexuals) who is consciously choosing to actively support the rights of members of a targeted social group (e.g., women, people of color, lesbians/gay men/bisexuals), and/or to reduce or eliminate that particular form of oppression (e.g., racism, sexism, or heterosexism) on a personal, institutional, or societal level. (p. 13)

Thus, racial justice allies are whites who espouse a positive racial diversity outlook and consciously choose to actively support the rights of people of color and/or to reduce or

eliminate racism on a personal, institutional, or societal level. Reason, Roosa Millar, and Scales simplify this definition by stating, “racial justice allies are Whites who are actively working to end racism and racial oppression” (2005, p. 4).

The rationale behind the call for an enhanced understanding of the development of racial justice allies is revealed in the following section. A synthesis of the research related to institutional (e.g., structural) diversity follows. Complementing each of these discussions is a summary of the educational benefits of racial diversity found in the 2003 report of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) Panel on Racial Dynamics in Colleges and Universities entitled, *Compelling Interest: Examining the Evidence on Racial Dynamics in Higher Education* (Chang *et al.*). This report was compiled in response to the University of Michigan Affirmative Action cases (Gratz *et al. v. Bollinger et al.* and Grutter *v. Bollinger et al.*).

### *Institutional Racial Diversity*

As the United States becomes more racially diverse, institutions of higher learning are witnessing change in the racial mixture of their students. United States (U.S.) Census 2000 data reveal that the Hispanic population has grown by 60 percent since the 1990 Census, making it slightly larger than the African American population, which is approximately 12 percent of the overall population (Grieco & Cassidy, March, 2001). White Americans currently make up about 75 percent of the U.S. population, a decrease from approximately 80 percent in 1990. “As the demographics of the American population continue to shift, diversity must be recognized as essential to higher education not only to produce future leaders, but also to assure an educated and productive citizenry” (“A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State 2004-2009”, 2005).

According to the annual report of the American Council on Education, the number of minority students enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities rose significantly over the past 10 years (Wills, 2005). African American, Hispanic, Asian American, and American Indian enrollments increased by 51.7 percent from 1991 to 2001, totaling more than 4.3 million of U.S. students within higher education. The Pennsylvania State University (Penn State) offers an example of this increase in minority enrollments within a large, public research university. In the last ten years Penn State's minority enrollment has increased from 7.9 percent to 11.8 percent ("A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State 2004-2009", 2005). Fall 2002 campus-wide data indicate that African American students now number more than 3,700 and Hispanics number 1,944. Both figures represent record high minority enrollments for Penn State. Although acknowledging they "must continue to improve in every area of recruitment and retention" these data signify that Penn State is making progress in creating a more racially diverse educational context.

The 2003 AERA Compelling Interest Report identifies the benefits of racial diversity in higher education (Chang et al., 2003). This report brings together substantial empirical evidence on the benefits that the multiple forms of diversity transmit to the individual, the institution, and society (Milem, 2003). Milem focuses on the educational benefits of racial diversity and offers thoughtful considerations for responding to the need for diversity within higher education. Of the educational benefits to institutions and private enterprise the following are relevant to this discussion of structural diversity: cultivation of a workforce with greater levels of cross-cultural competence, attraction of best available talent pool, enhanced marketing efforts, higher levels of creativity and innovation, better problem-solving abilities, and greater organization flexibility.

Structural diversity, which allows for *opportunities* to socialize and learn with students of different racial groups does not guarantee positive attitudes toward diversity or racial difference; quality interactions resulting from the structural diversity must occur (Villalpando, 2002). Similarly, when exploring the precollege preparation for participation in a diverse democracy, the overall satisfaction of students' college experience included positive interactions across racial/ethnic boundaries (Hurtado *et al.*, 2002). Thus, structural diversity alone does not produce democratic outcomes such as the ability to see the world from another's perspective, beliefs that conflict enhances democracy, and views about the importance of social action for societal change. The following literature synthesizes the research dedicated to exploring how college students' attitudes toward racial difference are influenced by campus racial diversity; diversity beyond merely numerical heterogeneity.

#### *Diversity Experiences and Interventions*

Although racial diversity in higher education is essential to addressing institutional and individual racism, I argue that to genuinely work toward racial equality colleges and universities must adopt innovative educational interventions to purposefully facilitate white students' development of racial justice ally characteristics and behaviors. The following research explores the theoretical link between white students' experiences with racial diversity, educational interventions during college, and how these affect attitudes toward racial diversity and racial bias.

#### *Experiences with Racial Diversity*

Saddlemire (1996) examined second-semester white undergraduates' attitudes toward African American undergraduates at a predominantly white university, revealing

a lack of contact and understanding of African Americans. Saddlemire concluded that most white students' thoughts and impressions of African Americans were based on misinformation or a total lack of information. Saddlemire's study, in support of Smith's (1993) findings, found that white students felt they should not be held culpable for presumed wrongs due to past discrimination against African Americans. Saddlemire states, "Before attempting to heighten the White students' appreciating of people from diverse cultures, university professionals may need to assess further White students' knowledge regarding African Americans" (1996, p. 690) and other peoples of color. Accurate information about racial others is essential, but not sufficient to ensure the development of an antiracism perspective, which is the awareness of and active resistance to individual racial bias.

In their quantitative comparison of ethnic minority and white college students' developments of pluralistic orientations—which are comparable to antiracism perspectives—Engberg, Meader, and Hurtado (2003) reveal that white students who live in white neighborhoods, attend predominantly white high schools, and have white friends are less likely to interact with diverse others. More importantly, they found that "interaction with diverse peers has a significant positive effect on all...factors [i.e., pluralistic orientation, cultural awareness, taking social action...and the belief that conflict enhances democracy] leading to a pluralistic orientation [, which] underscores the importance of having diverse peers on college campuses" (p. 14).

Although interactions with racially diverse peers reportedly produce positive gains for both white and ethnic minority students, the weight of the effects is higher for white students (Engberg et al., 2003). Several other studies support the connection

between interacting with diverse others and the development of an antiracism perspective for white students (Gurin *et al.*, 2002; Hurtado *et al.*, 2002; Meader, 1998; Springer *et al.*, 1996; Whitt *et al.*, 2001). Of substantial interest to this study are the findings that involvement in social action was a positive, statistically significant predictor of a pluralistic orientation for white students and that “cultural awareness” is the strongest predictor of a pluralistic orientation for both white and racial minority students as measured by a quantitative instrument (Engberg *et al.*, 2003). These findings support the need to further investigate the process white students go through in developing antiracism perspectives and becoming allies with the racially oppressed.

Meader’s (1998) study found that a few personal characteristics (parental educational level, gender, and attending a white high school) influenced student attitudes toward racial diversity. However, environmental factors (ability measures, perceptions of institutional climate, and college experiences) appeared to influence students’ attitudes to a greater extent. Interestingly, this study discovered when white students did not observe any discrimination against them, they supported institutional concerns and policies devoted to diversity. However, when they felt discriminated against (i.e., “reverse discrimination”) they opposed raced-based policies such as Affirmative Action. This study uncovered the existence of unconscious racial bias often associated with limited racial awareness. Until personal privileges are threatened, white students declared themselves as supporting equality for all races, yet when asked the appropriate questions their racial bias revealed itself; questions which elicited responses beyond what is socially desirable (or politically correct). When the respondents in the study faced losing privileges due to their race (white) they proclaimed their dislike of race-based policies,

thus revealing a lack of racial awareness and unconscious bias. This communicates the need for increased racial diversity on predominantly white campuses and the importance of shaping the college environment into one that convincingly values diversity. This reshaping of predominantly white campuses requires white students take a prominent role in shifting their own and other white students' attitudes toward racial diversity and difference.

### *Educational Interventions*

Relevant to this dissertation study are the fairly recent investigations of individual characteristics and educational interventions designed to influence students' interracial development and attitudes towards racial diversity during college. The research by Whitt et al. (2001) provides important evidence to support my assertion that a student's openness to diversity and challenge to her or his beliefs, values, and ideals about racial difference is a necessary part of the development of an antiracism perspective, which may lead to the expression of racial justice ally behaviors. A brief summary of this and other research relevant to how institutions of higher education influence attitudes towards racial diversity through educational interventions follows.

*Openness to diversity and challenge.* Whitt et al. (2001) point to individual experiences and environmental characteristics, which can produce growth and development of students' openness to diversity and challenge (i.e., confrontation) during their first three years of college. The elements showing a positive association to a student's openness to diversity and challenge are a non-discriminatory racial environment, participation in a racial or cultural awareness workshop, diverse student acquaintances (race, ideas, age, religion), credit hours completed by the third year, and



on-campus residence (associated with openness in first and second years, but not third).

Some negative influences on openness to diversity and challenge included enrollment in a greater number of math courses and participation in intercollegiate athletics. Intercollegiate athletics revealed a significantly negative influence in the first year, however, in the third year it had a strong positive influence (Whitt et al., 2001). Even though math courses negatively influenced students' openness to diversity and challenge, courses containing racial and gender issue-related content (i.e., diversity courses) had positive outcomes. Diversity courses positively influenced one's quality of interaction with diverse others (intergroup tolerance), and increased their commitment to social action and engagement (Henderson-King & Kaleta, 2000; Laird *et al.*, 2002; Villalpando, 2002; Zuniga *et al.*, 2005). However, these studies do not address the following questions related to the influence of such diversity courses: are they lasting or temporal; do they lead to racial justice activism; and *how* do the courses influence racial justice ally development during college, if at all. Additionally, this dissertation explores further the findings that a positive relationship exists between racially diverse student acquaintances (i.e., diverse friendships) and a student's openness to diversity and challenge. In this dissertation I investigate this phenomenon within a racially diverse intergroup dialogue course specifically designed to address race relations.

Not only does the literature illustrate that college attendance influences attitudes toward racial diversity when considering an institutions environmental characteristics, it reveals the capability of developing and recreating interracial attitudes and antiracism perspectives among undergraduate white students through individual experiences (formal interventions and informal experiences), which can produce growth and development of

students' openness to diversity and challenge (Whitt et al., 2001). My argument also assumes the need for social change within higher education environments, starting with the individual students who constitute the racial majority (i.e., white students). By prioritizing antiracism education and other interventions, the result may be improved race relations on college campuses and within the larger society.

*Educational interventions and racial bias.* Higher education institutions responded to the 1960s increase in historically underrepresented students, such as women and students of color, by providing educational interventions to address the challenges growing from a diverse student population (Engberg, 2004). Campuses today face similar challenges as they observe increased—albeit more covert—levels of racial conflict (Pettigrew, 1998) in spite of the many educational interventions found such as multicultural courses, diversity workshops and training, peer-facilitated interventions, and service interventions (Engberg, 2004). Engberg concluded in a critical examination of 73 educational interventions that 52 were effective in reducing racial bias. However, he called into question the overall quality of these studies, identifying the numerous limitations in conceptualization, measurement, research design, and analytic approaches. He also noted that the long-term effects of the interventions were minimally investigated.

Changing racial bias requires a consciousness and alteration to personal beliefs and behaviors, whereas, becoming a racial justice ally requires this plus an outward and sometimes public action in an attempt to change the behaviors of other whites. Thus, I argue that the elimination of racial inequality may happen if the white majority acknowledges racism still exists, realizes that white people are an essential part of the problem and solution, assumes an antiracism perspective, and behaves as racial justice

allies. Research suggests that intergroup dialogue is a promising method of promoting racial justice ally development (Engberg, 2004; Schoem & Hurtado, 2001; Vasques Scalera, 1999).

Reducing personal racial bias is not the only focus of this dissertation, although the development of racial justice allies highly depends upon an antiracism perspective, which I consider analogous to a person who consciously strives to understand and eliminate personal racial bias. Extending beyond influencing racial bias through educational interventions as discussed by Engberg (2004) is my attention to externalized action as a pathway to individual, social, and institutional change.

*Intergroup dialogue.* The studies of intergroup dialogue are of direct interest to this dissertation research because the intervention I explored is, albeit unintentionally, designed as an intergroup dialogue course with a hands-on component (SOC 300). Schoem (2003) defined an intergroup dialogue as a process not an event, about relationship-building and thoughtful engagement around difficult issues such as race. It involves face-to-face interactions and is focused on intergroup conflict and community building and thus, may be intense difficult work and only occasionally a “feel good” experience. Intergroup dialogues are led by skilled facilitators and are about inquiry and understanding of self and others through an integration of content and process. They are primarily focused on talking, but authentic dialogue often leads to action. Even though few intergroup dialogue programs exist on college campuses today, they are proving beneficial to meeting diversity-related outcomes.

A smattering of empirical research suggests intergroup dialogue and interracial interaction in courses increased motivation for intergroup learning, importance of and

confidence in taking action (Nagda *et al.*, 2004); motivation to reduce one's own prejudice and taking action to promote inclusion and social justice (Zuniga *et al.*, 2005), which support the findings of other scholars focused on the educational outcomes of campus racial diversity (Engberg *et al.*, 2003; Gurin *et al.*, 2002; Hurtado *et al.*, 2002; Vasques Scalera, 1999). Until recently, intergroup dialogue did not refer to a specified structure. But, techniques, processes, and "best practices" for doing intergroup dialogue specific to race relations work on college campuses to achieve "democratic outcomes" now exist (Schoem, 2003; Schoem & Hurtado, 2001). I incorporate these characteristics into the discussion of the SOC 300 learning contexts. Therefore, I provide definitions of the concepts in Chapter Five where I use the characteristics as secondary themes to better illustrate the dialogic nature of the course.

*Student benefits.* The 2003 AERA Compelling Interest Report summarizes the benefits of diversity in higher education in relation to the individual student as improved racial and cultural awareness, enhanced openness to diversity and challenge, greater commitment to increasing racial understanding, more occupational and residential desegregation later in life, enhanced critical thinking ability, greater satisfaction with the college experience, and perceptions of a more supportive campus racial climate (Chang *et al.*, 2003). Many colleges and universities provide educational interventions within the curriculum, cocurriculum, and extracurriculum, in order to produce such educational benefits. However, little research offers insight into the process of developing the capacities for antiracism behaviors necessary for change in today's more covert, systemic, and institutionalized racism. Such behaviors originate from an antiracism perspective and manifest themselves in antiracism action at levels ranging from personal

interactions to public demonstrations.

### *Student Development Theory*

The theory available on student development is plentiful and grows from many historically established disciplines such as psychology and sociology. Since the early 1970s, numerous authors developed models and theories for viewing and analyzing the cognitive, moral, affective, psychosocial, and racial identity growth of traditionally aged college students. Until recently, these frameworks remained fragmented, unitary, and unidirectional, considering each developmental dimension as a separate entity with a singular dimension and moving in one direction toward a developed state.

Pertinent to this dissertation research is the more recent theoretical literature and its historical evolution within the student development field of study. Contemporary theories present more complex and holistic models of student development through an integrated, yet non-unitary, and multidirectional approach, not unlike the complex developmental process of racial justice allies. The following presents a theoretical evolution of pertinent student development theories and models leading to those most relevant to the process of racial justice ally development.

### *White Racial Identity Development*

Not surprisingly, racial identity theorists before 1990 did very little to address white racial identity development. Helms's original model of white identity development presented a two-phase process (1990). "Phase 1, the abandonment of racism, begins with the Contact stage and ends with the Reintegration stage...Phase 2, defining a positive White identity, begins with the Pseudo-Independent stage and ends with the Autonomy stage" (p. 55). The stages, which were later relabeled as "statuses" (Helms, 1995),

include contact, disintegration, reintegration, pseudo-independent, immersion/emersion, and autonomy. Ultimately, Helms's perspective requires the abandonment of individual racism and the recognition and active opposition to institutional and cultural racism. This acquisition of a "healthy White identity," according to Helms, must include an awareness of one's whiteness, and the creation of a positive view of what that means. However, Helms's notion of whiteness is limiting as a racial identity model because it primarily focuses on developing attitudes toward people of color, specifically people who are African American. It does not address the importance of racial justice activism, nor emphasize the importance of reconstructing whiteness, where whiteness is valued and moves beyond the label of embodying racism (Eichstedt, 2001; Giroux, 1997).

Further, although Helms's model takes into consideration how white racial identity development affects attitudes, behaviors, and emotions regarding racism, but does not explicitly take into account other developmental dimensions (i.e., cognitive, interpersonal, intrapersonal, gender, sexual orientation, etc.), which are occurring simultaneously and are mutually dependent upon one another. Helms's model may be useful for looking at the development of a white student's attitudes toward people of color but requires elaboration to meet the needs of today's understanding of individual identities as they are complex, multiple, and overlapping. Therefore, the intersections of identities, including activist identities, must be explicated and explored to better understand how students develop within the higher education environment.

Tatum's (1994) comments on Helms's model align with that of Rowe, Bennett, and Atkinson (1994), both believe that a student who may present a "healthy White racial identity" may not have developed the competencies for "White ally" attitudes and

actions, which include a strong sense of self as white. Tatum (1994) communicates concern because Helms's paradigm implies three models of whiteness: the "white supremacist" model, the "what whiteness?" view, and the "guilty white" model (Tatum, 1994). None of these present a positive connotation of whiteness, therefore Tatum argues, how can we keep developing white students from retreating to earlier stages out of frustration from this constantly inharmonious process? Tatum presents the possibility for another model, one that recognizes the "history of white protest against racism, a history of whites who have resisted the role of oppressor and who have been allies to people of color" (p. 471). This suggested proactive extension of Helms's model has not been empirically investigated, or developed by Tatum. This study however, addresses the role of white antiracism role models in the development of racial justice allies during college.

#### *White Racial Consciousness*

An alternative to identity models is the notion of "consciousness" which differs from identity in the developmental literature by not assuming any internalization or self-identification with an external state of awareness (LaFleur *et al.*, 2002; Rowe *et al.*, 1994). This is the point when an individual begins to see the other, not necessarily make sense of the other in relation to him or herself. In this definition consciousness is expressed through observable attitudes and behaviors, and is thus measurable.

White racial consciousness, as defined by Rowe, *et al.* (1994), provides one example of how consciousness is defined in terms of race: "We define White racial consciousness as one's awareness of being White and what that implies in relation to those who do not share White group membership....We focus our attention on attitudes, however, because they might be considered relatively stable and more readily available

for assessment” (p. 133). Consciousness may or may not be a part of person’s identity and because it was intentionally not grounded in identity theory, using a consciousness-based theory avoids the implicit problems of identity-based theories such as being prescriptive and highly abstract (LaFleur *et al.*, 2002). In contrast to a theory of white racial identity, white racial consciousness classifies commonly held racial attitudes that white people display toward people of color, not that white people internalize according to what it means to identify as white.

White racial consciousness is an area of research that illustrates the complexity of understanding white privilege by presenting it as a multidimensional developmental process. Generally speaking, the developmental continuum of white consciousness begins with an initial awareness of one’s whiteness as a racial construct and at the other end of the spectrum is the culmination of racial justice attitudes and actions. The concept of white racial consciousness refers to an attitudinal construct; therefore, a positive white racial consciousness indicates a positive way of thinking about those considered non-white, or members of the racial out-group (Rowe *et al.*, 1994). White consciousness takes into consideration the many complex determinants of racial attitudes and behaviors and thus supports the promotion of diversity and race relations within higher education as avenues for creating a constructive white racial consciousness (Chavez *et al.*, 2003; Helms, 1990; King & Baxter Magolda, 2001).

White consciousness measurement instruments, such as the Oklahoma Racial Attitudes Scale (ORAS), attempted to scientifically calculate attitudes towards people of color (Leach *et al.*, 2002). Choney and Behrens (1996) originally developed the Oklahoma Racial Attitudes Scale-Preliminary Form (ORAS-P), which was recently



revised into the ORAS, to measure white racial consciousness using two basic constructs, racial acceptance and racial justice. LaFleur, Rowe, and Leach (2002) describe the items contained within the ORAS as reflecting four types of attitudes (dominative, integrative, conflictive, and reactive) as well as, the items designed to show the level of commitment to these attitudes (avoidant, dissonant, dependent). For example, respondents whose attitudes illustrate comfort in interacting with racial minorities show high racial acceptance; they are characterized by Integrative type attitudes. These individuals also score high on their commitment to these attitudes to be identified as subjects with developed white consciousness (i.e., potential racial justice allies).

Although the I did not use the the ORAS for this study, the investigation of white consciousness offers valuable insight into the problem of defining and redefining a healthy construct of whiteness, or a racial justice ally, and the inherent difficulty in doing so quantitatively. Antiracism perspectives and behaviors are difficult to precisely measure. Therefore, understanding the process of becoming a racial justice ally is more appropriately investigated qualitatively, the methodology I employ in this dissertation.

*Reconstructing whiteness.* Contrary to many of his counterparts in other disciplines, critical theorist Giroux (1997) provides an argument for constructing a racial identity through education that does not renounce whiteness, nor look to apply it with a counterproductive label of domination (whiteness = racism). Rather, educators must “rearticulate a notion of Whiteness that builds upon, but also moves beyond, the view of Whiteness as simply a fixed position of domination” (p. 293) that must either be accepted or rejected.

The lack of ethnic identity among whites (Giroux, 1997; Perry, 2001), the rise of white consciousness due to white identity politics, and the belief in reverse discrimination are current themes in the white identity literature. These themes evolved from earlier studies such as Gallagher's exploration of the meaning whites attach to their race (1997). "The contemporary meaning [of whiteness] is an amalgamation of these white narratives...[they are] naïve because they attach little meaning to their race, humane in their desire to reach out to nonwhites, defensive as self-defined victims, and reactionary in their calls for a return to white solidarity" (p. 6). This research recognizes the prominent social theme among young college students of "colorblindness" and the ramifications of unveiling this myth (discomfort, conflict, defensiveness). Students tend to believe the playing field is level and racism is outdated in America (Meader, 1998) thus, they see policies such as Affirmative Action, and diversity initiatives as forms of reverse discrimination and respond with resentment (Chizhik & Chizhik, 2002).

By definition, a racial justice ally orientation is grounded in a rearticulated and constructive notion of whiteness. It offers an antiracist identity for "White youth [who] need a more critical and productive way of construing a sense of identity, agency, and race across a wide range of contexts and public spheres" (Giroux, 1997, p. 293). By creating an "oppositional identity" as a racial justice ally students can see themselves as participants in the fight for racial equality and social justice.

#### *Multiple and Intersecting Dimensions of Identity*

As an emerging area of study within such disciplines as sociology and psychology, studies of the multiple dimensions of identity typically focus on intersecting *oppressed* social identities. Scholars are exploring the connections across and between

the various hierarchical systems operating within modern society (Allen & Chung, 2000). The study of intersecting identities depends on and is tied to location (subjectivity). Such studies investigate how certain identities and positions intersect, interlock, and interact which provides multiple experiences of oppression (International encyclopedia of the social & behavioral sciences, 2001). Research in this area focuses on power relationships based on socially ascribed characteristics and how belonging to multiple, oppressed groups creates different experiences of oppression. Of interest is the lack of acknowledgement or exploration of the intersections of conflicting identities, a concept similar to that of “nonunitary subjectivity” presented by Bloom (1998). According to Bloom, nonunitary subjectivity is:

No single ‘essence’ or core of conscious or unconscious thoughts and emotions of an individual—her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world; an active and continual process of production within historical, social, and cultural boundaries; subjectivity is relational, multiple, and fragmented. (pp. 4-5)

The belief in nonunitary subjectivity allows for the existence of multiple dimensions of identity, which are dependent upon the context and power relationships with others within a socially, historically, and culturally situated environment. This dissertation study extends beyond the multiple *oppressed* identities one holds to include an individual’s *privileged* group identities as well. These multiple dimensions of identity may exist simultaneously, in conflict, or in unison depending on the context and experiences of the individual. The overarching behaviors resulting from these realized multiple dimensions of identity do not stem from a binary, monolithic, dualistic,

structure; rather they emerge from a multidimensional, complex, and dynamic developmental process.

Jones and McEwen (2000) include in their work a discussion of individuals not necessarily identifying as experiencing multiple oppressions, rather they allow for a broader conception of multiple identity development. Much of Bloom's (1998) work with nonunitary subjectivity is represented in Jones and McEwen's (2000) conceptual model, which does not exclude from analysis those with conflicting or oppositional social identities—such as whites and allies—within any specified area of social justice work. However, unlike Bloom (1998), Jones and McEwen (2000) claim there is a very distinct core essence or “core sense of self” within every individual.

*Multiple dimensions of identity model.* In a qualitative study of 10 undergraduate female university students diverse in race, cultural background, and academic major, Jones and McEwen (2000) “attempted to advance a more complex understanding of identity and present a model of multiple dimensions of identity development” (p. 407). They focused on the participants' understandings of their identity (i.e., sense of self) and how certain experiences, especially those of difference (Eichstedt, 2001), and the influence of multiple dimensions of identity affected their identity development. Data collected through in-depth, open-ended interviews later revealed a conceptual model which presents a “core category” at the center of each individual, which is defined by the “contextual influences on the construction of identity” (p. 408), such as race, gender, education, family, and relationships with people of difference. At the center of a person's multiple dimensions of identity is a core sense of self (personally ascribed attributes, characteristics, and self-identifiers). Socially or externally constructed identities were

considered less meaningful because participants felt their sense of self had greater depth than the external social labels provided.

Important to understanding the Jones and McEwen model (2000) are the intersections of the multiple identity dimensions; where multiple identities intersect due to certain contextual influences demonstrates how no one dimension can be understood only in relation to other identity dimensions. For example, all participants identified as women, but when asked what that meant to them they connected their gender with other salient dimensions such as, “Jewish woman, Black woman, lesbian...” (p. 410). They further concluded that identity was composed of multiple and intersecting dimensions of which the most salient identities depended upon the contexts in which they were experienced. “Therefore, both difference and privilege worked to mediate the connection with and salience of various identity dimensions (i.e., race was not salient for White women; religion was very salient for Jewish women...)” (p. 408).

The Jones and McEwen model (2000) suggests that researchers broaden their consideration from a universal view of identity to a more situated analysis (Allen & Chung, 2000; Bloom, 1998), where context plays a significant role in the dynamic, nonlinear, and complex process of identity development. While obvious limitations such as sample size, a single research site, and gender homogeneity of the participants are a concern, conceptual issues also raise questions about this model. Although Jones and McEwen (2000) do not exclude the discussion of racially privileged identities and their intersections with oppressed identities, their conceptual model does not allow an in-depth understanding of the complexities associated with a problematic identity such as that of whites. The invisibility of white as a definable racial category constrains the

developmental process for whites. The racial identity options are limited to either colorblindness, which ignores whiteness (i.e., white racial identity) altogether, or relegating to the essentialist construction of whiteness, where “only whites are racists” and they are the sole cause and perpetrators of racism (Eichstedt, 2001; Giroux, 1997).

An essentialist pairing of qualities (good/bad, black/white, right/wrong) does not offer an avenue for the development of antiracism perspectives nor racial justice ally status (Eichstedt, 2001). Perspectives and identities opposed to racism in our modern American society require the reconstruction of whiteness and the balancing of an individual’s oppositional identities; allowing for multiple, intersecting dimensions of identity with oft times “conflicting valuations” (Myrdal, 1962). Further complicating this “American dilemma” is the propensity of people to sidestep shameful identities if possible when confronted with the realization that they are members who receive unearned privileges due to skin color (Eichstedt, 2001; McIntosh, 2003). Rather than identifying themselves in essentialist terms (white equals racist), many whites readily find an oppressed identity to feign as salient, which temporarily relinquishes them of their white guilt and places them comfortably within a socially marginalized, yet racially privileged people.

Giroux (1997) provides support for Eichstedt’s (2000) arguments and the need for a closer analysis of conflicting identities by calling for a deconstruction of whiteness in the public sphere, creating the possibility for “White students to recognize their own agency and legitimate place within the struggle for social change and an anti-racist society” (p. 285). Whites can no longer be excluded from the discourse surrounding racial politics, they are more than the perpetrators of racism, and they must be taught to

realize their role in its eradication. He calls for a new ethnicity to define racial identities as “multiple, porous, complex, and shifting” (p. 299). When considering a reconstructed notion of whiteness, a positive white consciousness, and a highly developed integrated self, the development of racial justice allies becomes a very real possibility and meaningful learning outcome.

### *Integrated Development Models*

The literature reviewed thus far reveals some unique perspectives that positive encounters with diverse others and experiences when incorporated with a positive white racial identity, or consciousness, may facilitate a college student’s attainment of an antiracism perspective and racial justice ally actions. A missing piece to this argument is the literature addressing the necessary development in other areas in order to become a racial justice ally such as the work of King & Baxter Magolda (2001, 2005), which examines how the multiple facets of development are interrelated, and without “intercultural maturity,” becoming a culturally competent individual is difficult. Later in this chapter I elaborate on this integrated developmental model and King and Baxter Magolda’s (2005) theory of cultural competence through which they claim that “to demonstrate cultural competence several types of expertise are needed; subject matter knowledge, complex cognitive skills for decision-making, social skills to function effectively in diverse work groups, and personal attributes that include flexibility and openness to new ideas” (2001, p. 2).

The next section focuses on the multiple and interrelated developmental capabilities necessary to become a racial justice ally, which is arguably difficult and complex. Aspiring racial justice allies must develop “intercultural maturity” that includes

learning to understand and critically examine their whiteness. This includes positively shifting their racial attitudes and coming to terms with unconscious bias toward non-whites, thereby obtaining an antiracism perspective. Ultimately, they may identify and be capable of behaving as allies for racial justice in varying contexts (i.e., committing to an activist identity where action stems from social and personal responsibility). Successfully navigating this developmental process requires complex, highly developed cognitive, moral, psychosocial, and affective capabilities working in unison and oft times in conflict with one another in multiple, varied, and dynamic contexts (Reason et al., 2005).

The order of the following literature does not suggest any sequence or hierarchy of development. I first present an extended explanation of moral development, which arguably is a facet of intercultural competency; I feel it needs further elaboration due to its significance in the process of racial justice ally development. I then build to the more multidimensional, yet integrated, theories and models before presenting the literature specifically addressing social and racial justice ally development toward the end of this chapter.

#### *Moral Development and Empathy*

As mentioned above, moral reasoning includes the capacity to take another's perspective, which is imperative to the development of an antiracism perspective leading to racial justice ally behaviors (Engberg et al., 2003; O'Brien, 2001; Schoem & Hurtado, 2001). Although moral development is woven into the integrated identity models discussed below, it warrants added attention due to its significance in ensuring a person is capable of taking another's perspective (i.e., empathy). I believe Hogan and Netzer (1993) provide an eloquent and understandable language for discussing the experiences



of whites which help them to become empathetic in support of the racially oppressed. These phenomena of “approximating experiences” (i.e., which motivate empathy) are presented in relation to whiteness, racism, and racial justice using their language, which has been adopted by other authors such as O’Brien (2001) and Eichstedt (2001). Therefore, after a brief overview of the theoretical foundations of moral development I offer a synthesis of Hogan and Netzer’s (1993) framework of approximating experiences because it was used in this dissertation study to analyze and further elucidate the process of racial justice ally development.

*Kohlberg’s moral development theory.* Kohlberg (1972, as cited in Evans et al., 1998) focused his foundational work on how people make moral judgments, which have three qualities: an emphasis on value not fact; an effect on people or a person; and a requirement that an action be taken. He argued that it is a person’s structure of thought, which is transformed as it develops with regard to what is right or necessary. He stated, “the principal central to the development of moral judgment...is that of *justice*. Justice, the primary regard for the value and equality of human beings, and for reciprocity in human relations, is a basic and human standard” (p. 173). Kohlberg also discussed social perspective taking as a prerequisite cognitive domain related to moral reasoning. Social perspective taking, as defined by Selman (1980, as cited in Evans et al., 1998) is “the ability to put oneself in another person’s place and to understand what he or she is thinking” (p. 177).

*Gilligan’s orientation of care.* Unlike Kohlberg’s original research, Gilligan (1982/1993) extended her studies to women from the start and distinguished them from men by themes of care and justice rather than gender. Her work revealed an *orientation of*

*care*, which focused on attachment to others as carrying equal weight with self-care when moral decisions are made. This orientation differs from a *justice orientation*, which centers around autonomy and universal justice based on rules and rights (Evans et al., 1998). Gilligan (1995, as cited in Evans et al., 1998) “referred to the justice voice (based on equality, fairness, and reciprocity) as ‘patriarchal,’ treating the individual as separate, autonomous, and independent” (p. 191). Dissimilarly, “she depicts the care voice as derived from a conception of the self that is relational and a view of self and others as connected and interdependent” (Perreault, 1996, p. 34, as cited in Evans et al., 1998).

*Approximating experiences framework.* Hogan and Netzer (1993) developed three types of “approximating experiences” to describe the different paths to empathy motivating whites to become antiracism activists: borrowed approximations, global approximations, and overlapping approximations. Although Hogan and Netzer’s (1993) research did not include a diverse sample (they only interviewed white women), there is no reason this framework could not be applied to any white sample, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, religion, ability, or class. According to Hogan and Netzer’s (1993) framework “borrowed approximations” are experiences a white person has where they learn about racism through the stories told by a person of color. This person could be anywhere from a friend to an intimate partner (O’Brien, 2001). The interaction the white person has with the person of color through hearing his or her story helps make racism a real problem that needs to be addressed.

“Global approximations” occur in the absence of any significant relationships with people of color. The experiences expose whites to racism and they perceive racism “as an unfair crime against humanity, a wrong that needs to be righted to further the

cause of justice” (O'Brien, 2001, p. 25). This concept of global approximations is reminiscent of Kohlberg's (1972) justice orientation. It is strictly out of a belief in individual rights and social rules that motivates the white person to do the “right thing” and act morally. Many scholars argue that global approximations may lead a person to “false empathy” which means they act out of a sense of duty, justice, or pity, rather than from an actualized sense of self as racial justice ally. Often times, whites who make faulty assumptions while doing what they think is right for the “oppressed other” happens when an overconfident white person visualizes what people of color need, based on what they would need if they were them, yet their experiences are radically different than people of color's (Delgado & Stefancic, 1997).

“Overlapping approximations” requires the white person empathize with the pain of racism through relating an analogous experience of oppression such as: sexism for a woman; “classism” for a poor person; heterosexism for a gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender individual; anti-Semitism for a Jewish person (O'Brien, 2001) and “ableism” for those with a physical or mental dysfunction. Eichstedt (1997, as cited in O'Brien, 2001), extended these conditions to include overlapping approximations of oppression felt by a white person through experiences with sexual abuse as a motivation to empathize with people of color.

*Individual diversity framework.* The Chavez, Guido-DiBrito, and Mallory individual diversity development framework, defined as “cognitive, affective, and behavioral growth processes toward consciously valuing complex and integrated differences in others and ourselves” (2003), represents a theoretical perspective requiring complex individual development (Hurtado et al., 2002). Chavez, Guido-DiBrito, and

Mallory (2003) base their theoretical framework on three primary resources: theoretical foundations (psychosocial, moral, identity, and influences on development progression); their collective work as educators, consultants, and diversity trainers in the form of storytelling (Parker & Lynn, 2002); and reflection on their personal development and the development of others.

Chavez et al. (2003) propose a process in which an individual learns to be aware of, explore, understand, integrate, and value various types of otherness such as race, gender, religion, and sexual orientation, including their own “internal otherness.” They hypothesize the nonlinear periods of awareness are unawareness, dual awareness, questioning and self-exploration, risk-taking or exploration, and integration. The authors claim, “most individuals begin at the cognitive level and at some point leap to emotional practice and on to the behavioral components of each dimension of the model, although all three appear to interact in a meaningful gestalt” (Chavez et al., 2003, p. 458). This theoretically supports the notion that in order for an individual to develop as a racial justice ally the cognitive and affective dimensions must be adequately developed to a certain level of maturity; a developmental level where perspective taking, empathy, and morality may be employed.

Though this model is integrative, pays close attention to one’s sense of self as “other,” and considers the multiple dimensions of identity occurring within an individual, limitations exist concerning its use in generating a better understanding of how white racial identity development affects the development of racial justice allies. The unique circumstances specific to white racial identity development (e.g., whiteness) are excluded from this framework.

The individual diversity model uses the term “otherness” to describe marginalized identities, those historically excluded from equality within our society. These identities become salient at different times, within different contexts while interacting with the other multiple forms and dimensions of identity (Eichstedt, 2001; Jones & McEwen, 2000). But once again, dominant, non-marginalized identities are not addressed. When a white individual becomes critically aware of the racial injustices of society, the bias and socially constructed prejudice within themselves that perpetuates an unjust distribution of power and privilege, they must be provided with a model for creating positive change. Thus, if the majority white population is expected to act for social change a broader theoretical understanding is needed. This includes the unique transformational processes and obstacles they experience when at first adopting an antiracism perspective, incorporating this into their identity, extending it to their social interactions, then initiating racial justice ally actions in various contexts.

The student development literature leading up to this point illustrates the evolution of the theoretical structures which help higher education professionals make sense of how students experience college. As touched upon earlier, King and Baxter Magolda’s (2005) model of intercultural maturity offers a complex and integrated approach to analyzing the learner’s intercultural capabilities. Although not empirically tested, this model provides an appropriate theoretical framework for analyzing and discussing the complex developmental capabilities necessary when potentially becoming racial justice allies. As such, I also present this model in Chapter Five as a theoretical framework for the thematic analysis. There I offer expanded definitions of the concepts briefly presented here.

*Intercultural Maturity and Competence*

As a part of the more complex layers of development, the concepts of valuing “others” and the “otherness” in one’s self identity are essential to realizing intercultural maturity, which is also expressed in the literature on individual diversity development discussed earlier (Chavez et al., 2003; King & Baxter Magolda, 2001, 2005; Saddleire, 1996). The subsequent literature on intercultural maturity and competence adheres to the integrative and complex nature of the multiple dimensions of identity. Further, it illustrates how an integrated framework is essential to contemporary student development research and theory that addresses issues of diversity and multiculturalism.

The development of racial justice allies requires a highly developed sense of self and other within multiple dimensions. In King and Baxter Magolda’s (2005) integrated development framework, “maturity” is defined as “the developmental capacity that undergirds the ways learners come to make meaning. That is, the way they approach, understand, and act on their concerns” (p. 574), which includes the cognitive, identity, and interpersonal development and their interconnections. Intercultural competence involves a variety of mutually reinforcing skills including cross-cultural knowledge, reasoning abilities, complex problem analysis resulting in solutions, and personal attributes that enhance the application of knowledge and skills such as tolerance (Taylor, 1998), openness (Engberg et al., 2003), and courage (Broido, 1997).

The student affairs literature reveals a call for intercultural competence and maturity extending beyond individual students to include all college and university educators and professionals (King & Howard-Hamilton, 2003; Mueller & Pope, 2001). It also supports the relationship between white racial consciousness and multicultural

competence (Mueller & Pope, 2001) and that “self-knowledge (e.g., understanding and affirming one’s own racial identity) is a pre-cursor to understanding the cultural practices and identities of others” (Baxter Magolda, 1999; King & Howard-Hamilton, 2003, p. 131).

Cognitively, the development of intercultural maturity is complex (King & Shuford, 1996). King and Shuford (1996) espouse King & Kitchener’s Reflective Judgment model of intellectual development, which illustrates how reasoning skills develop in adulthood, and shows how the development of these skills is relevant to multicultural education on college campuses. This supports the premise that cognitive development beyond the “dualistic” stage is a necessary component in the integrated conceptual framework of intercultural maturity development.

King and Baxter Magolda (2005) draw upon Kegan’s (1994) concept of “self-authorship” to illustrate the sense of self necessary in the development of an intercultural worldview. Baxter Magolda (1999) also explores self-authorship and extends it into her Epistemological Reflection model, or “four ways of knowing.” Kegan’s concept of self-authorship is an “individual’s ‘mature capacity’ to function in ways that effectively address life’s demands. King and Baxter Magolda’s (2005) framework “encompasses Kegan’s (1994) three dimensions of development (cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal) as well as their interconnections” (as cited in King & Baxter Magolda, 2005, p. 574). Kegan argued that “development in all three dimensions is required for a person to be able to use one’s skills. Those for whom development in one or more dimensions is not adequate for complex life tasks often report being overwhelmed or ‘in over their heads’” (p. 574). Further, he stated, “a [mature capacity] is an ideology, an

internal identity...[it] can coordinate, integrate, act upon, or invent values, beliefs, convictions, generalizations, ideals, abstractions, interpersonal loyalties, and intrapersonal states. It is no longer authored by them, it authors them and thereby achieves a personal authority” (p. 574). Therefore, self-authorship requires a mature capacity; it necessitates complex development in the cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal developmental dimensions.

Theory suggests that the development within all three dimensions of intercultural maturity may require purposeful educational interventions such as those discussed by King and Baxter Magolda (2005). Suggested educational interventions appear to fall within two frameworks, one for multicultural education (Ortiz & Rhoads, 2000), and another for intergroup dialogue programs (Schoem & Hurtado, 2001). I employed the intercultural maturity model as a theoretical frame for examining the influence of this course on their racial justice ally development. The next section presents the literature directly related to ally development and concludes with a discussion of the conceptual model for this dissertation.

### *Ally Development*

Student development theorists traditionally focus on the development of marginalized social identities (women, homosexuals, students of color) and discrete individual development areas such as cognitive, psychosocial, and moral (Evans et al., 1998). More recently scholars and researchers have presented developmental models and theories hoping to promote social justice agendas (Broido, 2000). However, few researchers have explored the phenomena of ally development specific to racial justice. Thus far, the literature related to racial justice ally development primarily focuses on a



white college student's development resulting in individual antiracism attitudes not her or his development as a racial justice ally, which I conceptualize as implying action.

Research on racial justice ally development, such as this study, could provide the desired positive conceptions of whiteness (Eichstedt, 2001; Giroux, 1997; Tatum, 1994) and an activist identity for whites (i.e., racial justice ally) missing from the literature on college student development. The following section begins with a brief introduction to student activism, and then more thoroughly explains the existing models and literature on social and racial justice ally development.

### *Social Change and Student Activism*

Multicultural and diversity initiatives on college and university campuses have proliferated since the 1960s (Garcia et al., 2001), but at differing intensity levels. The student activism of the 1930s and 1960s signifies the high points of students' active engagement directed at social and political change (Rhoads, 1997). According to Altbach and Cohen (1990, as cited in Rhoads, 1997), "American higher education may be in the midst of its third great wave of student activism (p. 508) focused on "identity politics." Rhoads focuses his study primarily on the context of student activism, and how it constructs meaning for those involved in specific experiences and actions directed at social justice concerns. The role identity plays in student organizing is a recurring theme in Rhoads's interviews with his participants.

Rhoads's (1997) research provides support for activism as a positive way of improving the political climate for students who feel their identity is not valued by the institution, and as a process that fosters student development. However, the study insufficiently addresses the role of white students in activism centered on identity

politics, beyond noting that “scores of progressive-minded Whites have also been demonstrating as part of this [multicultural] movement” (Rhoads, 1997, p. 516). This evokes the question, what impel these “martyrs for multiculturalism” to act for racial justice (Leslie & Murr, 1993, as cited in Rhoads, 1997)? Moreover, how did they develop antiracism perspectives and activist orientations that include a commitment to social responsibility and actions against their own racially privileged status?

To signify that whites can be effective in initiating positive social change toward racial justice, social impact theorists, Blanchard, Crandall, Brigham, and Vaughn (1994), provide evidence that “Whites can influence interracial sensibilities expressed by other Whites...a few outspoken people can influence the normative climate of interracial social settings in either direction” (pp. 996-997). This in concert with the undeniable influence of the interaction with diverse peers on traditionally-aged college students (Hurtado et al., 2002; Villalpando, 2002; Whitt et al., 2001) and the present call for increased racial diversity initiatives give warrant for the attention on white racial justice ally development.

### *Social Justice Allies*

Although the research literature devoted to the study of social and racial justice allies is limited within the field of higher education, fields such as social work, counseling, teacher education, nursing, sociology, and social justice education offer additional work on the topic. This literature base is characteristically practical rather than empirically tested, and less theoretical in nature than more evolved areas of inquiry. In this section I provide a brief summary of the work and explain how this dissertation builds upon and goes beyond the previous research on the subject.

*Goodman's model.* Diane J. Goodman's (2000) focus on promoting diversity and social justice by educating and motivating privileged groups to action offers insight and perspective to the issue of social and racial justice ally development. Her article (2000) and subsequent book entitled, *Promoting Diversity and Social Justice: Educating People from Privileged Groups* (2001), offer theories, perspectives, and strategies she found useful when working with adults from privileged groups on diversity and social justice issues. Goodman writes for practitioners in higher education and other fields, who are committed to tackling these issues. Although her work lacks empirical support and is not focused on college students, it is a useful primer on the complex process of developing allies. Goodman focuses on three developmental attributes that motivate people to work for social justice: 1) empathy, 2) moral/spiritual, and 3) self-interest.

Goodman (2000) argues, "One of the more challenging aspects of multicultural education is engaging people from dominant social groups (e.g., men, whites, heterosexuals) in promoting equity" (p. 106). Goodman's work offers a theoretical perspective for understanding what may motivate people from privileged groups to support diversity and social justice. Furthermore, she considers the complexities and limitations of each source of motivation (empathy, moral and spiritual, and self-interest) and provides "pitfalls" to beware of when applying these approaches in an educational setting. Goodman posits, "By better understanding what motivates someone to support diversity and equity, educators can more intentionally choose approaches that will engage individuals, and thus more effectively promote personal and institutional change" (Goodman, 2000, p. 106).

*Bishop's six-step model to becoming an ally.* In her second book of a three part

series, *Becoming an Ally: Breaking the Cycle of Oppression in People*, Bishop (2002) presents the first half of a larger work addressing institutional oppression. *Becoming an Ally* addresses an extension of the issues presented in her first work, which she wrote out of concern for many people deeply engaged in liberating their own group, yet seemingly unaware of how they oppress others. Although not based on scientific research, Bishop's (2002) six-step model to becoming an ally to other oppressed people is based on her experiences and stories of others. Although the model is untested, it offers hypothetical parallels to the racial justice ally developmental process I explore.

Bishop's (2002) six-step model of social justice ally development is as follows:

1. understanding oppression, how it came about, how it is held in place, and how it stamps its patterns on the individuals and institutions that continually recreate it;
2. understanding different oppressions, how they are similar, how they differ, and how they reinforce one another;
3. consciousness and healing;
4. becoming a worker for your own liberation;
5. becoming an ally;
6. maintaining hope. (p. 22)

This six-step framework speculates on how an individual becomes an ally to other oppressed groups of people.

The six-step model closely resembles the discussion of social oppression and liberation found in the process of developing critical consciousness (Freire, 2000), which requires special considerations when applying it to white students becoming racial justice

allies. Some racial justice allies may undergo the steps outlined in Bishop's (2002) model, although for whites (and any other dominant social group), this model offers no positive racial identity for them to aspire, which a racial justice ally development model may provide (Reason, Roosa Millar, & Scales, 2005).

*Broido's social justice ally model.* The original stimulus for this investigation and the preliminary racial justice ally development model (Reason, Roosa Millar, & Scales, 2005) was Broido's (1997) research entitled, *The Development of Social Justice Allies during College: A Phenomenological Investigation*. Her research-based study analyzed ally development from the students' perspectives (i.e., how they perceived their inclination toward ally attitudes and behavior). She also considered a broader scope of social justice issues in her work: racism, sexism, and heterosexism.

Broido's (1997) research took place on a large, predominantly white, eastern campus. She interviewed each of her six participants twice. The participants were specifically selected for their identifiable social justice activism on campus. Her analysis of the data resulted in eleven themes. Of these themes, those informing subsequent work including this dissertation are: participants identified a common set of courses; non-academic knowledge from friendships with people of different sexual orientations; and clarification and confidence of their own position on issues. The clarification process took place in classes, through self-reflection, perspective-taking, and informal conversations with friends (Broido, 1997).

The findings offered by Broido (2000) suggest how higher education institutions might facilitate the development of social justice allies. Many of the recommendations for practice were also presented by other authors within this literature review, such as the

following: encourage all members of the institution to take responsibility for assisting students in the meaning-making process; create opportunities for students to reflect on their values and give them a safe environment to express them; provide support for students to understand other perspectives; develop a safe campus climate; increase opportunities for marginalized (“target”) group members to interact with potential allies; encourage study abroad; foster confidence in students (Broido, 2000). Broido further elaborates these suggestions by giving the “how-to” details specific to either faculty or student affairs areas of responsibility within the higher education institution. This model offers a broad place of origin for this dissertation as it scientifically considers the unique and complex formation of social justice ally development, under which racial justice ally development falls.

### *Racial Justice Allies*

Within this section I present the minimal literature available specifically discussing white people confronting racism. Although only the last focuses on college or university students the following literature provides the groundwork for additional research in this area. It also furnishes this dissertation study with a solid conceptual foundation.

*Antiracist role models.* In her book, *Refusing Racism: White Allies and the Struggle for Civil Rights*, Stokes Brown (2002) focuses on the complex reasons European American people (whites) would give up some of their racial privilege and work against white supremacy. Her “stories reveal how four white allies figured out how to be effective antiracists in a racist society” (p. 2). Through qualitative interviews, Stokes Brown provides historical accounts of four individuals who publicly fought for the Civil

Rights of blacks. She sets her work in a constructivist frame by discussing race as a tool used for essentializing groups of people. “Sociologists and anthropologists today regard the concept of race as a social construct...a label that politically and culturally dominant groups apply to themselves and to other groups. Racial designations and definitions are understood to change over time, reflecting changes in political power and attitudes” (Walker, Spohn, & Delone, 2000 as cited in Stokes Brown, 2002, p. 2).

Stokes Brown’s four white participants were purposefully chosen from across the class spectrum: Judge Waring, upper-class aristocrat; Virginia Durr and Anne Braden who both renounced upper-class status for working-class lives; and Herb Kohl who lives as a middle-class person while retaining allegiance to the working class. Stokes Brown reiterates the bell hooks (2000) argument that class issues intertwine with race issues and have done so throughout history (hooks, 2000 as cited by Stokes Brown, 2002). Of her findings, the only traits held in common among all four participants were their high energy, good health, unusual optimism, and pronounced capacity for independent thinking.

Stokes Brown (2002) provides a historical snapshot of white racism, which offers a better understanding of what it took for four dissimilar individuals, within their distinct historical time and lived environments, to work against racism. These individuals exemplify the historical and courageous white figures that struggled against racism, when racism was overt and biologically justified; although racism today looks much different, this book reiterates the importance of seeking role models when engaging in racial justice ally action (Reason et al., 2005; Stokes Brown, 2002). An interesting life experience shared by the sample, yet left unexplored by the author, is the influence of college on

each participant's development into racial justice allies.

*Antiracism activist development model.* In her qualitative study of 30 antiracists O'Brien (2001), a sociologist, explored why some whites concede their power without demand and often put themselves in jeopardy by taking an interest in antiracism action. She asks the question, "What has motivated them to take a step which is unheard of for most whites?" She further states that "only a minimum of scholars have considered this question" (p. 18), which I also found to be true. In her multi-year study of a convenience sample of 30 participants selected from two racial justice action groups, People's Institute for Survival and Beyond and Anti-racist Action, O'Brien (2001) presents three main possible explanations for how and why whites become antiracism activists:

- Whites get involved in antiracist networks. Either they are involved in some other activist group (e.g., political, religious, environmental) or they have friends who are activists who convince them to go along.
- Whites must develop empathy for people of color by way of "approximating experiences." Either they do it by way of analogy to some oppression they have suffered ("overlapping approximations") by knowing a person of color and being witness to their suffering ("borrowed approximations") or by relating to their democratic principles ("global approximations"). Research done on this has been mostly with white women (Eichstedt, 2001; Feagin *et al.*, 2001; Hogan & Netzer, 1993) so it is unclear whether men are also motivated by empathy.
- A particular event in someone's life could serve as a "turning point" and the individual sees her or his antiracist transformation dating from that moment, "planting seeds," to describe these early memories. (p. 18)



These three areas considered in combination with each individual's environment, social status (especially gender), and life experiences motivated the 30 participants in her study to enlist in the difficult work of "privileged resistance" (O'Brien, 2001).

Although not focusing her work on college students and the experiences during college influencing their development as racial justice allies, these findings offer great insight into the process. The first explanation resembles the findings of Broido (1997) who found that membership in an organization devoted to social justice often translated into work in other areas, and peers were often the catalyst for their initial involvement in such activist groups. The second explanation fits into the literature which emphasizes the need for intercultural maturity and competence in order to adopt an antiracism perspective and translate that into an activist identity (Eichstedt, 2001; King & Baxter Magolda, 2001; King & Howard-Hamilton, 2003; King & Shuford, 1996). The third account very generally describes the memory of a defining moment or "turning point" (some might call an "ah-ha" moment or epiphany). This moment was often different for participants, but they all had one.

Unlike Broido (1997), O'Brien (2001), and Reason et al. (2005) who studied self-identified "allies," I selected the participants for this study to view racial justice ally development at a potentially formative point in time (as it occurred) rather than summative (after it occurred). I investigate the racial justice ally development process through a specific educational intervention to reveal its influence.

*Problematic white identities and racial justice.* Another scholar from sociology, Eichstedt (2001) makes claims based on exploratory interviews with 16 white antiracism activists ranging in age from 24 to 52, chosen using a convenience, snowball method.

This research is part of a larger project looking at “multiracial and monoracial activist groups that advocate for racial justice” (p. 448). The reason she chose this sample to explore further is the realization that these whites are the anomaly when considering the contemporary theorizing that focuses on individual interests as the primary motivator for mobilization. Goodman (2000) also noted pure self-interest as an unauthentic explanation for social justice action. This proves problematic since whites working against a system that gives them power and privilege appears to be the antithesis of self-interest, yet to motivate whites to work against the system that privileges them they must themselves become interested and committed to changing it.

Eichstedt (2001) points out the phenomenon of overrepresentation of women, gay men, lesbians, and Jewish people in antiracism work, which anecdotal evidence supports. Of the 16 participants she interviewed, two were white gay men, and 14 were white lesbians, and half of the lesbians were Jewish. Not only does this mean her sample is not representative, it supports the anecdotal evidence and helps show “that the ‘benefits’ of being white are not evenly distributed and that this uneven distribution of white privilege leads to different phenomenological relationships to ‘the fact of whiteness’” (p. 450). Eichstedt (2002) argues these differential relationships with whiteness strongly impact which whites choose to become antiracism activists.

From her research Eichstedt (2001) determined:

Managing a problematic identity presents a particular crisis for dominant group members who work in racial justice movements. While all movements must construct an identity around which participants may rally, white antiracism activists must undermine white identity and white supremacy while they

simultaneously must embrace their identification of themselves as white and unduly privileged. (p. 466)

The conditions causing white antiracism activist identities to be problematic are the simultaneous beliefs that “all whites are racist” and the essentialist, static notion of whiteness that must be deconstructed. They find themselves navigating between conflicting identities with no way out.

The “steps” used by Eichstedt’s (2001) participants to manage their white identities while being accepted as an activist for racial justice are as follows. Participants assumed an oppressor status (Delgado & Stefancic, 1997; Frankenberg, 1993; Giroux, 1997; Ortiz & Rhoads, 2000; Perry, 2001; Roediger, 2002), while balancing this negative identity with some positive constructions of self (Eichstedt, 2001; Giroux, 1997; Ortiz & Rhoads, 2000), such as connecting with a history of white resistance to racial oppression (Stokes Brown, 2002). They had to overcome white guilt in order to act at all. Fifteen of the 16 were involved in other activism prior to racial justice, which meant they created or already espoused an “activist frame.” This activist identity may have helped them move from an antiracism perspective, past feeling helpless in the face of a grim social issue, to action as an antiracism activist.

Not unexpectedly, Eichstedt’s (2001) participants also noted experiencing significant relationships with people of color and having “approximating experiences” of oppression (Hogan & Netzer, 1993). These approximating experiences also resulted in an analysis focusing on the abuse of power. They were able to move beyond seeing and connecting to their shared oppressive statuses and seeing the larger social structures they operate within where power and privilege are unequally distributed due to various

socially ascribed characteristics (Eichstedt, 2001). Lastly, they connected with other white activists and activists of color (i.e., support networks) to meaningfully locate themselves within the larger struggle for racial justice (Bishop, 2002; Broido, 2000; O'Brien, 2001; Reason et al., 2005; Tatum, 1994).

The research performed by Eichstedt (2001) strengthens many preexisting claims while expanding future consideration to exploring an individual's activist perspective and investigating the social identities of those drawn to racial justice activist work in the first place. Tangentially, I consider these extensions in this dissertation study, which differs significantly from Eichstedt's (2001) in population and context.

*A preliminary model of racial justice ally development.* Through further exploration and a narrowing of Broido's (1997) model, Reason, Roosa Millar, and Scales (2005) developed a preliminary model of racial justice ally development. Although our developmental model is currently under construction, after a yearlong pilot study and extensive analysis, it provides a solid and pilot-tested framework for beginning to understand how college influences the development of white students' racial justice attitudes and actions. As one of the three researchers working on the development of this model, I anticipated the current study would provide greater depth, understanding, and conceptual links of the process. This dissertation investigates a specific curriculum, unique learning environments, and a different set of white college students, assumed to have at least some interest in improving race relations.

The Reason, Roosa Millar, and Scales (2005) study originally consisted of two separate studies. When the data collected for each was analyzed together, it provided a preliminary model for racial justice ally development. Eleven white undergraduate

students volunteered for the first study (First-Year Study). Six first-year female students volunteered from a large introductory education course (EDTHP 115), and 5 first-year females volunteered from a purposefully designed multicultural living environment, which channeled students into a sociology course focused on race relations (Sociology 119). Three researchers, including myself, interviewed the participants during three separate occasions throughout the 2003 fall semester for approximately one hour per interview.

The second study (Ally Study) used a snowball-sampling technique to identify 15 white, upper-division, undergraduate students actively engaged on campus in racial justice activities: 12 women, and 3 men from the same predominantly white institution as the First-Year study. These students were interviewed by the principle investigator one time each for approximately one hour (Reason et al., 2005).

The findings that emerged from cross-comparative analysis of the interviews include the following differences between the two research groups. The Ally group participants' conceptualization of whiteness showed a greater understanding of power and privilege and what that means in relation to others than the First-Year group. The positive influences on their whiteness for both groups included and depended on their pre-college experiences, college coursework, and college cocurricular involvement. And their racial justice attitudes and actions (action beyond the individual level only reported by the Ally group) depended on their sense and comfort with whiteness, invitation and opportunity to act, support networks, and white racial justice role models (Reason et al., 2005).

In this dissertation I utilize the Reason, Roosa Millar, and Scales (2005)

preliminary model as a conceptual framework for exploring how white students experience an educational intervention and how that intervention influences their racial justice ally development. Because the racial justice ally development model is preliminary, it only offers descriptive categories and does not reveal conceptual ordering or “theory” as defined by Corbin and Strauss (1998). This dissertation research offers greater depth and understanding of the racial justice ally development process as it unfolds within an academic course. The context of the formal educational interventions, discussed at length within the following methods section, allows a unique conduit into the focus of this study: how white undergraduate students experience an intentionally designed racial justice curriculum, and how do these educational interventions influence their racial justice ally development. This research perspective differs somewhat from the Reason, Roosa Millar, and Scales (2005) study which asked students to retrospectively describe their experiences long after they were over. This proved difficult because most first-year college students reportedly reflect very little (King & Shuford, 1996). Students in this study struggled when asked questions they had never been asked to think about before, such as their race.

### *Conceptual Framework*

The conceptual categories that emerged from the Reason, Roosa Millar, and Scales (2005) pilot study provide the conceptual framework for this dissertation research. Although I did not limit myself to these concepts, they provided a foundation from which to explore the racial justice ally development process within a unique research context (described in detail in Chapter Three). The following presents the key concepts identified by Reason et al. (2005) in our preliminary model and definitions for each. The two

distinct categories, pre-college characteristics and college experiences are presented first followed by the concepts which emerged from the data gathered during the pilot study. The concepts which emerged during and due to college experiences lay the foundation for this dissertation study.

#### *Pre-college Characteristics*

Determining the salient characteristics each participant brings to the research study is essential to any exploration of a developmental process. Reason et al. (2005) specifically gathered data regarding the following areas to establish such a benchmark: the student's sense of whiteness; existing racial justice attitudes and/or action taken; structural diversity in high school; positive, intimate interaction with diverse others; "minority" experiences; and parental influence.

#### *Experiences during College*

The concepts evolving from the multiple interviews resulted in the following concepts related to the participant's experiences during college (data gathered from first-year to senior-level students). The following experiences influenced racial justice ally development: diverse friendships, intentionally diverse living arrangements, coursework related to race, "minority" experiences, support and white racial justice role models, level of racial justice actions, and invitation and opportunity (Reason et al., 2005). Therefore, in addition to the intercultural maturity theoretical framework discussed previously, I incorporated the concepts of whiteness, "minority" experiences, support and white racial justice role models, invitation and opportunity, and educational interventions (focusing on coursework), into the framework for this dissertation. The concepts adopted from the Reason et al. (2005) study are defined in the following sections.

*Whiteness.* Reason et al. (2005) use Giroux's (1997) concept of "whiteness" to signify "respondents' understandings of what it means to be White in contemporary society...how their own identities have been shaped within a broader racist culture and the responsibilities Whites assume because they live in a society that privileges them based on their racial features" (p. 314). From the pilot results, we determined that the participants' sense of whiteness was related to their attitudes toward people of color, and their level of racial justice action. Similarly, I explored the participant's understanding of their racial identity (whiteness), how their racial identity shapes their view of themselves and the world, and what they feel their role is in challenging the privilege allotted them because of their skin color.

*"Minority" experiences.* Reason et al. (2005) found that "students who were able to recall situations in which they were numerical minorities while in college were more apt to have reflected upon their Whiteness...this 'minority experience' often occurred within the context of friendship groups and focused only on race" (p. 19). The participants in this pilot study also reported "approximating and/or overlapping experiences" (Hogan & Netzer, 1993) that influenced reflection and increased consciousness of their racial identity as whites. And in turn, this increased their awareness of their white privilege, causing them to think about their roles as racial justice allies.

*Support and white racial justice role models.* The Reason et al. (2005) pilot study strengthened the claim that finding like-minded others to draw support, provide and interpret information (Broido, 2000), and overcome obstacles and challenges to maintaining racial justice action (O'Brien, 2001) is an important part of becoming a racial



justice ally. Support from white role models was especially important for students just beginning to reflect on their whiteness (Reason et al., 2005).

*Invitation and opportunity.* Broido (2000) found that an invitation into social justice action was necessary for many of the participants in her study. Reason et al. (2005) also found this phenomenon when the Ally participants reported close friends or trusted individuals invited them into racial justice actions, or another opportunity served as the impetus for such behavior.

*Educational interventions.* Reason, et al. (2005) found that coursework related to race, particularly coursework focused on race relations, positively influenced a student's sense of whiteness. Additionally, "First-year students not in a race relations course rarely reflected on what it meant to be White or the influence of race in society" (p. 16). None of the first-year students indicated any plans for studying race or racial issues while in college.

Another intriguing finding from the pilot—and support for this study which explores the experiences of whites who completed Sociology 119, *Race and Ethnic Relations*—was that all students who identified as "allies" for the Ally Study took the class during their time at Penn State. This dissertation further investigated the outcomes of this course, which seemed to be a powerful educational intervention, and potentially offers insight into what makes it a powerful medium for the development of racial justice attitudes and behaviors.

Further findings from the pilot suggested that students who applied the course content to cocurricular experiences reported significant racial attitude changes reflected in an increase in positive feelings about people of color. Other cocurricular experiences

found to be influential on the students' sense of whiteness (occurring concurrently with SOC 119) were diverse residence halls, and discussions about the course topics with other students outside of class, especially students of color. The pilot results drive my decision not to exclude from this study the other involvement the participants relate to their experiences learning about race and race relations, but my focus is primarily on the influence of SOC 300 on their development as racial justice allies.

### Chapter Summary and Transition

Higher education institutions must visibly dedicate themselves to ensuring marginalized students feel they “matter” (Cuyjet, 1998). The public presence of racial justice allies on a campus with an outward commitment to fostering a more integrated campus community would send just such a message to students of color. The institution must change, starting with the historically overrepresented white students. Building a community of difference (Tierney, 1993), where prejudice and racism do not exist, requires action from all members of the community, whites and people of color alike (Radloff & Evans, 2003).

This chapter further elucidated the problem under investigation, revealed what was missing from the literature, and established a theoretical foundation for this study. The literature review explored the many sources within multiple disciplines and fields of study and garnered support for the study of the development of racial justice allies as a potential avenue for combating racism and illuminating how this developmental process occurred for white college students enrolled in a SOC 300. The literature included a wide spectrum of social science investigations including empirically tested research, theory and practice-based writings, and synthesized information located primarily within higher

education and sociological scholarship. The literature reviewed incorporated the following thematic structures: (1) racial diversity in higher education; (2) educational experiences and interventions affecting racial diversity attitudes and racial bias; (3) student development theory and models; and (4) social and racial justice ally development.

In the next chapter I present the overall qualitative paradigm used for this study including a discussion of the case study research design, data collection methods, and the grounded theory approach to analysis. The components correspond to those described by Arminio and Hultgren (2002) as elements essential to “goodness” in qualitative research and give a thorough account of the meaning making process necessary for systematic qualitative research.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

The following chapter presents the overall qualitative paradigm used for this study. This includes the case study research design, data collection methods, and the grounded theory approach to analysis. The components presented here correspond to those described by Arminio and Hultgren (2002) as elements essential to “goodness” in qualitative research. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the following elements that demonstrate the meaning making process necessary for thorough and systematic qualitative research: (1) epistemological and theoretical foundations; (2) researcher reflexivity; (3) methodology; (4) research site and data collection methods; (5) analysis and interpretation; and (6) ethical considerations and trustworthiness.

#### *Epistemological and Theoretical Foundations*

My role as researcher, data collection instrument, analyst, and interpreter of the results necessitate I reveal the assumptions, values, and biases I bring to the research (Merriam, 1998), which inevitably shaped the way I understood and interpreted the data. A qualitative research methodology fit my understanding that “meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world” (Merriam, 2002, p. 1). Therefore, I expose in this chapter the constructivist and critical stances from which I approach this study: a critical constructivist orientation that opposes objectivity and resists the status quo. Strauss and Corbin (1998) define objectivity as “the ability to achieve a certain degree of distance from the research materials and to represent them

fairly; the ability to listen to the words of respondents and give them a voice independent of that of the researcher” (p. 35). Although effectively representing the voices of the participants by presenting the data in their words, I slightly modified this grounded theory convention of objectivity by incorporating my critical constructivist orientation, which values subjectivity and reflexivity above objectivity.

The critical orientation I espouse is rooted in critical social theory, more specifically, within an area of sociological scholarship called antiracist social theory (Feagin & Vera, 2001, p. 215). Feagin and Vera explain that antiracist social theory is not reserved for scholars of color; rather it incorporates scholarship from white sociologists such as Eileen O'Brien (2001). This exemplifies the sociology discipline's evolutionary response to increased diversity in society and academe. Feagin and Vera (2001) characterize this post-positivist liberation sociology as

...concerned with alleviating or eliminating various social oppressions and with creating societies that are more just and egalitarian societies. [...] An emancipatory sociology not only seeks sound scientific knowledge but also takes sides with, and takes the outlook of, the oppressed and envisions an end to that oppression. It adopts what Gideon Sjoberg and his associates have called a *countersystem* (italics in original) approach. A countersystem analyst consciously tries to step outside her or his society in order to better view it. A countersystem perspective often envisions a society where people have empathetic [SIC] compassion for human suffering and a commitment to reducing that suffering. It envisions research and analysis relevant to everyday human problems, particularly those of the oppressed. (p. 1)

Critical social theories are “those frameworks that involve theorizing that is particularly useful for human emancipation and liberation” (Feagin & Vera, 2001, p. 201). Antiracist social theory originated from early sociologists such as W.E.B. Du Bois and Anna Julia Cooper among others, who “began probing U.S. racism as more than a matter of racial prejudice or fringe extremists. They saw racism as a centuries-long, deep-lying institutionalized system of racial exclusion and violence” (p. 216). Antiracist theory generally attempts to facilitate human action against racist attitudes and practices, which relates directly to the outcomes of racial justice ally development. And like the focus of racial justice ally development, white antiracist sociologists such as O’Brien have empirically studied white antiracism activism in an attempt to help whites move toward action against racism, which are my hopes for this dissertation.

I recognize an emancipatory agenda that undergirds my research. I anticipated the process of conducting this study, as well as the results if put into practice, could influence social change efforts through actively challenging the status quo (Merriam, 2002). Therefore, it was impossible and undesirable for me to achieve distance from the research materials, set aside my action agenda, and exclude what I have learned through my life experiences and participation in this and other research on racial justice ally development. With this said, I deliberately did not stifle the voices of the respondents nor let mine overpower theirs’. Rather, I paid close attention to actively listening and representing the participants fairly. During the interviewing process I often challenged participants to explore potentially uncomfortable issues at a deep provocative level as I sought “not just to study and understand society but rather to critique and change society” (Patton, 2002, p. 131). Although my intent as an aspiring racial justice ally is to promote

racial equality, the voices of those who may see racial justice issues differently than I do are also powerful and offer valuable insight into the potential challenges to developing antiracism behaviors. Therefore, those voices were not omitted nor diluted during this investigation. Ultimately, it was through these disconfirming voices that the study remained authentic, took its final shape, and generated trustworthy results.

### *Researcher Reflexivity*

My choice of topic and research methodology directly relate to what initially called me to this study, my personal journey as a racial justice ally. I believe the intellectual and emotional challenges of issues surrounding race, racism, and whiteness triggered my interests and brought me to this research project. Much like the experiences of the participants in this study, my journey did not begin until my colorblind ideology was challenged in a course by a trusted role model. Unfortunately for me, this transformative moment did not happen until well into my 30s, and fortunately for most of the students in this study it began early in their 20s. Perhaps serendipitously, the same faculty member who challenged my colorblindness invited me to conduct an exploratory literature review on social justice allies. He was the trusted other who ignited my interest in this topic. The opportunity, support, challenge, and role modeling he provided sustained the fire along with my conviction to personal and social change through education.

The research project that emerged from the exploratory literature review mentioned previously, in tandem with other race-related experiences over the past three years, called me to a racial justice research agenda. As I soon discovered while immersing myself in critical social literature, I lacked awareness about race, racism, and

my role as a white person socialized within a racist culture. Once I began to develop as a racial justice ally through academic means, my personal growth as an ally, educator, and scholar soon followed.

I partially attribute this growth to working on a racially diverse research team with Reason and Scales (2005), as we began conceptualizing how racial justice allies develop during college. Through three diverse lenses we explored issues of whiteness, race, and racism from both the racially privileged and non-privileged perspectives. During this time, I faced complex feelings of conflict, frustration, and challenge stemming from my struggle to unlearn and heal from my internalized racial bias and unconscious racism that has been socially constructed throughout my lifetime, while simultaneously trying to navigate and find balance in my intellectual and emotional life as an aspiring racial justice ally. The personal interactions with the person of color on the research team evolved from a collegial working relationship into a friendship; an interracial friendship that enabled authentic, empathic, and often times challenging dialogue around difficult issues.

Research related issues similar to those experienced in our earlier work also arose throughout this study. However, they were different because I felt my development since our original study changed. In our earlier work, I was a racial insider as a white person, yet a pseudo-outsider as a white who was entrenched in the *academic* pursuit of understanding issues of race and becoming a racial justice ally. In doing so I had feelings of being the “good” white vs. the participants who I saw as the “bad” whites, of whom I was expected to withhold judgment. At times the interviews were frustrating, yet somehow affirming because I felt as if I was “getting it” and they were not. Throughout



this dissertation, withholding judgment happened much more naturally. I no longer placed essentialist labels on the participants and accepted the endlessness of the developmental journey. Also, my struggle to become a racial justice ally was no longer purely academic.

In hindsight, I realized that the reactions toward the participants discussed above stemmed from my white guilt; guilt from not becoming racially conscious sooner, not understanding racism, and not accepting my role and responsibility as an ally. It was not until after our initial study was completed and our first article submitted for publication that I realized the emotive piece was missing from my understanding of issues of race.

The realization that I still felt white guilt propelled my academic pursuit of understanding my role as a white ally even further. Once discovered, the guilt turned into an inner struggle and challenge to learn more, to try and “wrap my head around it” in order to understand, which was impossible for me at this point because I was resisting allowing my emotional and spiritual self to play a role. Until this time, I was not being authentic at the level necessary for me to become and sustain an active role in dismantling racism.

Through thoughtful reflection and an eye-opening experience at the White Privilege Conference in April 2005, my heart joined my head in the struggle to unlearn internalized racism. What followed was the intense soul-searching necessary for me to come to terms with the level of commitment I required of myself to research race and begin living as a racial justice ally. I am now better able to empathize, connect, and relate to the participants in my study because it was not much earlier that I had begun my exploration into my racial identity and my part in perpetuating systemic racism. Now, I

can say I have accepted and am committed to my calling as an ally for racial and social justice. I am at peace with myself in knowing this struggle *is* mine and I am confident in my commitment to it.

### *Methodology*

The nature of the research problem and ensuing questions drove my choice of selecting a qualitative research tradition. This research seeks to understand a developmental process where many unexplored emotions and value-laden beliefs exist about racism, a taboo and often avoided topic for most whites. Marshall and Rossman (1999) suggest the use of a qualitative methodology in exploring a complex problem, where little is known about it, and relevant variables have not yet been identified, which is the case for the process of racial justice ally development.

The process of racial justice ally development is conceivably parallel to that of social justice allies, complex and modestly understood. The individuals experiencing the process are inherently complex—developing in their multiple identities—as are the social and relational dynamics that occur as individuals interact with people from various social groups. Also, a minimally explored problem unique to ally development lies in the conflict arising from the socially dominant group’s involvement in activism with the target group. As a white ally, the complexity of realizing that as a white person, a member of the dominant “oppressive” racial group, you could become an outcast from the white social group once you are allied with the socially marginalized. And, you could potentially be unwelcome by the people of color you are “trying to help” (Stokes Brown, 2002). Therefore, a qualitative methodology provided the best avenue of inquiry, which when properly employed seeks “to obtain the intricate details about phenomena such as

feelings, thought processes, and emotions that are difficult to extract or learn through more conventional research methods” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 11).

Case study research methods were used to explore each individual as a particular and complex single case in order to understand their activity within the specified circumstances (Stake, 1995). This approach draws from “naturalistic, holistic, ethnographic, phenomenological, and biographic research methods” (p. xi). I utilized collective case studies in order to compare and contrast their similarities and differences as I explored the process of racial justice ally development in relation to each student’s lived experience within SOC 300, which represents the unit of analysis.

#### *Research Site and Data Collection Methods*

The research site was the same institution used in the Reason et al. (2005) study, which is a large, predominantly white, research university located in central Pennsylvania, the University Park Campus of the Pennsylvania State University (Penn State-UP). In order to study the influence of educational interventions on the development of racial justice allies at a predominantly white institution, I felt it was important to choose a university or college that is seemingly making a concerted effort to address racism on campus. Penn State-UP claims to be making such an effort, according to their *2004-2009 Framework to Foster Diversity* (2005) and the existing formal and informal educational interventions available on campus such as: multicultural living environments, diversity courses, peer-facilitated dialogues, and workshops and trainings like those provided by the Race Relations Project.

Another salient reason for selecting a predominantly white institution was the perceived existence of a “colorblind” culture, especially among first-year undergraduates

as revealed in the Reason et al. (2005) study. Many of the white students interviewed in the study revealed characteristics held by what appears to be the status quo perspective of late-adolescent whites from predominantly white regions. They did not consider racism a white problem. Personally, they claimed they saw and treated “everyone the same” at Penn State-UP regardless of skin color or race. It was also not uncommon to hear backlash from the white students who said there was no longer a need for Affirmative Action and that whites were victims of discriminatory practices by the institution because of their race.

### *Sociology 300 Educational Intervention*

To get as close as possible to the lived experiences of the participants, the results and findings were grounded in their empirical worlds (Patton, 2002). It was from these perspectives that I analyzed and interpreted the students’ experiences as they reportedly lived them. More specifically, I studied the racial justice ally development process as it occurred within the learning contexts under investigation to better understand the experiences of the participants through their voices.

*History of the course.* Originally, the discussion groups for SOC 119 emerged out of a need to provide guided discussions of what was being presented in the lectures. As the course grew and more optional discussion sections were added, more undergraduate “group leaders” were needed. Dr. Richards (Sam), the SOC 119 professor, recruited Dr. Mulvey (Laurie) to assist with the discussion groups because of her background in Social Work and experience “doing group work.” At first she met with the group leaders sporadically to help them with their discussion groups. Soon, the discussion groups were integrated into the course and became a required part of the experience. Laurie then met

with the facilitators once a week, which in 2003 became the three-hour Sociology 300 (SOC 300) intergroup dialogue course it is today.

Sociology 300 is the primary training class for students who have been selected to be undergraduate teaching assistants for Sociology 119. Under the supervision of Dr. Laurie Mulvey, the teaching assistants participate in a weekly experiential training seminar while concurrently co-facilitating two weekly sections of SOC 119. During the seminar, the student facilitators explore group dynamics and facilitation techniques (such as the Socratic Method), as well as concerns, challenges and successes they are having with their own discussion groups. This forum creates a peer-to-peer learning dynamic for the teaching assistants which is meant to parallel and support their work in the SOC 119 discussion sections. Unlike SOC 119, SOC 300 shifts the focus from the understanding the sociology of race relations, to active engagement in the process of helping others to find their own voice in the dialogue. ("Race Relations Project", 2005)

Laurie described the evolution of the course as an “experimental process;” through trial and error the course has taken shape and continues to evolve. When asked in a formal interview what the learning outcomes were for the class she explained:

Ideally, I want to see people hearing things that they’ve never heard before, or allowing themselves to be transformed...by other people’s experiences. And also...somehow people start to become friendly with one another. ...taking yourself out of what you always knew the world to be. The other thing that I definitely see is people—I’m not sure if this applies more to white students—just *getting* a voice. Finally being able to say “no, this is what I actually see” and I can

put it into words and I'm finding a way to communicate back and forth on very sensitive things. Learning how to talk about these things, it's like learning another language. I think I see it with students of color too, but it requires white students to be more vocal. Definitely watching people get a voice is really good. We work with so many first year students in the Race Relations Project...it's utterly painful for me to watch the way a whole group of people can talk for 90 minutes without talking at all because they know that they can't talk about [racism] because they don't know about it. It's not on their radar screen. They're worried they are going to say shit that they know is controversial, but they just don't know what it is. So they don't say anything, but yet they have to talk for 90 minutes. It's just the most painful thing to watch.

The focus of this dissertation is on the intentionally designed racial justice curriculum consisting of the SOC 119 and SOC 300 experiences. However, the Race Relations Project is important to note because the facilitators from SOC 119, after completing SOC 300, are often selected to be trained as facilitators for the Race Relations Project (SOC 497A), which is a paid internship that includes a weekly seminar and project meeting (see Appendix E). Laurie fondly referred to the additional training the SOC 300 teaching assistants received once selected for the Race Relations Project as the "farm team" (SOC 497E). Worth mentioning here is that two of the participants from this study joined the "farm team" after completing SOC 300 in the fall. Unlike a formal course, the Race Relations Project is a peer-facilitated diversity program offered most commonly as a one-time experience within courses, or for faculty, staff, and student groups. It is housed in the College of Liberal Arts and is sponsored by Educational

Equity, Student Affairs, Residence Life, Undergraduate Education, and numerous colleges throughout the institution.

SOC 300 was the primary educational intervention from which the data was gleaned for this study. It is a formal elective course designed to support and train peer-facilitators (teaching assistants) for SOC 119 discussion groups. The SOC 119 seminar is a relatively small discussion-based component of a large lecture-style course, SOC 119 *Race and Ethnic Relations*,” which is also a prerequisite for facilitating the seminars. In earlier years, the teaching assistants (TAs) for the SOC 119 discussion groups would recommend students from the class to be TAs the following semester, based primarily on the criteria that they will be “naturally facilitative.” Now, the process of becoming a TA includes an application and interview. Thus, those who are not recommended can apply to be TAs although it rarely happens. The SOC 300 course provides training and support for them as they facilitate small group discussions, in pairs, two times per week for the duration of a semester.

### *Participant Selection*

Since coming to Penn State in 2002 as a graduate student and beginning my transformative journey as a racial justice ally, I established relationships with the key gatekeepers for this study (Dr. Sam Richards and Dr. Laurie Mulvey). Additionally, during the research project with Reason and Scales, I experienced SOC 119 for myself through an independent study with Sam during my second year. This opportunity further incited my interest in the work Sam and Laurie were doing, especially as it related to the development of racial justice allies during college.

Sam and Laurie were critical in gaining access to the participants in the study and

Laurie assisted with the recruitment of participants from the white students in the two sections of SOC 300. Respondents were purposefully selected based primarily on the criteria of maximizing what I can learn from each case (Stake, 1995). More specific criterion for the study included cases with certain characteristics such as they self-identified as members of the “white race” and were at least 18 years old (IRB requirement). Laurie allowed me to personally visit each of her two SOC 300 sections, where I asked for volunteers for this study. Those who were interested in learning more about the study provided me their contact information and I later contacted them electronically with further details.

Of those matching the criteria, ten cases were originally selected and interviewed for this study. One participant was later removed from consideration due to his unique racial background as a multiracial person who appeared white, which presented problems when performing cross-case comparisons with the other participants. He experienced issues of race and whiteness much differently than the other whites although he identified as white. Throughout our interviews he revealed the problematic nature of racial categorization which complicates the developmental process of becoming a racial justice ally. Although his case was removed from the analysis for this study, his unique situation as it relates to racial justice ally development should be considered for further investigation.

Laurie shared that the SOC 300 course is deliberately racially and culturally heterogeneous; half of the students are white and the other half are of color. She stated, “I have 16 spots for white students and 16 spots for students of color; so, white students compete against white students for 16 spots and students of color compete against



students of color because it has to be multicultural.” She further stated that the reason it has to be multicultural is because of the following:

I think that the students in SOC 300 who are challenging other people [students in SOC 119 discussion groups] and who are in a position of dealing with whatever issues students in their discussion groups bring up, I think they need to be challenged [themselves]. And so I think they need to be with as many different perspectives as possible.

The respondent’s understanding of her or his gender, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, age, physical ability, and racial characteristics were carefully collected and documented. This is also important because of the potential effects such characteristics may have on a participant’s development as a racial justice ally (Broido, 2000; O’Brien, 2001; Reason, 2005). Also, because the SOC 300 course is an extension of SOC 119, is elective, and the selection process is rather rigorous, I presumed the participants were ostensibly dedicated, or at a minimum *interested* in improving race relations on campus and racial inequality in society, which was confirmed during the investigation.

#### *Data Collection Methods*

Once all of the research respondents were identified and agreed to participate, I ensured complete confidentiality as defined by the Office of Research Protections. Due to the sensitivity of the topic, it was critical that I gained the trust and created and maintained a rapport with the participants and the instructor, who I met with two times during the course of the study. I briefly explained to the participants the overall project and the time commitment necessary to complete the data collection, which included one observation during a SOC 119 discussion groups and two extensive interviews, with one

additional wrap-up interview after the in-class observation. Once they agreed to participate by signing two copies of the informed consent form (see Appendix A), they completed a participant data sheet (see Appendix B) with general demographic information. Although observation is traditionally the primary data collection method in case study research (Stake, 1995) I collected the data for this study using semi-structured interviews (refer to Appendix C for initial interview protocol) with the observations serving more as a measure of trustworthiness. Through the observations, I was able to test the consistency of what the respondents were reporting and my initial understandings of each individual. If any inconsistencies between what they were reporting, my understanding of how they would behave, and the way they actually did behave during the observation, these would be noted and investigated further in the final interview.

*Interviews.* As a way of assisting the reader to make naturalistic generalizations of the analysis I provided opportunities for vicarious experiences through the narrative accounts shared by the participants during our interviews (Stake, 1995). Interviewing played a central role in the data collection within this case study approach (Creswell, 1998). Interviews with participants allowed me to discover and portray the multiple views of each case as she or he experienced the problem or phenomenon under investigation (Stake, 1995).

In particular, I used feminist interviewing techniques to understand the lived experiences of the participants as they perceived them. Some specific characteristics of the feminist interview, which I employed, include the following: feminist interviews should be engaged, interactive, non-hierarchical, create long-lasting relationships, and more like conversations than traditional interview styles (Bloom, 1998). As a result of

using feminist interview techniques, a reciprocally reflective process occurred. Although focused mostly on the stories shared by the participants, the feminist approach forced me to retell sometimes personal, painful, and revealing experiences during the course of an interview in order to promote a non-hierarchical relationship with the participant. This led me to further explore my journey as a racial justice ally while exploring theirs. I believe that the interviews would not have been as fruitful, nor would the reflections create the powerful intrapersonal learning opportunities they did, had I not used this feminist approach. Most of the participants confirmed in our final interviews that they felt an increased awareness about themselves by sharing how these conversations encouraged them to reflect. Amaya stated,

Whenever I'm asked to speak for a long amount of time I start reflecting on my own opinions and seeing where they derive from, and then I take the next couple days and think about it and see how my actions are following with what I had told you about or spoken about. So, it definitely creates a greater sense of awareness about how I feel and why.

Nate shared how participating in this research assisted him in exploring his motivations for wanting to participate in race relations dialogues,

It made me think more about my motives as to why I'm doing things, because before I was just doing things because it was interesting—it was what I wanted to do—I never thought about *why* I wanted to do it before. So, you asking me “why are you doing this” made me think about well, “why am I doing this?” I think that that was probably the biggest thing for me was just questioning why I was doing it, but not questioning it in a bad way. (Nate)

Feminist inquiry techniques suited the overall research design because I was trying to understand the complexities of a process lived by complex and multidimensional participants. Feminist methodologists value an individual's nonunitary subjectivity, viewing individuals as relational, dynamic, multiple, and fragmented. Thus, the interviews and feminist interviewing approach allowed these subjectivities to emerge and be fully explored.

### *Analysis and Interpretation*

The analysis of the data provided the depth and understanding necessary to address the research questions and generate a substantive theory. Substantive theory is specific to a group or place (Strauss & Corbin, 1998); in this instance, I sought to develop a theory of racial justice ally development among white students experiencing an intentionally designed racial justice curriculum at a predominantly white research institution (Penn State-UP).

Stake (1995) defines the researcher's role in the analysis process as taking impressions and observations apart. Researchers use this process to make sense of the data they have diligently gathered during observations and interviews. The data analysis for this study focused on understanding the meanings that respondents made from their experiences within SOC 119, SOC 300, being white undergraduate students within the college environment, and the relationships they constructed between those experiences and the outcomes under investigation (racial justice attitudes and actions). The analysis process systematically and exhaustively exposed the underlying themes, teased out relationships, probed issues, and aggregated categorical data of the lived experiences of the participants (Stake, 1995).

In order for the researcher to capture the essence of the interviews, she must be conscious of her preconceptions and withhold premature judgments in order to understand the experiences of the participants. Throughout the analysis phase of this study, I used memos to document and track my sense making and interpretations of the data as they unfolded. Further, I used these memos to inform my interpretations which evolved as I edited the transcripts, coded, and performed grounded theory analysis of the data.

Because interviewing is a common methodological approach to gathering data on the lived experiences of participants, it is conventionally accepted that the researcher remove her bias (Creswell, 1998). However, I believe it is difficult if not impossible to *remove* bias, especially when considering my critical constructivist orientation as discussed earlier. Therefore, I feel it is more important that the researcher critically scrutinizes her *judgments*, which was surprisingly difficult at times and proved unsettling not only during the interviews but during the analysis of the transcripts.

The need to examine critically one's judgments is another justification for the use of memos to ensure trustworthiness to the greatest degree possible (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Through multiple iterations of my reflective memos I was able to catch misinterpretations, preconceived judgments, and personal biases, and adjust or remove them. The interpretation of each individual experience included a synthesis of findings, in which I summarized what each participant reported in relation to the others in the study. This cross-case analysis resulted in a heightened understanding of the process of how SOC 300 influenced racial justice ally development.

The Reason, Roosa Millar, and Scales (2005) preliminary conceptual framework

provided this study with some initial coding categories which I drew from during the analysis of the data. Beginning with these concepts enabled this research to go deeper and revealed new and richer results. Additionally, as a framework for analyzing the data I employed a grounded theory method which provided a tangible process—although not structured, static, or rigid—for analysis and interpretation of the data when compared to other traditions of qualitative research.

Put simply, the procedures for coding consist of “*conceptualizing and reducing data, elaborating categories in terms of properties and dimensions, and relating through a series of propositional statements. Conceptualizing, reducing, elaborating, and relating are often referred to as coding*” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 12). Data analysis and interpretation form an iterative process characterized by repetition, recurrence, and reiteration. According to the grounded theory methods established by Corbin and Strauss there are three major types of coding tools: open, axial, and selective. Open coding is the descriptive process of identifying concepts based on their properties and dimensions as they emerge from the data. Next, “axial” coding which gets its name because the process occurs around the axis of a category; in this coding stage, the categories are linked at the level of properties and dimensions that relate the categories to the subcategories. Finally, selective coding occurs where the theory is integrated and refined.

The following presents the grounded analysis process used for coding and analyzing the transcripts. First, while describing the process as it unfolded in this study I supply a narrative description of the themes as recommended by Harry, Sturges, and Klingner (2005). I conclude with a conceptual representation (Figure **Error! Reference source not found.**) summarizing the systematic approach for explaining the phenomenon

under investigation. The analysis map is read from the bottom up, signifying the inductive process of grounded analysis. The row headings are in bold type and contained in the first column (open codes, categories, themes, and interrelating the explanations). The column headings, also in bold, are located in the top row (learner, learning contexts, and outcomes).

Using QSR NVivo version 2.0 I established the 32 open codes (see Appendix D for full list of codes) representing the key points and initial concepts created or reinforced by the participants during the interviews. Within the Learner column, some open codes included areas of personal development such as, whiteness, political/social justice, and gender identity. Open codes representing the learner as they experienced the varying Learning Contexts included: opportunity/invitation, perceptions of Laurie, and actionable space. I also developed a matrix of the participant attributes separate from the open codes which added to the demographic profile for each participant and is integrated into the participant self-portraits (see Chapter Four; matrix available from author upon request).

Conceptual categorization groups open codes into categories which show the range of information on the topic (see Appendix D for categories, category labels, and themes). This process determines dominant categories; condenses, clarifies and rearranges codes; and tests codes against data as the researcher continually codes, analyzes, and compares the data from the multiple participants. Through this process of comparison, the codes were condensed and new codes developed as commonalities and distinctions among meanings of similar data points become clearer. To document this process I created a coding memo which I continually added to and revised. First, after each participant's transcript was coded then, as the codes became more refined only when

necessary. The coding memo provided documentation of how the analysis process evolved from open codes, to themes, then resulting in an interrelated explanation of the influence of SOC 300 on racial justice ally development.

Next, I developed the themes embedded in the conceptual categories by determining which categories were predominant in the data, summarizing the content, identifying various types of data, and reflecting on the content of the predominant categories and determining the main arguments within each. Once established, the themes were repeatedly tested against the data to determine the extent that the participant perspectives supported the themes. The eight themes that ultimately emerged from the 32 codes are the learner's Developmental Complexity/Intercultural Maturity, Invitation/Opportunity, Intergroup Dialogue, "Minority" Experiences, Support and Racial Justice Role Models, Interracial Interactions and Racially Diverse Friendships, Facilitation Experience, and Racial Justice Actions.

Interpreting these explanations of participants' experiences requires the researcher produce conclusions about any contradictions within an explanation or determine how the explanations interrelate especially when no causal relationship is found (Harry et al., 2005). When comparing across the explanations emerging from this study I did not find any single factor that accounted for the phenomenon of racial justice ally development. Rather, like Reason et al. (2005) found in their study the analysis and interpretation of the findings reaffirmed the assumption that a combination of variables in a specific context influences such development. This underscores the difficulty in measuring complex social processes such as racial justice ally development during college.

Corbin and Strauss describe substantive theory as "a set of explanations that account for



phenomena within a specific substantive field” unlike “formal theory” which holds across similar settings (as cited in Harry et al., 2005, p. 10). In this study, the set of explanations accounting for the influences of SOC 300 on racial justice ally development are only relevant within specific substantive fields such as intergroup dialogue courses with an experiential component focused on race relations. To develop a formal theory other settings would need to be tested using different participants. The complexity of the findings reinforce that the problem of engaging whites in antiracism efforts must be understood as requiring a complex set of influences that include aspects of a multitude of explanations ranging from childhood values to “minority” experiences during college.

	<b>Learner</b>	<b>Learning Contexts</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
<b>Interrelating the explanations</b>	Characteristics of the learner’s developmental complexity i.e., intercultural maturity	Distinctive educational conditions found within the learning contexts of the SOC 300 educational intervention: intergroup dialogue with a facilitation experience	Indicators of racial justice ally development
<b>Themes</b>	Intercultural Maturity	Invitation and opportunity Intergroup Dialogue Facilitation experience “Minority” experiences Support and white racial justice role models Interracial interactions & racially diverse friendships	Level of racial justice actions
<b>Categories</b>	Cognitive Intrapersonal <i>Whiteness</i> Interpersonal	<i>Educational Spaces/Interventions</i> Dialogic space Actionable space RJA role models Friendships/Diverse interactions “Minority” experiences Opportunity/Invitation	Racial justice ally actions
<b>Open codes</b>	Affective/Empathy Cognitive Gender identity Political/Social justice Whiteness	Dialogic space Actionable space SOC 300: Intergroup Dialogue SOC 300: Facilitating SOC 119 RJA role models Friendships/Diverse interactions “Minority” experiences Opportunity/Invitation	Facilitator/TA role Perspective on RJA development RJA continuum

Figure 1: Data Analysis Map (read from bottom up)

Some of the challenges, dilemmas, and limitations presented during the data analysis phase of this study stem from the grounded theory method. The essence of grounded theory is its inductiveness, therefore it requires the researcher approach the topic with relative neutrality because the main goal is to describe and understand patterns rather than evaluate them. The challenge I faced was in paying close attention to my personal biases, which I have done through the use of reflective memos. This enabled me to bridge the gap between the extant knowledge I brought to the research and that which I found grounded in the data.

Coding memos, reflective memos, and reflective journaling allowed for an ongoing analysis of my reflections while I simultaneously analyzed the interview transcripts. Thus, many of my biases were revealed and taken into consideration during the analysis process. This reflective process also captured how I—the research instrument—changed throughout the data gathering timeframe. Reflecting on my development as a racial justice ally throughout the study and applying this new knowledge in other contexts not only increased my self-awareness but most importantly, it increased my understandings of the experiences shared by the participants.

#### *Ethical Considerations and Trustworthiness*

The ethical issues I considered and addressed to satisfy the Human Subjects Review Committee were ensuring participant confidentiality and making sure resources for emotional distress that may arise from the interviews were provided in the consent form. My ethical obligation as a researcher to educate participants regarding issues of racism when appropriate was also taken into account beforehand. Although not educating in any formal authoritative manner, I thoughtfully challenged the participants' views and

felt minimal resistance when doing so. I found out in our last interview that many of the participants reported appreciating the opportunity to think deeper about their beliefs, thus did not react negatively to my probing questions. Perhaps their positive reactions to such personal questions were related to their unique interest in improving race relations and their willingness to engage in difficult dialogues about race on a personal level. Further, the participants did not appear hesitant to give me advice, push me to think deeper, and question my beliefs just as I did theirs. I believe that the feminist interview style allowed a mutual rapport to develop which is necessary to openly communicate about difficult issues in a non-hierarchical manner.

The following efforts were taken to ensure the participant's identities remained confidential: aliases were selected by each participant and maintained in all interviews; transcriptions and field notes only referred to the participants using their aliases; and tapes were kept in a secure home office location and will be destroyed at a period after the study. An unexpected ethical dilemma did surface that relates directly to the assurance of confidentiality. When I sent the transcripts and Chapter Four to the participants for a member check, one student felt I breached the confidentiality agreement by disclosing her hometown and other demographic information which could allow other readers familiar with her situation to identify her. The ethical dilemma was how to honor her concerns, even though I believe I had not broken the confidentiality agreement. However, because the information was not critical to understanding the participants or the topic under investigation, I eliminated the data she had concerns with from all of the participant profiles. This seemed to satisfy her because I did not hear from her again. In hindsight, I should have realized such specifics were unnecessary and replaced the town

names with size and regional descriptors, which was important to the study. Also, I should have been more thoughtful to the special circumstances of this individual. As a survivor of domestic abuse, she required certain accommodations that the others did not. Although I was not aware of the reaction she would have to seeing our conversation on paper, I will take what I have learned from this situation into all of my future research where complex human participants are involved. I may suggest under the same circumstances, participants reconsider partaking in a study given their experiences rather than risk causing them any further distress. Ultimately, the participant must decide.

### *Trustworthiness*

Satisfactory qualitative research depends upon trustworthiness, which simply refers to the “correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation, or other sort of account” (Maxwell, 1996, p. 87). A study is considered trustworthy if the researcher’s choice of procedures are sufficiently explicit and the research standards are appropriate to the study (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). If the research process and the empirical grounding of the research findings are adequate the study may be deemed by the readers as credible. I have thoroughly described the research process and my stance as researcher so that the readers can judge whether the process and findings offered for this study are adequate.

In an attempt to limit flaws in this research, I conducted member checks, using multiple methods and sites for data collection (triangulation), and enlisting outside input on research design issues as well as conceptual issues that arose. Moreover, theoretical threats to the validity were avoided in this study by paying close attention to discrepant or disaffirming data. This method helped me avoid making assumptions or conclusions that

were not grounded in the data collected. I included discrepant data as a way of increasing my understanding and potentially contributing to or questioning theory related to the influence of intergroup dialogue on racial justice ally development.

During the in-class observation I witnessed each participant within her or his environment and used this to reveal any contradictions or surprises from the data gleaned during the interviews. The in-class observations provided accounts served as validation via of the data gathered through the interviews. Observations allowed me to make meaning of the individual cases “in action” as they facilitated their SOC 119 discussion groups. I could also compare my observations to the profiles I had developed during the two intensive interviews and during the initial stages of analysis to provide a fuller understanding of each participant.

Trustworthiness can also be challenged if it is not clear that the description of what the researcher saw and heard is accurate (Maxwell, 1998). To avoid this problem I tape-recorded the interviews thus, giving me “rich” data from which I worked and validated the descriptions I provided in my study. As the transcriptions were completed, I listened to the tapes while reading the transcripts to edit any mistakes, fill in any areas that may have been initially noted as inaudible, and note anything important related to the context or tone of the conversation. I also actively documented my personal thoughts and those spurred during the analysis of the research data through reflective journaling, coding memos, and researcher comments typed directly into the transcripts.

The interpretation of a study can be questioned if it is believed the researcher has imposed her own set of standards or perspectives on the data (Maxwell, 1996). Soliciting feedback and conducting member checks with the participants aided me in avoiding this

pitfall. I conducted member checks throughout the interviews by repeating back what the participant told me and asking if it was accurate or not, and recapping items from the previous interview at the start of our second. Also, toward the end of spring semester I requested the participants' responses to Chapter Four and the transcripts which included my researcher comments. They were welcomed to respond to any discrepancies they saw or comment on my remarks. Besides the feedback I discussed above, one other participant responded to the member check. He wanted to clarify his thoughts shared during a segment of one of our interviews and toward the end of his response he wrote, "Thank you for giving me the opportunity to think about this further, it is not something I am done thinking about, just more of an immediate reaction. Thank you for your insight, I appreciate it."

As a novice researcher it was beneficial and essential that I solicited outside support from my advisor, colleagues, and other qualitative researchers. This not only improved the credibility of my overall findings but I learned and grew as a researcher. Although limited, my previous research experience beyond coursework included intensive and multiple qualitative interviewing experiences as one of three researchers working on establishing a preliminary model of racial justice ally development (Reason *et al.*, 2005). I believe this prior experience was beneficial to carrying out this dissertation research. The experience sensitized me to the topic and the potential difficulties in investigating it; thus, I did not enter this project without some sense of what it was like to interview participants about a potentially taboo topic. However, unlike my previous research encounter where I only interviewed first-year students who had little exposure to diversity coursework or experiences, I found the participants in this dissertation to be

very open to discussing racial issues, which I attribute to their participation and familiarity with issues of race that may foster racial justice ally development.

### *Naturalistic Generalization*

Case study research follows a constructivist view of knowledge, it “does not require the researcher to avoid delivering generalizations...[it] encourages providing the reader with the raw material for their own generalizing” (Stake, 1995, p. 102). Stake refers to the process of transferring what we learn from a particular in-depth exploration of one situation to another similar situation as “naturalistic generalization” (as cited in Merriam, 1998, p. 211). People generally draw on their implicit knowledge, intuition, and lived experiences and look for patterns in the world around them to explain their own experiences. Acquiring a deep understanding of the particular allows the individual to see similarities in new and different contexts.

Grounded theory convention states that generated theories are only generalizable to the specific actions, processes, and interactions that pertain to a specific phenomenon and the resulting outcome (Brott & Myers, 1999). Therefore, the results of this study should prove valuable when applied within similar higher education contexts. Applying what was learned here to varying educational contexts with comparable individuals may reinforce and/or unveil additional influences that the elements found in an intergroup dialogue course have on racial justice ally development. This investigation and previous studies of this phenomenon invite further analysis within varying institutional settings and learning environments. Therefore, although this study was conducted at the Pennsylvania State University, focused primarily on the experiences of nine undergraduates during SOC 300, and explored how this learning process influenced their

racial justice ally development, the understandings revealed from these students within this particular context allows others to observe similarities in new and foreign contexts.

### Chapter Summary and Transition

This chapter presented the overall qualitative paradigm used for this study, including the case study research design, data collection methods, and the grounded theory approach to analysis. It addressed each element described by Arminio and Hultgren (2002) as components essential to “goodness” in qualitative research such as: the epistemological and theoretical foundations; researcher reflexivity; methodology; research site and data collection methods; analysis and interpretation; and ethical considerations and trustworthiness. The next chapter introduces the nine participants from the study using their voices to richly describe their childhood experiences, attitudes and values, and influential racial incidents occurring before SOC 300. It then explores the experiences of the participants as they entered college and participated in SOC 119.



## **Chapter 4**

### **Participant Self-Portraits**

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the nine participants from the study using their voices to richly describe their childhood experiences, attitudes and values, and influential incidents related to racial diversity, race relations, and social justice occurring before SOC 119. These recounted experiences leading up to college and enrolling in the intentionally designed racial justice curriculum are important because they may reveal predispositions or developmental capabilities that relate to how the participant experienced SOC 300 and how it may have influenced her or his racial justice ally development.

At this point, I present initial interpretations of the findings and focus on presenting the data that paints a self-portrait of each participant as she or he recounts perspective-shaping experiences. I begin by introducing the participants as a group—offering some general commonalities, differences, and characteristics—then provide a profile of each participant in alphabetical order according to their pseudonyms, focusing mainly on critical incidents prior to college. The next part of the chapter builds from what is known about each individual as they entered college. The chapter concludes with a brief summary of the participants' predispositions prior to college, which establishes a foundation from which to explore the influences of SOC 300.

I collected data through a series of three semi-structured interviews and one observation during the fall semester of 2005, from September 22<sup>nd</sup> to December 1<sup>st</sup>. Each

participant filled out a data sheet (Appendix B), which was also discussed for clarification and additional information during the first interview. From a combination of these, I created a matrix of participant attributes using NVivo and exporting the file into an Excel spreadsheet (matrix not included). The following paragraphs offer a rich synthesis of this data by first discussing commonalities and differences among the participants, and then offering an individual profile of each learner.

### The Group

Participants attended one of two SOC 300 sections per week: the Monday section held in the Thomas Building or the Wednesday section held in the Boucke Building. Allison, Amaya, Elizabeth, Nate, Shasta, and Tiffany attended the Monday (Thomas) section while Brooke, Jan, and John attended the Wednesday section (Boucke).

Six of the nine participants are female and none reported as transgender. Further, all claim to be heterosexual at this time. Five are seniors, two are juniors, one is a sophomore, and one recorded himself as a “sophomore/junior.” Of the nine, four transferred from another campus location after completing their sophomore year: three (Elizabeth, Jan, and Tiffany) from Penn State’s Commonwealth campuses and one (Nate) from another “branch campus” of Ohio State University. The difference in age spans a decade, however, three are 20 years old, five are 21, and only one is 30. They all took SOC 119, which is a prerequisite of SOC 300; most students took SOC 119 the spring semester just prior to taking SOC 300, except Allison who completed it her freshman year. All have at least a 2.5 grade point average and are pursuing Liberal Arts-related degrees such as Labor and Industrial Relations (3), Crime, Law, and Justice, Education, Journalism, English Literature, History, and Film.

When asked about their parents' education levels, political ideology, and race, most responded that their fathers completed college, maintain a conservative political perspective, and are white. Similarly, they described their mothers' races as white and almost all as college graduates. Unlike their fathers', most of them portrayed their mothers' political viewpoints as liberal or middle-of-the-road. Only three of the nine participants described their socioeconomic status as "lower," "lower-middle," or "lower-poverty" while most claimed "upper-middle" or "middle-upper." Additionally, participants shared characteristics of the areas in which they grew up. Seven lived the majority of their childhoods in predominantly white suburban or rural areas (one labeled her hometown as "rural/suburban"). Of the two from less racially homogeneous areas, one labeled her hometown as suburban and "racially mixed" while the other considered his as rural and "segregated by race." Only one of the nine participants was raised within a religious tradition other than Christianity (Judaism). And, only two of the nine thought of themselves as "practicing" any sort of organized religion; one of those two was not "raised religious." Racially, all nine participants articulated their primary racial identity as "white," although the participant who is Jewish stated his racial identity as "white-Jewish," he used "Jewish" to describe his ethnic identity, and another student declared herself "European-white."

#### Individual Pre-College Portraits

##### *Allison*

Allison is a 21 year-old white heterosexual female. I interviewed her on September 29, 2005, November 3<sup>rd</sup>, and the final interview was November 10<sup>th</sup>, which followed the in-class observation done on the same day. She is a senior majoring in Labor

and Industrial Relations with a triple minor in Sociology, Spanish, and Political Science. Allison is extremely involved in college, both academically and cocurricularly, and still manages to maintain a 3.8 grade point average.

Allison described the racial make-up of her hometown, which is a suburb of Rochester, in the following way:

I'd say it's probably 70-80% white. More recently it has shifted. Webster's kind of like a suburb...like you can have a big span of real estate, there's really cheap housing, there's very expensive housing. So it's kind of a mixture of a lot of people who, like when we moved out, who come from the city as like the first suburb. But there are wealthier suburbs around Rochester as well. So, more recently because the housing prices have been good we've noticed a change in the dynamics, but probably when I was in high school it was 70-80% white. And then the rest, I'd say, the least represented group would probably be Hispanic. Next to the whites it would probably be about 10% Asian, and 10% Black after that.

Although Allison grew up in a predominantly white neighborhood, she shared what she considers a significant experience from early childhood when her family lived in the city of Rochester before moving to the suburbs. This reflection was significant to her because it points to an early memory of ethnic prejudice that, until now, she did not make sense of or even notice.

Actually, it's funny, looking back I didn't realize it when I was younger, but it was, the whole street was Italian and my mom said when we first moved in, "we're Irish Catholic," and one of the older women next door to us came in and she said, "So what's your last name?" And we'd say, "[our last name]"...and

she's like, "that's not Italian, is it?" And we said "no," and she said, "we still like nice people anyway!" So, I didn't realize it when I was younger, you know my mom explained later that it's kind of funny and I listen to all the names like (inaudible) & (inaudible), it makes sense. But I'd say our street was all white and probably about two blocks over was where it would be more African American and Hispanic, but I think our section of it was almost all Italian.

Allison came to Penn State, University Park with a predisposition toward seeing race and ethnicity. Although her exposure to racial difference was limited during her childhood, she chiefly attributes her "openness" to and awareness of difference to the influence of her parents.

Allison also attributed her current interest in race relations and social justice issues to how her parents raised her and her younger brother and sister. Primarily, she credits her critical social awareness to her mother who actively engaged in social change efforts, while her father presented himself in more of a supportive role. She said his role was to "keep me on an even keel so I don't go off into left field forever."

My mother was very big in social justice. She always told me her happiest times were when she was on the picket line protesting nuclear war and all that other stuff when we were younger and my dad used to always say, "as long as you don't go out and get thrown in jail, you have two kids, do whatever you want. Have fun." So she was always a lot more progressive and she's been very candid with me even about her own prejudices and biases being raised as she was and how *her* parents influenced her.

She further explains how being open-minded and seeing the world through a

multicultural perspective was not always something her mother felt would be easy.

Allison conveys this frustration as she describes how her upbringing was different from most whites and “being comfortable” with racial difference may have been seen as “bizarre” to her white friends.

I know I’m biased because of my parents, but I really don’t feel that a lot of parents talk to their children about stuff like this like my parents did. My mom kinda says that the way we think is a probably a curse and all that bullshit...because I’ll be so frustrated that you know I can’t explain and make everyone love this stuff the way I do, and my relative comfort of being you know the only white girl in a room is bizarre to a lot of my friends who wouldn’t want to be in that situation, but I don’t want to put it all back on my parents and give them *too* much credit and maybe I was just predisposed to it. I don’t know. The whole nature versus nurture thing, but I do think that the way we talk about it, like both my brother and sister are the same way as far as being inquisitive and not having a whole lot of tolerance yet for people who are what we term “closed-minded,” that’s just more our viewpoint. And I do think that a lot of it...it’s just something we always discussed, and my parents always take us to the art films, not always just the Disney films when we were younger...just so we could see different sides, things that are going on in other countries to try different foods, kind of like an exposure to outside cultures outside like rather than “oh, I’m American let’s go to McDonalds” type thing.

When asked how she came to understand her white privilege, Allison recounts a story of how her parents used “teaching moments” to raise awareness of racial differences and

injustices. Although she admits to not necessarily “getting her [mother’s] point” at the time, she now refers to this experience as influencing her current openness to understanding whiteness and white privilege.

My parents tried to foster an awareness of the way things are...we’ll be driving and if a police car had pulled someone over my mom will be like, “what race are they?” And it almost always would be a minority race, and she’d be like “just be aware of this and not hate the police or whatever, but be aware that there’s a trend here.” And we’d do that a lot of times when we’d drive by to see if there were any trends. I don’t think I probably understood it at that point what she was getting at, but it was one of those things...[she’d tell us to] notice and observe what’s around you. Or, when we would watch certain movies, or stuff like that...like just be aware that there’s a bunch of different people living in the United States and this is the way it is.

Allison attributes some of her comfort with racial difference to her early childhood exposure to people of color when she lived in a city for a short time. Primarily, her friendship groups during her school years were white, although they were ethnically different from her because they were primarily Italian, and she is “Irish Catholic.”

I kind of had a little bit of a double life thing being I have lived in the city [before moving to the suburbs]. I kind of split my time between my friends in the city for a while, which happened to be not as frequently than with my friends at the Catholic school who were almost all white. A lot of other friends I have met are Black or Hispanic. But in my high school I’d say almost all my friends were white or specifically Italian, it was a very Italian town, and then Asian as well.

The sequence of dialogue which exposed indicators of Allison's developmental capabilities prior to taking SOC 300 was around her Catholic upbringing. What arose through this conversation was her movement from simply accepting the authority of others as "truth" to a more cognitively complex way of seeing the world. She stated, "I used to get mad at my brother and sister, I'm the oldest, they'd always be like "church is so boring"...and falling asleep in church and I'd be like you have to pay attention, its church, it's important." She described how her commitment to Catholicism changed from this to questioning general Catholic doctrine, challenging her priest in high school and later her mother's beliefs of Catholicism, and ultimately choosing not to practice Catholicism after her first year of college.

My mom, she's very, very Catholic, which I thought how can you believe this...that's been one of our big contentions in college; spirituality is important to me and I would like to be able to believe in God in general, but I'm a very logical, scientific thinker so it's hard to bridge that gap. And then with the Catholic church specifically, it's just hard when you hear about the issues of abortion and birth control and homosexuality it's like I don't agree with all those things and her contention is you're always a part of a lot things you don't agree with every aspect of the organization. [...] She says it's like anything, she's a democrat, but she doesn't agree with everything the Democratic Party does, but they align most closely with what she will support. So I've kind of gone back and forth and it's hard. And I don't know, it's hard also that especially the sexism of the Catholic church is something I've had a really hard time with personally because I remember when I went to my first communion and the priest said do



you have any questions for me and I was like “yeah, can I be a priest? How come I can’t be a priest?” And he just thought that was funny.

She further expanded on her struggle to establish her own identity separate from that of her parents and, in doing so, often challenged her mother as a way to make meaning for herself.

It’s a constant struggle that I like to talk about and we challenge each other on that a lot, and I think sometimes my mom thinks I’m trying to change her mind, which I’m not but I just want to see how she thinks and how she believes that strongly about something that conflicts naturally.

She also shared how her mother often worried about her insatiable interest in other belief systems, both religious and cultural.

I went through a phase where some of my friends were not fundamentalists...they were nondenominational and I’m not sure, I’m still not really familiar with what their religion actually is but a bunch of my friends all belonged to the same church so for a while in high school I would start hanging out with their youth group just because they were my friends and I didn’t like the youth group at my church, so my mom was afraid I was just going to go off and convert. [...] And now when I first came here I attended church regularly and actually found it was a comfort but just something I knew. And that was good. I just kind of stopped after that. I also met a lot of people here who happened to be Indian, so I spent a lot of time with that group and went to their functions and then my mom thought I was going to go off and convert to be Hindu too. So, it was interesting. I don’t think it started in college. It’s kind of something that I’ve always been interested

in, like what is the deal with religion and it's such a central focus of our family. It's been brought up frequently but I do challenge her, not to change her beliefs, but to try and break down "why do you believe this?" I don't think necessarily she always appreciates it.

Exemplifying Allison's struggle to establish a positive sense of whiteness is her retelling of an incident during high school when she tried desperately to make sure people of color knew she was "not like the other white people."

So, ever since I was younger, I remember trying to work through how do I show that I'm an open-minded person. And it was difficult as a child to go through. I used to work in a bagel shop and if people [of color] would come in you'd have to be nicer and smile more so that they'd know I'm not like the other white people that you've encountered. But then you think I'm just doing that because you're black. And that kind of thing...as a child it was kind of one of those things like proving yourself kind of thing. I personally felt I guess that you had to just break that barrier and say "do you trust that I am who I say I am" even in the most miniscule circumstances.

### *Amaya*

Like Allison, Amaya is 21, heterosexual, female, and a senior majoring in Labor and Industrial Relations with a minor in Business. Our first interview was September 23, 2005, the second on October 21<sup>st</sup>, and the third followed the in-class observation on December 1<sup>st</sup>. Amaya was raised in a small Pennsylvania town with one younger brother. She describes her hometown as a "small town, rural town, middle class to lower middle class. Majority white. Very racist. Cross burnings. Every month or so." When I asked if

such things still occur today, she replied “last month” and continued to describe her hometown and how she “always felt uncomfortable” there.

There was a KKK headquarters in that town. They used to stand out on the corner by our town bank. I know I remember being about six years old and I thought there was a parade. I thought they were in costume. And I remember my father stopping and grabbing one of the pamphlets that they were handing out and reading it...he was racist but to my knowledge he was not involved in any of it. So yeah, majority white. Christian. So for me I always felt uncomfortable in the town. Way too close-minded. Those people have been in that town for 100 years. They're not moving. That's why they're there...cause they want an area that can be all white and close-minded and think the same. And I just wanted to get out. That's what I remember. I didn't want anything to do with any of those people. And so I knew that that's how they were always going to be. So I let go. I, I don't even remember being...I don't even think anyone knows I was there. But I tried to keep it that way.

Her high school was all white as well and she recalled “only having maybe one or two black children in elementary school or middle school, or high school.” Amaya recounted incidents of racism from high school as occurring “all the time...I mean constant. People would write nigger on the bathroom wall.” She also described other racially motivated incidents not confined to her high school:

We had a lot of farms—farming community—a lot of orchards and we'd often have migrant workers on the orchards. And people would drive by and shoot them with BB guns. And very, what I consider, to be like redneck type

activity...and the KKK would always rally. That was always going on. In the high school though...well there weren't really many black people in the high school. And I say black because I hadn't even seen Indian people or anything until I came to college. But I mean, I just remember hearing a lot of racist jokes, racial slurs, stuff was always being written on the walls in the bathroom and just, it was pretty normal for that area.

Although wanting to distance herself from the town and "those" people in it, she told me how she "did a lot of extracurricular things." She described herself in high school as "an overachiever." She said, "I had to be or I would get beaten...if I didn't get straight A's. I'm not kidding." The list of extracurricular activities included: "field hockey and track, and I did oil painting, and every club you can imagine. That's why no one suspected anything was going on at home." Here Amaya shared a very important part of herself and upbringing that is essential to understanding her and her perspectives. She stated, "Well my father...here's, here's what you're waiting for. My father was very abusive. I grew up in a horribly abusive domestic violent home. And I was to play the part of the mom and the surrogate wife." The abuse went on "until the end of summer session 2002 at Penn State when [she] told him no more and [hasn't] spoken to him since."

When asked why she *was different than those from her hometown*, she shared her belief in the "acceptance of everyone and open mindedness." She primarily attributes learning these values to her mother although she also feels that "always wanting more" (being curious and creative) helped her become who she is today. She stated:

I think it has to do a lot with my mother. I think it has to do with her always taking the opposing belief of my father. They separated when I was nine by the

way. Always telling me that it's important to be open minded and accepting of everyone and everyone will be different from you and that's a good thing. And she was always trying to take me to cultural events, anything she could, encouraging reading of books that were written about places outside of Pennsylvania, and watching TV shows, documentaries and stuff like that. A lot of it was her. But, but it also came from me always wanting more, always seeking more, always wanting to do more than what was offered, always trying to come up with new ideas. I mean ever since I was little and they're like "do you want to go on the swing or sandbox" and I was like, "learn how to roller blade" or something you know ridiculous. It's just always that way.

Although not "raised religious," Amaya considers herself a "spiritual" and "Christian" person. Her mother was also influential in forming these values in Amaya.

...my mom was probably the only one who ever tried to teach me about religion. I grew up with a fear of religion. But then in high school my family went to a Pentecostal church for a couple years. And although I felt them to be extremists I took from that an understanding of Christian beliefs.

Amaya described her friendships growing up as "...dwindle[ing] largely because of [her] home life." She described this in the following way:

I mean I had a lot of friends when I was a little kid, and in middle school it kind of got a little bit less. And then high school, it was just people that I just was friendly with and talked with but I wasn't allowed to have any friends basically. So I just kept to myself and did my own thing and got out.

A "defining moment" in Amaya's understanding of racism occurred when she was eight

years old. She recalled how, until an incident where a neighbor and good friend who is black received a threatening letter in her locker, she had “never thought much about race.”

When I was growing up...our neighbors were black. And you know our families got along, it was great. My best friend growing up was black and I never thought much of race until she went to high school and was being threatened. I remember being eight years old and seeing my father and the neighbor standing in the kitchen reading a letter that this girl had received in her locker at high school. And that was kind of...I didn't understand why they were angry at her. You know cause Kelly was always a great friend of mine and I didn't understand. And they had to explain to me that it was because she was black. And I was like, “well why? What does that matter?” And then that's, that's the defining moment of when I understood there to be racism...that was the first time I ever noticed the difference between races.

*Brooke*

Brooke also identified as female and heterosexual. She is a year younger than Allison and Amaya (20 years old) and a junior majoring in Education with a minor in Human Development and Family Studies (grade point average 3.78). I interviewed her on September 29, 2005, November 3<sup>rd</sup>, and November 10<sup>th</sup>, following the observation of her SOC 119 discussion group. Brooke grew up just north of Philadelphia in a “rural/suburban suburb.” She described the area and her high school as “not diverse really at all...” although she said it has “become very diverse. But when [she] graduated there were two African American people in [her] class...that was it...no Hispanic people, no

Indian people, nothing.” She further explained her perceptions of the town:

[It] is kind of closed-minded. They’re not very open to the whole race thing. We even just had some people that are gay move into the community and our community was just up in arms about it. And I was just like, “you’ve got to be kidding me.” I guess you can say they’re an older town. Like a lot of people, their generations, have lived in town and so I mean anyone new moving into it is hard for them.

Brooke was very involved in high school and especially enjoyed sports. She recalled her experiences playing tennis and other high school activities:

I love tennis, so I went pretty far in that in high school. Tennis is a huge part of my life...I’ve been playing since I was little so tennis was big in high school. I won championships and had a good time so I would say that was one of the biggest parts; I spent a lot of time training for it, even in the off-season. Sports in general, I pole-vaulted, I had a good time with that. I like to run track...other than that...our school, it was hard because I was in school with not too terribly much money. There weren’t too many things you could really go into. But, I was part of NHS [National Honor Society] and (inaudible) club. I would go out and do community service. And then, just my church stuff; I was a bible study leader for little kids and stuff like that.

Brooke described herself as “very religious.” She further explained how her religious upbringing shaped who she is today. She fondly explained the church she went to as a child and her commitment to her faith, which almost prevented her from attending college at all.

I was one of those kids you didn't have to force to go church... We have a very open church. It's much different, like you don't just sit there and sing hymns. It's very much like "praise the lord and share your story with people." It's very different [than a traditional Catholic experience]. When I—my boyfriend is Catholic—and the first time I went to a Catholic service I wasn't even sure what was going on, so it was very different to me. But would [my parents] make me and my brother and sister go if we didn't want to? Yeah, probably. We were all pretty open to it because the experience of it. [...] Actually, I really didn't want to come to college. I just wanted to go into missionary work or the Peace Corps. But my parents were like, "you should just get this base and then you can do whatever you want from there." So, I respected their opinion and I know that they're a little bit wiser than I am in that area, so I took it as they gave it. I'm a very strong Christian, but a lot of people say I'm not what they'd expect. They expect me to condemn them, like if they're not doing certain things which I know is what they'd expect from me, so it's always funny when they're like "Oh, you're so nice."

Brooke attributed her worldview and predisposition to "do good work" primarily to her parents. When asked if her beliefs and desire to be in the Peace Corps to do missionary work comes from values instilled by her parents she replied: "Yeah, I'd say about half and half. Because while my parents are religious they wouldn't really go out and do missionary work. So I'd say, I'd take it one step further. But obviously they introduced me to religion as a child." She further explained how since high school she felt this was her calling:



When I hit high school I just got more into reading *The Word* and reading other books and as a Christian we feel like we have callings. And I just felt like, I didn't want to be stagnant. I just wanted to go and experience new things. And I find great joy in Christ and in knowing Christ and as a missionary, I would never want to force it on anyone, but I want to open that door for those that haven't heard it because there's a good amount of people that haven't. So, I don't want people to think that I'm the kind of person that wants to instill my beliefs in people. I'm not there because I feel like they're wrong. It's not that. I really just want people to hear and know what's out there.

I followed up by asking her *if her calling was to spread the word of God or was it to do good work for others?* She replied by saying: "To do good work more and in the process allow them to know the reason why I feel [the way I do]; that it is because God has blessed me and through my actions they see God, rather than me saying 'here's the Bible, here's what you should believe.'" She continued:

...I feel like that's a very weird approach to take, to tell people what to do. I'd much rather let people, even at college, people are like, "oh, you're really, really nice, and you don't ever get angry at people, what is that in you?" And I like to say, "I'm at peace and that I really do believe that most people have good in them." It takes a lot for me to get really angry at someone, so I would say to them, "well, God tells me that I should be a good person."

Another reason she felt a "calling" to join the Peace Corps or do missionary work was her "general interest in things outside of American culture." She stated, "I love learning about different cultures. I like the idea of traveling, so I think that was part of it too. I knew as a

missionary I could travel and experience a whole new part of this world that I live in.”

Also, as far as her interest in race relations before coming to Penn State, she felt she had “always been one not to like racism and that kind of judgment stuff...it was always kind of there.”

*Elizabeth*

Elizabeth grew-up in a “middle-upper” suburb of Pittsburgh. She is a 21 year-old senior, majoring in Journalism with a minor in Communication Arts and Sciences (grade point average 3.2). She described herself as:

A people person...I always have been. I mean even from like in high school...I candy-striped when I was in high school and did that type of stuff...I loved it. I just like people. Communication [and] people [are] absolutely my strengths.

Talking with people, that is definitely where I excel the most.

She is one of the four participants who transferred to the University Park campus from another campus (Penn State – Altoona). Additionally, she identified as “straight” and as a “non-practicing Lutheran.” I first interviewed her on October 5, 2005, followed by November 14<sup>th</sup> and November 16<sup>th</sup>; I observed her facilitate SOC 119 on November 15<sup>th</sup>. She described her hometown as being a “very small community. I graduated with 230 people in my class. So it was kind of a thing where everybody knew everybody.” She further expounded on the racial diversity in the area as:

Not many black people. Not many Hispanics. I would say that I went to school with majority white people. I was pretty much surrounded by that. There was probably maybe like 10 black kids in our whole school. And I was always very friendly with them. They were my friends but they were more...if you want to

say like they were more white, white black people.

When asked what her ethnic identity or cultural background was she shared the following detailed description:

Well, nationality wise...my dad's side is Lebanese, Italian, and Irish. My mother's side is German, Irish and she's a little English and Welsh mixed in there. So as far as identifying like with a specific culture...I mean I eat the Lebanese food and Italian food, but that's about the extent of it. Like traditions, that type of stuff that was never a part of my upbringing. The first time that I had really, really thought about it [was in SOC 300] because I've never had to do that before. Basically, how I identify myself with other people is through what I like, through what I do, through my interests, my passions. That's how I decide if I like a person or if I get along with a person. And not like...it's never been like, "well, you're Italian, so I like you."

Although her father was "very active" in her upbringing, she considered her mother her "inspiration." She was "a stay at home mom, but she was a social worker [before starting a family]." Elizabeth shared that her mother told her "she wishes she would have been a teacher...her family has a whole history of teachers." She further described her mother's influence on her identity and who she sees herself as today by stating:

She's everything to me, like when I think of how I identify, I don't identify with a specific culture. I'm six different nationalities...but I identify with her. I just love her to death. She just is...how I grew up, one thing about my family that I take, that I realize now is so important is with my mom open discussion was always present. It was never "no, because I'm the mom and that's what I say."

How we felt, what we thought, you know all that...and there was always room for discussion. That was one thing she always told us, “[there’s] always room for discussion.” There’s always room to hear both sides of the story. I definitely get that from her. As far as like race and all that, she always—from the time I was little—told me don’t ever discriminate toward people. Just because you’re white doesn’t make you better. [...] She always tells me, she says that I remind her exactly of her when she was my age...just like as far as my aspirations and what I want to do...especially when it comes to open discussion and that type of stuff. It, it absolutely is her, yeah.

Her mother’s influence on her values and beliefs was powerful before coming to college and continues to be as influential in her life choices during college. Elizabeth described how “be[ing] nice to everyone” regardless of “how they look” was a value instilled by her mother, one she aspires to accomplish “to this day.”

I remember even from the time that I was a little girl, my mom always was like always include everyone, always be nice to everyone. I never, ever, and still to this day can’t understand how something like slavery could happen just because of the color of somebody’s skin or how they look. To me...I cannot wrap my mind around that. Like it’s just unbelievable to me. It’s like people are people to me.

She added how her mother taught her the importance of a “stable family,” making choices based on doing the “right thing,” and not expecting money to “make you happy.” She declared that:

[My mother] always told me that...she made the choice that she was going to

make her family be everything that she didn't have. She said, "people have choices and you can choose to do the right thing..." Like, whatever decision you make, make it right. That's what she always said to me and that was so important to her to have a family, a stable family. You know four kids; we're all two years apart. My parents, they never fight. [...] Something that has definitely, absolutely aided me...even though when I first came to school, I was obsessed with the whole PR [Public Relations] and that type of thing. [But now I realize that] from the time I was a little girl my mother has always stressed to me, you know money's nice, money is comfortable, but money doesn't make you happy. You will never be happy unless you surround yourself with good relationships and you're a good person. Since the day I was born that has been ingrained in me. She added, "I think that it starts from my mother definitely, but it was also classes that I've taken at school..." which will be discussed in the next chapter.

### *Jan*

Jan also transferred from a Commonwealth campus, Penn State – Berks, after completing her sophomore year. She is now a senior majoring in English Literature and considering a minor in French. She reported a grade point average of approximately 3.0. Jan is 21, "liberal," "white European," and heterosexual. Her hometown is a predominantly white suburb of Allentown. I interviewed her first on October 19, 2005, second on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, and our final interview followed the in-class observation on November 16<sup>th</sup>.

She "graduated with 500 people in [her] class" of which "there was a handful of Asian Americans and two black kids, one boy one girl—they were brother and sister

actually, and just a handful of Indian students.” She considered her hometown as being within “a little bit more of a liberal area, [although] there [were] very, very adamant conservatives in the area also.” Jan described the progressiveness of her high school through her friendships and types of involvement, which were “almost all [...] diverse.” She added:

...we were all in the choir, and I was the theater rat, and the drug and alcohol free organization, and the drama departments, and all that kind of stuff. I grew up with these two kids from—well, one of them from first grade on and the other one from sixth grade on—and they were two of my best male friends. And one of them was an Indian, he’s a Hindi Indian. And the other one was always gay. He just...he always knew it but didn’t want anybody else to know it. He came out to me in like 10<sup>th</sup> grade. And then from there, just kind of opened up you know. Also, working in the theater downtown, at the community theater, we got a lot of it [exposure to diversity]. I had a lot of black friends from down there that I would definitely hang out with on a regular basis. I had very Polish, Jewish friends, a whole family actually, all the time we were together and hanging out.

Although her high school was minimally racially diverse and she had a few friends of color, she relayed experiences which personalized issues of difference based on sexual orientation prior to coming to college. She shared that issues related to sexual orientation were more prevalent conversation topics in her friendship group. For example, she shared this story:

A friend [of mine] in high school literally got the shit kicked out of him because he came out to be gay. He told people and people knew. And he was in the

hospital for two days you know. And that is so appalling. So then it turned out that my one friend and the other friend didn't want to come out in high school. They just wanted to wait...because they were terrified.

Jan felt that her family greatly influenced her and her two older sisters by teaching them to be "open-minded and accepting of others," which she equates with being "involved in the arts and things like that." Another indicator of the influence of her family is her desire to teach as a career, like her parents and sisters. She proclaimed that "teaching is one of the most noble and valuable professions cause you're not going to learn anything if you don't have anybody to teach you." Her parents, especially her mother, also shaped many of Jan's "liberal" leanings:

[My mother] believes in choice, pro choice. And she likes birth control because she knows that her daughters would all be pregnant if we didn't have birth control...she's really just open, even as a Christian. She's a moderate Christian because when she grew up with her parents everything was very "this is right and this is wrong." And she moved out of Tamaqua...a little coal mining town in northeastern PA, and she moved out of there and went to college with the purpose of not only getting her education for her future but for everybody else's future also. Because if she had stayed in that town she would still use the racist terms that my grandmother uses and my grandfather used and would still have the same views on things like that because they've never been exposed to difference. I think that you know she's even come flat out and said "if I hadn't gone to college I wouldn't be like this [open and accepting of difference]...I went to college to learn about people."

Besides her mother, Jan attributes a significant amount of her spirituality, critical thinking and perspective-taking ability, and her comfort with racial difference before college to a long time family friend, who also happens to be a person of color. She described her “quasi-uncle’s” influence on her upbringing in the following way:

I think the most influential person in my spirituality is my uncle, who’s not...he’s not really my uncle. We just kind of pretend he’s my uncle. He’s this black man, born and raised in New Orleans, who was a youth group leader at the church where my parents went and I went when I was little; when my sisters and I were all born. So they became really good friends with him and I connect with him on a lot of levels. He’s like a 50-year-old man but we can sit down and have these conversations with each other that reach below the surface, which is very important to me. He and I connect on a different level. And I really think that I got a lot of it [openness to different perspectives] from him because he taught me to just, to just be open with it and be open with your spirituality also. Don’t say that it has to be *this*...that everything is by the book. You know, look at things, and question the things that you don’t understand, like really question them. Don’t just say I wonder why and move on. Like actually take the time to think about it and talk to other people about it. And I’ve spent so many hours just sitting down and bull shitting with him over it, and he’s taught me, like I said, to be open with it. And so my spirituality comes in the fact that I’m not a big fan of organized religion any more. But I got, I have a strong enough basis from that that it causes me to question everything else just like I would you know what’s in a textbook. Just like I would question what’s in the Bible. If I’m not sure, I’m



going to ask about it.

When asked about her comfort with racial difference she once again attributed this to her “quasi-uncle” by responding:

Maybe it’s because literally from the time I was born there was this random black man in our house all the time, at our family functions, and always hanging out with us. I learned as a young kid I guess to be able to laugh about it. Like we in our house joke about it and it’s probably just because we’re very comfortable with him. We never poke fun but...everybody gets drunk because everybody’s drinking wine, and he stands up and he goes “why you all got to be picking on the black man?” So, everybody gives him a hard time about it and jokes around about it. But at the same time, I was taught that he’s no different than I am, and neither is anybody else. The only difference in us is culture.

Further, it is through her uncle that she “gets to experience a lot of different cultures, because of his storytelling...as far as [she] can remember [she was] hearing stories from this corner of the world and that corner of the world.” She continued, “He really has opened my eyes to like everything.” In addition to his stories, Jan reported being able “to travel a lot as a kid too.” Although “not necessarily to places that are very different, but they’re very different in their cultural aspects.” She has “been all over Europe, all over the place, in almost all of the [places she’s traveled] it’s just like those people are so different...but ‘I should not like the French because they eat snails’” [sarcastic comment about people who don’t like others because of their different cultural practices].

Another story she recalled from her childhood with her uncle exemplified her belief that his physical appearance “doesn’t mean that he’s any different.” She further explained:

We were buying something somewhere, and this little girl in the shopping cart behind me and my uncle said “mommy why is that man chocolate?” She replied “Oh, don’t ask that.” And the two of us turned around and looked at her—at this little girl—and he said, “What’s your favorite ice cream flavor?” And the girl goes, “chocolate.” And he said “well mine’s vanilla and it’s nice to meet you.” And who knows what happened to that little girl after that.

Jan also reported her older sister who attended Penn State as being influential in how she makes meaning of her white privilege. I asked her, *when did you start thinking that whites have privileges based purely on their skin color?* She replied:

My sister told me. When I was in seventh grade, like at the end of my...or no, I would have been in eighth grade. My middle sister came up here to main campus and she came home one weekend and was like, “just so you know, you are so lucky.” She was like, “I am lucky, you are lucky, our whole family is lucky.” I don’t, I don’t really remember [how or why she thought this] but I know that she was doing like NRT theater and she was doing THON and everything like that and she just kind of laid it out when I was little. And she was just like “you know, you’re stupid if you think that you don’t get anything because of who you are or where you’re from or what you look like.”

### *John*

John is a 20-year-old heterosexual sophomore majoring in Labor and Industrial Relations with an Economics/Business minor. He was the first participant I interviewed for this project: we first met on September 22, 2005; followed by October 20<sup>th</sup>; and concluded the series of interviews on November 10<sup>th</sup>, after the in-class observation nine

days earlier. John is an excellent student and, although he maintains a 3.55 grade point average, he reported feeling he “could do better.” He continued:

I should do better. But I’ve done all right...probably too much of a laid-back approach. I think it will just take care of itself when it does. Plus, I have trouble developing interest towards general education classes...so if I’m not interested I probably won’t do all that well.

His intelligence and comfort with one-on-one conversations juxtapose the discomfort and uneasiness he shared feeling when expressing himself in social groups, he described himself as:

In general, I’m not a people person. I have trouble interacting with just about anybody, at least I did up until college. And even still, I’m one of the kids that’s totally content to sit and eat lunch by myself. Like on a one-on-one basis, I really don’t have much trouble interacting with anyone like one-on-one. But when there’s a bunch of people around, like in a discussion group, that’s probably not the best place for me ironically, which is amazing I’m a TA.

John grew up in an “upper-middle class suburb just north of Pittsburgh.” He described his high school as:

There were maybe 1,200 students in the whole school and there were maybe 250 or 280 in my graduating class. Probably the majority of that was...I’d say 96-98% just one racial background of mainly white, probably European origin. And about 95% of the graduating class goes on to college.

He further explained his feelings that his high school was overly focused on college preparation; overly focused because he feels “college is not for everyone” and the

expectation was that all students graduated and went on to a selective college or university, he stated that “95% did.” His friends growing up were primarily male, heterosexual, white, and politically ranged from “really, really conservative” to “a few that are more liberal.” He stated,

I pretty much hung out with only white males. I was always quite socially awkward when I was young as far as like talking to girls...And I think the only friendships I ever actually had with girls would be like my sisters and they kind of have to be my friends. A few of my friends, like maybe one or two you could say, were probably in the upper 5% wealth factor in the country. But mostly, we're all pretty much the same as far as that extent. Political views started to differ as we got older. Some are really, really conservative, others are just more moderate. And there's a few that are more liberal too.

John matter-of-factly described his high school experiences and upbringing. He perceived his experiences growing up by saying, “I don't really feel that my story can benefit anyone per se, just because I consider it just kind of like an average story. Probably the same as...I don't know...someone else's story.”

His parents are both white, more than undergraduate college-educated. He reported his mother's political ideology as “middle-of-the-road” and his father's as “conservative.” He described his family as “always [having] what [they] needed and [they] could always get what [they] needed as well.” He continued,

So, I knew we were privileged to that extent. And our family values education and they value the family cohesive unit. So, I knew I was privileged to that extent as well, to have a supportive family. [My parents were married] once to each

other for...I guess 38 years now, or something like that. I have two older sisters and a younger brother, and they were—aside from the one sister—they're all pretty much set on education and really supporting the family as a whole, and looking out for themselves as well.

John described his “limited view of everything” during high school as the reason why he was a “staunch conservative.” He explained the “twisted things” he used to believe in high school and how his limited exposure to different perspectives prevented him from seeing things how he does now:

I thought welfare was totally useless because people weren't helping themselves. That's what I thought. But that's because I was a fool and didn't realize what happens and things like that. And so now, after I've come to college and just seeing more of what goes on, hearing other people's opinions, I most definitely am more moderate now and I would classify myself as a moderate that leans conservative on some issues but not on others. I think anything that has to do with religion I am not leaning towards the right on that at all. I'm most definitely more liberal on that. And I'd say maybe more things that have to do with perhaps like fiscal policy or something like that. I'm more conservative than others.

When asked about his religious background he replied, “We never really went to church when we were younger; I think my parents were just kind of tired by the time my brother and I came along. We were 12 or 13 years younger than my [sisters].” He continued to explain why he thinks he has no interest in religion now:

And then, all of a sudden when I hit 9th grade, [my parents] felt it was important that I became confirmed as a Presbyterian. So, I had to go every other Sunday, to

five and a half hours of classes and church meetings and I really wasn't thrilled. So, if I wasn't already aligned with a religion, I definitely wasn't going to be after that...and if anything, I would say that it pushed me further away from any type of faith that requires you to go to a church once a week.

In an exploration of where his understanding of white privilege came from, he revealed his father's views and beliefs which may have influenced his desire to learn more about race and race relations. Although he said they "don't really often get into [discussing racial issues]" he shared the following:

Well, with the white privilege, I don't exactly know what I thought before about it...I guess my dad had a different view of white privilege. He didn't think there really was white privilege at this time. He thinks that it's one of the worst times to be a white male. And I don't know why he thinks that way; I mean, he's a little bit older but that shouldn't really justify it either. I guess he sees because we do have an advantage now and I don't know if he wants to acknowledge that, that maybe by attempting to make the playing field level he sees the privileges that we have may be given to other groups. I don't know. I don't think he wants to make sure [people of color] don't go anywhere. But I think he just feels that people will pass him over because he's an old white guy maybe. I don't know. We've gotten into [discussions about] the problems with education; like how a city school isn't as good, at least around Pittsburgh, our city schools kind of suck. And we know some of the teachers from down there and they hate it. They hate teaching there. They don't like the kids. The kids don't like them. The kids don't really want to learn. So, it's just that whole thing. And we've talked about that

and I said we should throw more money at it, and he said that wasn't the problem. He said the problem was the home environment or just people not valuing education, is what he said. See, I don't know, because I think I'm kind of conflicted on the issue. I remember my dad used to tell me, "You have to be careful with what you do." And I was like, "what are you talking about?" And he said if you're somewhere you're not familiar with...he was saying how I need to be careful if I was around a poor class of African Americans. And I was like why? He goes, "well son, number one they're probably not going to like you because you're educated. And number two, they're probably not going to like you because you're white." I was like, "Dad, I can run into your redneck hick that doesn't like me because I'm educated." He was like, "yeah son, but he has a common bond with you because you're white." I was like, "I don't know about that...and I could get along with them." But I mean, maybe he's right, maybe he isn't. But I do think economics divides people. I guess I still do kind of feel that economics divides people more than race probably.

The following is an experience John shared as an example of an early memory of seeing racial difference. He first reiterated, "I've had very little interactions with groups outside of my own" and proceeded to share the following story.

...we drove down [to Pittsburgh]. I don't know if I'd ever been downtown before or if I had I don't know if I remember it. And I was shocked to see that there was actually like different people. I thought everybody just kind of looked like me. I was probably seven or eight. So I was just really stupid for my age and really ignorant I guess. But I had no idea. It was just really different for me. I hadn't

ever seen so many different people; and just by different I mean that they weren't white. I guess maybe at the time I was kind of unnerved by it because I felt out of place. But I shouldn't have.

Through these reflections, John shares his struggle with not understanding racial difference and the complex process of overcoming the discomfort it has caused him since childhood.

*Nate*

Of the nine participants, Nate is the only one over 22 years old. He is 30 years-old, "Midwestern American," heterosexual, married, and has a 6-year-old daughter. He is a "sophomore/junior" majoring in History—with a focus on Asian history—and his minor is in Sociology (GPA 3.66). I interviewed him on October 7, 2005, October 28<sup>th</sup>, and November 16<sup>th</sup> (after the in-class observation). Nate relocated his family to State College to continue his bachelor's degree, which he started at a "branch campus" of Ohio State University. He described where he grew up and lived until transferring to Penn State:

[The town has] about 35,000 people. It's a dying industrial town. They used to make railroad train engines and that obviously doesn't get done anymore because you don't really need trains.... There's an oil refinery, there's a Ford plant, there's a Proctor and Gamble plant and tanks are made in Lima. But other than that, it's like you either work at one of those jobs, you work at a job that supports one of those jobs, or you don't work. So, it's really blue collar. It's really segregated. There are blacks, there are whites, there are about a handful of Indians. They're—now this sounds stereotypical but it's not—they are all



doctors. They all live in one section of town, and that's about it. I mean there's no real Asian population there. The Asians that are there are either doctors or they'll run a restaurant. It's predominantly...I'd say it's almost an even split between black and white. But that's numerically and geographically; the south end of town is the black end of town, the other side of town is the white end of town. If you're white, you don't go in the black end of town at night. There's a town just south of where I'm from...I remember it had a sign that said "don't let the sun set on your black rear-end...." They're kind of stuck in the Stone Age.

Before Nate started college he worked in his hometown to support his family. He used his blue-collar experience to illustrate the level of poverty people experience living there. He stated, "When I worked there, I worked a full time job. My wife stayed home and took care of my daughter and I finally got up to making \$18,000 a year by 2002, or 2001 when we moved." He further described the town as "hav[ing] barbed hooks, it tends to grab and hold," which happened to most of his friends. Like him, his friends "didn't like [the town]," But unlike him, "nobody ever left."

Nate, recalling the racial tension of his hometown, felt the whites attributed "the decline of [the town] to black people because everybody moves out of Lima because the black people move in, the property values go down...and then there's a crack house down the street." Although racial tension existed in his high school, he did not recall any violent incidents. This may be due to the severe racial segregation of the schools. He described how:

There were a lot of high schools in the town and most of the black kids [went to the] inner city high school. And then there are high schools that ring the inner

city. I went to Shawnee High School which is in a suburb.

He then went on to describe the racial tension that he witnessed during high school, he recalled:

There weren't a lot of fights. But there was a lot of people putting other people down. I mean that happened with the different social classes too...that's just high school a lot of times...but the Indian kids got it bad; it was "sand this" [reference to "sand nigger" as a derogatory label] and just all this horrible stuff...they got it bad. And the three black families that I knew that went there, you know you were either good at sports or you better be smart.

Nate reported that his daughter is the greatest influence on his life. He shared that his "daughter changed the way [he] looked at everything." He recalled this transformative episode in his life:

My daughter being born made my focus shift from myself and what was going on with me, and the rest of the world doesn't matter nearly as much as what's going on with me, to WOW, you know, somebody else here needs me to take care of her and the best way I can figure to take care of her is to get her away from this. I don't want her to have to not be able to leave later. I want her to not ever have to be here. So, as hard as it was to take her away from all of our families, cause my wife's family all lives there and my family all lives there, as hard as that was to do, I felt like it would be harder to leave her there and know what I was doing to her by leaving her there.

Nate's parents both lived in Ohio for most of their lives, he said, "My mom was actually born in Hicksville, Indiana but she basically lived in the town that I'm from all

my life. My dad lived in the town that I'm from all my life except for the time that he was in Vietnam." Nate reported being "closer to [his] mom, but they both worked." He said, "I can't remember a time when I wasn't allowed to be home by myself. I know that I was watching myself when I was eight years old." When discussing his father has stated, "I hardly knew my dad." He described his father as

...a truck driver, and when he got done driving his truck he would go to the bar, and if I saw him before the weekend it was because we had to go get him cause he passed out. So, I am just now getting to know my dad. But I don't know him and I haven't ever known him because he's just not been there.

The only siblings Nate has are "half siblings from [his] dad's pervious marriage" that he was not close to in age. When asked if he was raised in any religious tradition he responded,

No, nothing...the closest to a religious affiliation I had when I was younger was my parents took me to an Assemblies of God daycare center. But we didn't ever go to church. We didn't ever do anything. [When we went] to my grandma's house Sunday afternoons, we would say blessings on the food, that was the extent of my Christianity.

Nate described his father as "very strongly racist." He also said, "...my mom says she's not, but never says anything to my dad." He continued by sharing recollections from his childhood of his father's racism:

There were things that I saw my dad say and do to people that really shaped why I don't want to be like that. In particular, I remember being at Ponderosa with my mom and my dad and we had an Asian waitress, and my dad was about three-

quarters drunk and she came to take our drink orders and he told her, “I fought for my country against you people, I won’t have you serving me my food” and she ran away crying, and that was the evening. So, I’m NOT going to raise my daughter the way I was raised. I’m NOT going to treat people the way I’ve seen them treated. So, indirectly he had a very big role in shaping how I think about equality between colors, because I know good and well there isn’t any. But we should try for it.

The following story from Nate’s childhood also revealed his father’s racism toward blacks, he shared:

As dumb as it sounds [sarcastic tone], when I was in elementary school, I tried to have a black friend and he was taken from me. And I knew it was wrong then. His name was Eddy Johnson. He moved to Florida later, so it didn’t become a huge issue. But he was my friend. I played with him all day...during recess. And I was not allowed to bring him home because my dad would have flipped out. I remember my dad when I was 12 or 13 talking to me about “if you ever bring a black girl home you’ll both be buried in the backyard.” So, I knew that wasn’t the way things were supposed to be, even when I was younger.

### *Shasta*

Shasta is a 20-year-old “Jewish-American” man majoring in “Film/Sociology” with a minor in Japanese. He reported his class rank as “junior” and his GPA as 3.33. He identified himself as “open-minded and liberal,” “an atheist Agnostic Jew,” “feminist,” “upper middle” class, and racially, “white Jewish.” Our first interview was on September 23, 2005, the second on November 4<sup>th</sup>, and the third followed the in-class observation on

November 15<sup>th</sup>. Shasta described his life before Penn State as the following:

My life before Penn State was...I liked it. I think I had a pretty good life. I had a good high school experience and I was a pretty popular kid. Not like *football popular* but just like “well, there’s that crazy Shasta.” Everyone kind of knew my name and I was kind of a character. I got class clown in my yearbook and most likely to create a scene, which I thought was pretty funny because I like creating scenes. I’ve always been very passionate about things. And, I have a really great family.

He “grew up in the suburbs of Philadelphia,” in a predominantly white, “heavily Jewish-populated area.” He stated:

Even though it’s predominantly white, it’s not, overwhelmingly [white]...we had a fair amount [...] of blacks and Asians and stuff. I would say less Hispanics and maybe no Native Americans. It might be something like that [80% white] because I’ve seen a couple of people come to Penn State and they either say there’s absolutely no minorities or there’s a lot and I came [here] and I’m like “oh there’s just about as many as I know.” However, I know [I went to] one of the best high schools in the nation apparently...Lower Marion High School.

Shasta described his “closest friends” during high school as “white, even though some of the people [he] consider[ed] [his] closest friends, [he] really didn’t like *that* much.” He said, “I’m the kind of a person that has lots of friends, but only a few that I’m really tight with...so, as far as like hanging out within school and in classes and doing projects and stuff, I would say [my friendship group was] fairly diverse.” He recalled a time in high school where he sat at the “black table for an entire year.”

I remember, I think in 10<sup>th</sup> grade, in the cafeteria there's like the black table, considering they're the minority, most tables are going to be white just by default. For whatever reason, a lot of black groups sit together during lunch. I think for one whole year I just sat at that table. I had some of these friends since elementary school, and so I'd sit there; and it was kind of different experience. One year, [I sat] in one corner that had some couches with the Goth-type kids. Another year, I was sitting at the black table. Another year, I was just in the art room with people that would just do art stuff. And so, a very interesting kind of...I don't know...it's just like the attitude and just the way of communicating. Everyone has their own little clique.

When asked why he chose to sit with the black kids or other different “cliques,” he revealed how he “went to sit with a friend” who sat there. “He was black and I knew him from elementary school,” Shasta said. They “would go bowling...every Wednesday.” They “were pretty close, and it just became a habit.” He said, “I think after a while I went ‘wait a second...everyone here at the table is black except for me.’” He went on to describe some of his other influential friendships from high school.

A lot of my friends...I guess being really open minded and liberal attracts you to similarly like-minded people. So, I always had friends that were—I guess we were always into like *anime* and Japanese stuff—so, they were people that maybe would associate more with Eastern culture and [guy] friends that would only date Japanese girls, type of thing. So, the issue of hanging around with somebody who wasn't white didn't pop-up because if I hang out at the black table, my best friend is dating a Japanese girl, and...so, it's not like a huge issue. I've had friends that

have had stories of how people aren't cool with interracial dating or hanging out with whomever. But, I guess not the people that I attracted [to form] friendships. [We] shared ideologies...it also extends to sexuality too. I always had gay friends in high school and friends that would date bisexual women or whomever. So, it might be a little joke here and there but it wasn't a problem...just having friends that did not judge like that.

Shasta comes from a fairly large family. He has "four siblings, three older and one younger." He described his parents as "pretty open," although his father "tends to bug everybody and not give [them] respect [by being] an ass sometimes, [and] a lot of times [he] doesn't really treat people nicely," and some members of the family say "he's kind of racist." But, Shasta said, "He doesn't openly say bad things; he's not like 'oh I hate these other people.'" He further explained how his father may have "said jokes or things that were just kind of like 'uck'...But it was never openly [prejudiced]. He shared, "I've had black friends stay over for the weekend and stuff. I took my friend who was a lesbian to my senior prom. It wasn't like 'hey, why are you doing that?' type of thing."

Shasta attributes his "open-mindedness" to the influence of his mother, brother, and sisters. Overall, he described his family interactions as "...everyone found middle ground to talk on stuff. And if we talked about an issue or something in the news or whatever, it just came back to rights for everybody, and why do *we* have to say what people can or cannot do."

Besides the story shared previously of how Shasta "sat at the black table for one whole year" he expressed limited conversations about racial issues before coming to college. He did share how he could relate to being a "minority within a majority" because

he is Jewish. He stated:

Because I'm white, there wasn't tons of racial talk. Like you know, I met black people that go "we always talked about it, how could you never talk about it?"

Well, we've talked about some Jewish things like "oh, did you hear about x, y or z?" Because even though we're white, we're Jewish, so [being Jewish] was still like a minority within a majority.

*Tiffany*

I interviewed Tiffany first on September 29, 2005, next on October 27<sup>th</sup>, and the last time on November 15<sup>th</sup>, six days after observing her facilitate her SOC 119 discussion group. Like Elizabeth and Jan, she transferred from a Commonwealth campus of Penn State (PSU-Schuylkill). She is 21-years-old and heterosexual. As a senior during our interviews, she graduated in December with a major in Crime, Law, and Justice and a minor in Sociology (GPA 3.2). Tiffany lived in a suburb just outside of Newark. Because of the proximity to the city, she went to high school in Newark, which she described as "extremely diverse." She continued to explain the racial makeup of the high school:

I would think the whites and the blacks were around the same percentage, half-and-half. And then the Puerto Ricans; I think there was probably...about 7% Puerto Ricans, 3% Asians, and the rest of the makeup is like blacks and whites, and then we had a couple biracial people.

The area she lived in was also a "mixture" of people from many different socioeconomic backgrounds, from "nicer" areas like where she lived to "white trash areas." She further explained how, although they "didn't really have poor people" in the area where she lived, her family was on the "poverty line...but, for the last 10 years [her] grandparents



have been paying [the] mortgage on [their] house.”

Tiffany chronologically outlined her exposure to racial and ethnic difference and by describing the evolution of her friendships. She stated:

My first black friend’s name was Robert. We didn’t really even pay any attention to the fact that he was a different color than us. It was just like, “yeah we have one black person in our group.” So, when I got to middle school, which was in 5th grade, I got shipped to Drew Pyle, which is in Wilmington, and that was like my first interaction with like really different races. Like my next door neighbors were black, but I didn’t hang out with them. Then, when I went to 5<sup>th</sup> grade it was like, I looked around, and you had majority of black people because we were inner city...we were in inner-city schooling. So, I would get shipped from my townhouse all the way up there. So, it was just like *wow!* And then, my 5<sup>th</sup> grade year I really didn’t hang out with anyone but white people. And then my 6<sup>th</sup> grade year was when I met Ava. Ava lived in Puerto Rico for the last four years before that and she spoke Spanish fluently. And we just started hanging out cause she was sitting next to me, because you know how you have to sit in desks in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, and we started talking and everything. I started hanging out with her and her family, which is a traditional Puerto Rican family. You ate Puerto Rican meals, you clean, you cook, you know what I mean? Ava, every day after school, would have to go home and clean and then she would have to cook dinner for her parents. [...] And then, 7<sup>th</sup> grade I started hanging out with my Puerto Rican chick in 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Seventh grade was when I got I started hanging out with different cultures cause I got in the science Olympiad and I got into different

school programs. And there were black people in my classes and stuff like that. But, it was still a predominantly white racial category for my friends, except for Ava. Then, 8<sup>th</sup> grade, I started hanging out with Ashley, and Ashley was white-white. The first day I met her she was wearing cut off jeans, the long jeans but they were all scraggly at the bottom, Converse's...well, no I lied, it was overalls. She was wearing a pair of corduroy overalls, a striped shirt, and Converse's. And she has these thick coke-bottle glasses. And I remember looking at her just like "oh my God she needs help" I just remember sitting there thinking that. And then, her and I became friends and I guess you would say...I don't want to say "diversified" cause that sounds ghetto. But, I don't want to say "ghetto" either because that even sounds worse. But, my sisters had dated black men...my sisters introduced me to being cool. So, I had to make [Ashley] cool if I was going to start hanging out with her. And she became my partner in our English class. So, I had to make her cool cause I just didn't want to be hanging out with an un-cool person.

She described her "two best friends" in high school as: "one was male and one was female; the female was African American and the male was mixed, half African American and half white. And the male still denies being gay, but we know he's gay." She continued describing why her male friend did not come out. "He doesn't want to admit it because, see, he grew up in an African American family and stereotypically African American families think that's a wrong thing [to be gay]."

Tiffany's parents recently divorced. She shared the following about the relationship she had with them:

Both my parents are alcoholics. My dad is a severe alcoholic. My mom is a recovering alcoholic who's still currently drinking but not that much. So, my dad, although he's a drunk, I've always said I've been closest with my dad. Like when I was younger, I was the little boy my dad never had. At first they claimed I was going to be a boy until I actually came out—the ultrasound said I was boy. So, I was John Jr. from day one; and then I popped out, and my mom was like “okay, it's another girl [said in a disappointed tone].” So, I've been my dad's little girl. I've been doing things like working on cars with him, working on the house with him, and building rooms, and building decks and stuff with him. And I learned a lot from my dad. And my dad is one of those stubborn assholes because he's a drunk; and when he is right, he is right. And you don't argue with him. So, when I'm right, I'm right. And it's not because I'm a drunk. It's just because my dad taught me to be that way.

She continued to explain how her father influenced the thing she “loves” about herself, her “confidence,” which she feels is a “very male characteristic” that was influenced by her father “because [she] was closest with [her] dad.” She stated:

*Would I change it for the world?* No. I love how confident I am. I love the fact that I can stand up to a six-foot five black guy—or white guy—who weighs 400 pounds, and not back down cause I'm not afraid of them. I try to instill this in my friends cause I have two friends who have been physically abused and a best friend who used to be physically abused in her family life. I was like, “if I was ever with a guy and he raised a hand to me” I said, “I'll tell you right now,” I said, “I'd either kill them or I would do something to them.”

Tiffany told me a story of how her older “sisters only dated black guys...and that’s how [she] got into the black culture, because they [blacks] were around since [she] was real young.” Her interest in black culture as a child and wanting to remain “daddy’s little girl” was complicated because she felt that her “dad was very racist.” She recalled that when her “sister first started dating a black man—and he was in a union—every other word [from my dad] was nigger.” She remembered her dad “getting down [their] throats...” She remembered declaring, “I’m never dating a black man” when she was 10 years old. Incidentally, to this day she has kept her promise. She continued to describe the extent to which her father’s and grandparents’ racism influenced her beliefs growing up:

So, it started with I’m never dating a black man because I want to have a white child because at that time both my sisters were dating black men...not just like *black* men, the skin color, the skin tones. My one sister was dating a black, black man that you could not see at night unless he smiled or opened his eyes. That was how dark he was. And I could see that it hurt my dad. But also, I know that my grandparents, that if we brought home a mixed kid to my grandparents, my grandparents would shit bricks.

#### Chapter Summary and Transition

Although all nine participants expressed that an influential adult or family member from their childhood shaped their predisposition—positively or negatively—to learning about racial difference (i.e., “openness”), the data does not support that they entered college with any of the following: critical racial awareness, explicit antiracism attitudes or beliefs, or an understanding of whiteness as it relates to power and privilege. It was not until experiencing SOC 119 (discussed in the next chapter) that any of these

began to take shape.

Further, from the interviews the participants did not reveal any racial justice ally behaviors before coming to Penn State. Most recalled “openness” to racial difference and an interest in learning about it before coming to college. Thus, the evidence presented to this point does not suggest that a pre-college disposition toward racial justice directly leads to racial justice ally behavior, although there seems to be an indirect relationship with the process of becoming a racial justice ally.

Understanding the influence of pre-college characteristics are essential to setting the stage for the following discussion of the themes directly related to the experiences of SOC 119 and SOC 300. The next chapter narrows the discussion of the data to address the specific research questions using the themes which emerged from the interviews and cross-case analysis of the transcripts.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Thematic Analysis**

The previous chapter presented self-portraits of the participants and established the general characteristics, values, beliefs, and attitudes they brought with them to the intentionally designed racial justice curriculum (SOC 119 and SOC 300 experiences). The voices of the participants revealed they all had childhood experiences that could have predisposed them for learning about racial difference and race relations, but none reported any preexisting racial justice ally behaviors.

In this chapter I present and discuss the themes and sub-themes which emerged from the data across the nine interview transcripts, focusing on participant reflections of experiences related to their experiences in SOC 119 and SOC 300. Only those themes related to the research questions are included (see Appendix D for a full list of themes). And, just as I included other non-curricular influences on racial justice ally development in Chapter Four, in this chapter I include pertinent college involvement outside of the SOC 119 and SOC 300 experiences that might have influenced participants' development.

Although multiple participant responses proved insightful and supported the themes, I only provide excerpts that capture the fundamental nature of the theme derived through cross-case comparisons of the data. Also note that the themes are not offered in any hierarchical order. Beyond categorizing the themes by the research questions, I grouped them according to various levels revealed through the systematic analysis of the

data: the individual-learner level which includes developmental characteristics, and the educational contexts or course-level themes that explain the learning process.

### The Learner

The first research question, *how do white undergraduate students experience an intentionally designed racial justice curriculum*, addresses the individual-level characteristics of the learner as they reported experiences from SOC 119 and SOC 300. During grounded theory analysis of the data, the initial one-dimensional development characteristics were categorized into three broader themes which logically clustered to reveal the developmental complexity of the learner. These themes naturally emerged from the data and related to King and Baxter Magolda's (2005) three dimensions of "intercultural maturity" (cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal). Intercultural maturity is "the developmental capacity that undergirds ...the way learners approach, understand, and act on their concerns" (p. 574) related to cultural and racial differences. The expertise required to demonstrate intercultural skills includes the following: a complex understanding of cultural/racial differences (cognitive); the capacity to accept and not feel threatened by cultural/racial differences (intrapersonal); and the capacity to function interdependently with diverse others (interpersonal). I present the data using the intercultural maturity model because it provides an explanation of the various meaning-making processes occurring during the educational interventions; in other words, my analysis of the learner's developmental complexity.

Each section begins with a brief definition of the constructs as they relate to the overall model, followed by excerpts taken from the interviews with the participants, and concluding with a brief interpretation of the excerpts as they relate across all three

trajectory levels of intercultural maturity: initial, intermediate, and mature. The “levels” of intercultural maturity presented here are in no way as tidy as they may seem. As with the application of any theoretical model, the interpretation of the data is subjective and context dependent. The placement of the participants into a level of intercultural maturity may vary depending on the context they are describing and my interpretations of those descriptions. By offering examples that show the interrelationships across domains of the trajectory, I also intend to show the complexity of this developmental progression.

It is important to note that participants may be in various levels of the three dimensions. They may not fall into the same level across all three dimensions even though, because the dimensions are so interrelated, it is common to see progression in all three trajectories, albeit overlapping and often on the borderlines. And, the context may change the perceived level of development, which is why King and Baxter Magolda consider a consistent presence of maturity in all three dimensions “with the application of one’s learning in changing contexts as the more stringent criterion of educational success” (2005, p. 575). Therefore, intercultural maturity provides the developmental indicators of learning as the participants experienced SOC 300.

#### *Dimensions of Intercultural Maturity*

King and Baxter Magolda’s model of intercultural maturity encompasses concepts developed by Kegan (1994, as cited in King & Baxter Magolda, 2005). In brief, the cognitive dimension focuses on how the individual constructs views and “creates a meaning-making system based on how one understands knowledge and how it is gained” (p. 574). The intrapersonal dimension focuses on how the individual makes sense of her or his beliefs, values, personal identities (sense of self) and uses these understandings to



make decisions about behavior. How the individual views him or herself in relation to others and the others' views, values, and behaviors (as they relate to the individual's choices made in social contexts) are the focal points of the interpersonal dimension. For each of the following dimensions of intercultural maturity, I offer examples from my data. These illustrations reveal how the theory of intercultural maturity can be used to understand the experiences of students in SOC 300.

*Initial intercultural maturity.* The initial cognitive level assumes that knowledge is certain, transmitted from an authority figure, and dualistically determined to be right or wrong. The learner is unaware and disinterested in different cultural practices and values, resists challenges to her or his beliefs, and views other perspectives as wrong.

A learner at the initial level of intrapersonal development presents a lack of self-awareness, limited knowledge of personal attributes related to values and beliefs, social group membership or identity (race, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation), and knowledge about other cultures (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005). These individuals rely on external influences to define their belief systems and concept of self, which also determines their choices. Difference is perceived as a threat to their identity and their unquestioned personal values and beliefs.

Initial interpersonal levels of development are focused on social affirmation; the learner seeks out and depends upon relations with like-others to affirm identity. There is little awareness of how "social systems affect group norms" (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005, p. 576) and interaction typically occurs in homogenous groups. Societal-level problems are only viewed as salient if they personally affect the individual learner.

Through our interviews, Elizabeth revealed characteristics consistent with an initial level of intercultural maturity across all three dimensions. The following excerpts provide support for this claim by showing how she cognitively, intrapersonally, and interpersonally has just begun to develop intercultural maturity. Complimenting her words I offer my interpretation of the behaviors she presented, which illuminate the characteristics indicative of intercultural development within all three dimensions. In the first interview Elizabeth stated:

I remember even from the time that I was a little girl my mom was like “always include everyone, always be nice to everyone.” I never ever, and still to this day, can’t understand how something like slavery could happen just because of the color of somebody’s skin or how they look. To me, I cannot wrap my mind around that. It’s just unbelievable to me. People are people to me. You can’t fault somebody for how they were raised or where they grew up. What matters is that I’m here right now in the present; really trying to do something and being concerned. I don’t need to be in this class, it doesn’t do anything for me. I did it extra because it was something that inspired me and made me feel good. So, if this is how you’re going to be to everybody then why would any white person even want to be aware of that, if you’re going to be ignorant to them?

Further, when I asked Elizabeth “How does racism affect you?” she replied:

I don’t know. How does racism affect me? I mean it doesn’t really affect me. It doesn’t. I don’t suffer from racist comments, racist slurs. I don’t suffer from any type of discrimination. I never have. So I wouldn’t say that it really affects me. I mean it affects me in the fact that it’s influencing what I want to do with my life.

I guess it doesn't negatively affect me though. But it affects me in the fact that it makes me want to learn more about myself and more about people. It interests me.

Elizabeth reportedly relies on her mother's imparted knowledge to make sense of the world and struggles because it is her understanding that it is right to "always be nice to everyone" thus, she is unable to "wrap her mind" around slavery or contemporary racism. She does not accept the perspective of those who may not think her desire to participate in SOC 300 and race relations is a noble one. She especially discounts the perspective of people of color who may not appreciate her interest in race relations, yet she desires their approval. Her limited self-awareness is revealed by her lack of racial awareness both in her white identity and her colorblind approach to the races and ethnicities of others. Until college, more specifically SOC 300, she has not thought about her whiteness or the racial identities of others.

In her description of how and when she came to think about race and racial issues, Elizabeth's initial level of intrapersonal development becomes clearer. She shared:

All this [seeing race and issues of race] didn't really hit me until I came to Penn State. When I came to college my eyes were just...I was blown away. Actually, in Laurie's group [SOC 300] on Monday we had a Native American woman come in. She was passing around this thing and one of the questions she asked was "how do you identify culturally or ethnically?" And I seriously...that was the first time that I had really *really* thought about it because I've never had to do that before. Basically, how I identify myself, to other people, is through what I like, through what I do, through my interests, my passions.

Indicators of an initial level of interpersonal development become visible in Elizabeth's response to a question of whether anybody ever thought she was of another race or ethnicity because of her light-brown complexion. She appears unaware of how her behaviors may be perceived by others racially different from her and does not acknowledge such oppositional perspectives may even exist. She said:

Oh yeah. Well what's kind of funny about that is I've had more people tell me that this past semester than ever in my whole life. I'm not kidding. When I was a little girl in the summer I'd get like black as black can be. And I had people ask me if I was a little black girl. And to really be honest it never bothered me. I kind of laughed and thought it was funny. I was like "oh that's kind of cool." And then, from this year, in our [119 discussion] groups, actually the first day that we had them, we did *First Impressions*. And everyone had to write their name on a piece of paper, you passed it [around] and just wrote [down your first impression of each person in the group]. But, in both my groups I got from a couple people: mixed racially, ethnically different, whatever. That doesn't really bother me...I liked it. I like being exotic. I mean I'm not like exotic-exotic...but I like being different. I just think that it's something that is inherent in people [that perception of race plays a role in valuing what you say]. I think that it's something that, maybe not for everybody, but...just black people maybe are conditioned to do that a little bit I think [that if a multiracial person says something it is more valued by blacks than if a white person says it]. And that's something that's frustrating to me, like what *do* black people think of me who is concerned about something that I really don't have to be concerned about, having white privilege?

In search of clarification I said, “So, if you’re perceived as potentially being multiracial and people don’t know unless they ask you...” she interrupted and said “Right. I just think more people of color would be more open [if I was multiracial].” I followed up by asking, “What about the white people?” She responded, “Huh, that’s a good question. I don’t know.” Our conversation then turned to white privilege. I asked, “How do you benefit from white privilege?” She replied:

Well...specifically, I don’t know. But I think in general, it’s just in day-to-day life things that I may not even realize just how people react towards me or how they treat me with a certain type of respect or like being waited on or even like applying for jobs. Like that type of stuff. I didn’t realize that people actually do look at race as a factor. I don’t know. That’s a good question.

Socially affirming relationships are critical to Elizabeth’s identity and guide her decisions. For example, she views her ability to “pass” as multiracial as “exotic” because she thinks others may value her perspective more if she is “of color.” She does not see how this contradicts with her colorblind beliefs, nor does she see how greater social systems affect group norms. Elizabeth’s egocentricity is evident in all dimensions, including how she views social problems by maintaining that since she has not been a target of racism therefore, it does not affect her.

*Intermediate intercultural maturity.* Following King and Baxter Magolda’s (2005) initial level of intercultural maturity is the intermediate level. The intermediate cognitive phase illustrates how the views about knowledge shift from certain-knowing to acknowledging uncertainty and a decrease in relying on experts for this received knowing. The learner begins to rely on personal processing of claims to construct

meaning and, due to uncertainty, is more open to differing perspectives.

An intermediate level of the intrapersonal dimension reveals an evolving sense of identity that is different from the perceptions of external others. Self-exploration of values, beliefs, and racial identity are defining characteristics of this phase, which is often initiated by the tension between external and internal defining forces. With this new awareness of self, the learner becomes immersed in her or his culture while simultaneously legitimating other cultural perspectives.

Interpersonal development at the intermediate level of intercultural maturity shows an openness to interactions with diverse others, which assumes a refrain from judging those considered different. However, the sense of self is commonly overshadowed by the need for external approval and social acceptance. At this level the learner begins to explore how group norms and intergroup relations are affected by social systems i.e., structures of race, class, gender, and the like.

Viewed holistically, Allison exhibits characteristics which could be associated with an intermediate level of intercultural maturity in all three dimensions. Although not addressing the exact questions asked of Elizabeth, the following excerpts reveal a notable increase in developmental complexity (cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal) when compared to the previous statements shared by Elizabeth. When I asked Allison “How does today’s racism and racial inequality affect you?” her response below illustrates a shift from the initial level of understanding to an intermediate level. She shared the following:

I think personally...it makes me aware and it makes me think about these things when I’m in different positions...and ultimately my career path because I tend to

want to get involved in something related to race relation issues, I'm not quite sure where. I think ultimately, when I first got here I was kind of thrown back to that younger child mindset like I have to prove to [people of color] that I'm not Joe Schmo [typical racially-unaware white person]. But, I think that it makes me aware because I look at both sides and I try to be objective. What [people of color are] saying to me might not be a personal insult. It might just be a function of what they know me to be, and kind of just be aware and not to take everything so personally.

When she first came to college she was compelled to prove to people of color she was not "like other whites." More recently she elicits intermediate level traits, where gaining approval from racial others is not her primary focus of engaging in race relations. By not taking "everything so personally" she is better able to accept that not everyone sees the world the way she does and different perspectives are not all personal attacks.

Later in the interview I asked, "Would you ever trade places with a person of color?" She first shared her genuine interest in and desire to learn about cultures other than her own, and later she revealed a puzzling situation of "not liking a lot of other white people" right now. I connect her current distaste for other whites with a bias against rural people and cultures, which I sensed at times during our conversations, especially when discussing cultural practices of rural Pennsylvanians, like hunting. She shared the following:

I don't know. I guess I don't think that would make my life any easier being that I feel I'm privileged as it is. I think I would like to understand what it is like...I just really, really, really enjoy the Hispanic culture. I'm determined to learn that

stinkin' language even though it's taking me forever. [...] I think the one thing that I've heard in my discussion groups and I found I think myself is that a lot of cultures, specifically black and Hispanic, are much more colorful in like engaging, and their celebrations...they're louder. They have more songs. I think the white culture is very uptight and they are like, "don't embarrass yourself" and "don't speak too loudly, don't bother anybody, be polite," not like anyone else isn't polite...but [blacks and Hispanics] just seem to have more of a family, more of a bonding. White culture is paper pushing, you've got to get the job, get the money.... So, I think that would be interesting to join one of those cultures. But, I think, also, that doing that would require I take on a different role in society than me sitting here now.

Her negativity toward white culture later revealed an intermediate level of awareness of what she considered "one of her biggest prejudices." This indicates an intermediate level of understanding because she is aware of the bias and is working toward figuring it out. She stated,

This is probably like one of my biggest prejudices that I've worked towards [figuring out]...I guess I've had a problem as far as like looking down on those people because I can't relate to them. Going back to your white guilt question, not so much as being guilty about being white but not liking a lot of other white people...I'm not sure where that's coming from.

Additionally, when I asked her, "Do you feel that you can understand the oppression that people of color face?" she was able to relate her experience as a woman dealing with sexism to what people of color must face due to racism. She answered,



Yeah. I feel like I've gotten that a lot in discussion groups [I took before the SOC 300 one] especially the one where I was the only white person; [the students of color] made it sound like I could never understand what [racial oppression] is. And it really upset me that day because it's true. I'll never walk down the street and wonder if people are reacting to me [because of my skin color]. I also understand it on a sexism basis; it's not the same thing, but I hate when people talk to me like they're talking to a female. But, I will never fully understand [racism] firsthand but I have had relatives, neighbors, friends, different relationships throughout my history who have been affected by these things and they're heart is in essence my heart as well because I'm close to them. So, I think I have an understanding. But whether or not I can fully grasp it, I mean obviously, there's a limit to that aspect of it.

Evident in the quote below are intermediate interculturally mature characteristics, which reveal that Allison does not view the world egocentrically. She sees systemic inequality and structures that maintain such unequal distribution of power of privilege. She responded to the question, "Who's to blame for racism today?" by stating:

Not to sound like I'm a conspiracy theorist but I really think that those in power have maintained the structure, not necessarily intentionally, but just like what people think and it just keeps getting carried out...the media portrays things, you see the same things. And a lot of people aren't out shouting racial epithets in the street for the most part. They're still not getting the jobs or whatever. Affirmative action, reverse discrimination, you realize these things all the time and it's always a black male who's on TV but doing something terrible in the society. So...I feel

that those people have the ability to shape what we see and we're seeing kind of something that maintains our view right now.

Allison's words reveal traits distinctive of an intermediate developmental level of intercultural maturity. She's open to multiple perspectives and does not believe there is only one way to know anything. By not taking comments from people of color "so personally" and realizing they may not make sense of the world like she does due to racial differences, she is able to make her own meaning without relying on external authorities. Her increased comfort in uncertainty is evident in her ability to make her own meaning of racism, to acknowledge she may never fully understand it like a person of color but make sense of it by relating it to her experiences with sexism as a woman.

Interestingly, her dislike of whites may represent an evolving sense of white identity. In trying to make sense of her role in the struggle against racism, she tries to disassociate herself from colorblind whites. By embracing and actively interacting with other cultures she further disassociates herself from her own race and the white guilt that she feels when associated with "those other whites." This tension prompts more reflection and self-exploration about race, whiteness, and racial justice. Illustrated in Allison's final quote is the beginning of her exploration into how social systems affect group norms and intergroup relations. She sees race and racism in a larger societal context and sees how institutionalized racism manifest in the popular media creates and sustains systems of racial oppression.

*Intercultural maturity.* The cognitively mature learner is characterized by the "ability to consciously shift perspectives and behaviors into an alternative cultural worldview and to use multiple cultural frames" (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005, p. 576).

The learner has the potential for meaning making without relying on external sources which might result in developing a critical consciousness, both personal and social. A mature intrapersonal learner has developed the “capacity to create an internal self that openly engages challenges to one’s views and beliefs and that considers social identities...in a global and national context” (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005, p. 576). Further, the intrapersonally mature learner integrates aspects of self into personal identity. A characteristic of the interpersonally mature learner is “the capacity to engage in meaningful, interdependent relationships with diverse others that are grounded in an understanding and appreciation for human differences” (p. 576). The interpersonally mature learner understands that individuals and community practices influence social systems and she or he is willing to actively work for the rights of others (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005).

Not unexpectedly, and perhaps partly due to his age and life experiences, Nate expressed characteristics often related to a mature level of intercultural maturity. He exhibits what I consider the most complex developmental capabilities in all three dimensions when compared to the other participants. When I asked Nate “How does racism affect you?” he replied:

Racism affects me...in the same way that it affects most white people; it affects me as I let it affect me. And I understand that that’s not the choice that people of color have. And that’s one thing that I’m very thankful to SOC 119 for, is that I understand now more than I did that if you’re born into a minority that is something that you have to deal with every day. And if you’re not, it’s something you can choose to deal with every day. And I think that that was one of the bigger

things that I got out of SOC 119 is the beginning of the realization of that.

Racism affects me in my dealings with my daughter because I want to try and teach her how I wish I was taught instead of the way that I was and then I had to figure out for myself “is that true? Is that not true? Is my [black] friend Eddie, is he really weird and different from me? Is my dad right? Or, am I right,” which is hard for a second grader to try and figure out. I don’t want my daughter to have to deal with that. I want her to know that racism exists and that we’re on the—  
unfortunately or not unfortunately we’re on the better end of the stick. But there are things that we should be doing. But I’m still you know encased in this white privilege of...if I ever decide that I don’t want to deal with this any more, all I have to do is turn around and walk away. So, to say that racism is this huge issue in my life, I can’t because I could always drop it and leave. I’m not choosing to drop it and leave but it’s never going to be the issue for me that it is for [a person of color] or you know anyone else out on the street that is born into a non-majority class, race, anything. So it affects me, again, that I’m making myself think about it. It affects me in that I’m trying to understand other people’s viewpoints, and trying to make inroads, and trying to get connected to groups that I probably wouldn’t have been connected to or worried about connecting to otherwise. But I don’t know when I, when I hear that question I feel like it’s often best to ask to people who have to deal with it every day. Although, it’s completely valid to ask the other side, they’re going to have less to say and what I say about racism and how it affects me daily is almost superficial compared [to what people of color would say].

Within this excerpt, Nate illustrates the following interculturally mature traits: he is able to consciously shift perspectives and view the world through multiple cultural frames; he is capable of creating an internal self that is racially aware, open to challenges, and global in scope; and he has an appreciation for human difference which he plans on extending to his daughter. Predictably, the three examples above illustrate how whiteness plays a significant role in the learner's development of intercultural maturity for whites. Even though the analysis resulted in multiple themes relating to white racial identity development, the intercultural maturity model integrates racial identity development within its structural dimensions. Therefore, I only briefly present the next theme to emphasize the importance of whiteness to a white learner experiencing SOC 300.

*Whiteness.* The Reason et al. (2005) conceptual model employed for this study uses Giroux's (1997) concept of "whiteness" to signify "respondents' understandings of what it means to be White in contemporary society...how their own identities have been shaped within a broader racist culture and the responsibilities Whites assume because they live in a society that privileges them based on their racial features" (p. 314). Reason et al. (2005) determined that their participants' sense of whiteness was related to their attitudes toward people of color, and their level of racial justice action. Similarly, in this study I explored the participants' understandings of their racial identity (whiteness), how their racial identity shapes their view of themselves and the world, and what they feel their role is in challenging the privilege allotted them because of their skin color.

The King and Baxter Magolda (2005) model nestles racial identity development within the intrapersonal dimension of intercultural maturity with the assumption that the interpersonal and cognitive play a role. As revealed through the quotes above and

previous scholarship on whiteness, white racial identity development toward a racial justice paradigm can be problematic (Eichstedt, 2001; Frankenberg, 1993; Ortiz & Rhoads, 2000; Reason, 2005; Roediger, 2002; Tatum, 1994). The salience of whiteness appeared throughout all of the interviews at varying degrees of sophistication just as it did in the examples above. These examples confirm how the sophistication of whiteness corresponds with the level of intercultural development within the three dimensions.

Elizabeth's understanding of her whiteness is just beginning. She espouses a colorblind worldview and said that racism "doesn't affect her" beyond "wanting to learn more about [her]self and more about people...it interests [her]." She shared that having a light-brown complexion was "kind of cool" because she "likes being exotic...and different," like people of color.

Allison, on the other hand, is quite aware of racial difference and white privilege both on a personal and societal level. She described how her whiteness has changed from having to "prove" to people of color that she is "not like other whites," to immersing herself in learning about other cultures. This is perhaps due to her feelings that "white culture is very uptight" and "not liking a lot of other white people."

The most sophisticated sense of whiteness is evident in the excerpts taken from the interviews with Nate. He acknowledged, "Racism affects me...in the same way it affects most white people...as I let it affect me. I understand that that's not the choice that people of color have...I could always drop it and leave." He understands the unearned skin-color advantages he has and one of them is the option to ignore race, his own and that of others. Also, throughout Nate's interviews, he respectfully recognizes that he is still learning about his race and interracial relations. He stated, "I'm trying to

understand other people's viewpoints...and trying to get connected to groups that I probably wouldn't...otherwise."

In summary, each participant's level of intercultural maturity may vary depending upon the context or question posed. What I presented above represents the fluidity, overlapping nature, and interdependence of the developmental dimensions. The King and Baxter Magolda (2005) model facilitated this discussion of the developmental complexity of three of the learners as they entered the learning contexts. Although I am unable to provide a detailed illustration of each participant's intercultural maturity due to the lack of space, I present these three participants that capture the essence of how the learner could experience the racial justice curriculum, which relies heavily on her or his developmental complexity as they enter the curricular experiences. In the next section I show how the intercultural maturity of the learner and the learning contexts are mutually dependent. How the learner experiences the racial justice curriculum (SOC 119 and SOC 300) depends on their intercultural maturity, and the development of their intercultural maturity depends on their experiences in the SOC 119 and SOC 300 learning contexts.

My interpretations of the behaviors relayed to me through the reflections of the remainder of the nine learners also indicated many characteristics associated with King and Baxter Magolda's (2005) model of intercultural maturity. Systematic analysis of the data not shown here revealed the following. Like Elizabeth, three of the other participants exhibited behaviors associated with an initial level of intercultural maturity. Four of the remaining learners exhibited intermediate developmental characteristics, similar to Allison. And, only Nate's behavior conveyed a primarily mature level of intercultural development. Please bear in mind, within each "level" there are degrees of development

which are fluid, context dependent, and continually evolving, therefore these determinations of developmental complexity are in no way constant or absolute.

### The Learning Contexts

In the next section of this chapter I present the themes which answer the second research question: *How does the intentionally designed racial justice curriculum influence the racial justice ally development of the white participants?* Before specifically addressing the SOC 300 experience, I discuss the influence of SOC 119, which represents the introductory course of the racial justice curriculum.

### SOC 119

Chapter Four revealed all nine participants expressed that an influential adult or family member from their childhood shaped their predisposition—positively or negatively—to learning about racial difference (i.e., “openness”). The data, however, does not support that they entered college with any of the following: critical racial awareness, explicit antiracism attitudes or beliefs, or an understanding of whiteness as it relates to power and privilege. It was not until experiencing SOC 119 that any of these began to take shape. This part of the chapter builds from what is known about each individual learner as she or he entered college by offering the answers from the following questions about SOC 119. Why did you take SOC 119? What did you learn in the course? How did you experience the discussion group? And, how did you become an undergraduate teaching assistant for SOC 119?

*Why did you take SOC 119?*

Overall, the respondents took SOC 119 for practical reasons. A trusted individual (friend, roommate, or advisor) recommended it as a “good course” to take, “an easy A,”



or a course that “nobody should go through college without taking.” Examples of why the participants enrolled in SOC 119 are as follows:

When I came up here, I knew I liked...I took some intro SOC class as a senior [in high school]...and I really like it. And then when I saw it was *Race and Ethnic Relations* I was like, “Oh, that sounds good...that sounds really interesting. So, I signed up for it, and then, my advisor at the time said “that’s a very popular course.” I was like, “okay great...sounds interesting to me.” (Allison)

I needed a Gen Ed or something, and I was scrolling through eLion which is where we go to register for our classes, and SOC 119 came up, so I read the description. And I was like, “Oh thank God, something about culture. (Amaya)

My roommate, my best friend, she had taken it and so had my other friend and they were like, “you know, I don’t think anyone should go through college without taking this course. It’s just kind of nice,” and they said it was very refreshing, that’s how I remember them describing it. (Brooke)

I heard from a friend it was a pretty good course and it would make you think about things differently. So, I thought that would be a pretty good idea. And then when my advisor told me I had to fulfill a diversity requirement...and so, it fit that Gen Ed that I typically do not excel in. (John)

One of the major reasons, was it fit into my schedule because I can only go [to

class] at night. And I'm really glad that it did fit into my schedule. I also thought this will probably be really interesting, and it fits into my schedule; and it's four credits instead of three. (Nate)

Honestly, I signed up for SOC 119 and I didn't even know the name of the class. I took it because my one friend said it was an easy A. And, she said that Sam was just absolutely awesome...and he is, don't get me wrong. I was hooked day one on the class. But, the whole reason was because it was an easy A. (Tiffany)

*What did you learn in the course?*

Although practical reasons attracted the respondents to SOC 119, what they reported learning extended beyond the practical to the "eye-opening." As shown through the following excerpts, each student reported relating differently to course topics and the course professor, Sam. A common theme shared by all participants was the powerful "awakening," "perspective-changing," "mind-opening," "mini-revelation," and "wow" experience the course provided. This phenomenon, resulting from SOC 119, was also reported by the Ally participants in the pilot study that provides the conceptual foundation for this research (Reason *et al.*, 2005). The following responses reveal the distinct and indistinguishable learning experiences occurring in SOC 119; where each individual participant takes from SOC 119 a unique message, while simultaneously receiving the shared lesson of opening minds, increasing critical social awareness, and awakening to their whiteness for perhaps the first time.

Honestly, taking Sam's class when I was a first-semester freshman was just like, "ok, there's someone here that I agree with," [I found myself] nodding my head.

This is how I think. SOC 119 really helped me to adjust my first semester. I think, if nothing else, it opens your eyes. I don't think that necessarily everyone is affected the way I was affected by that class, being that I needed it for whatever I wanted to do with my life, but I do think that regardless of where you start from [...] it's info you might not have thought about before. (Allison)

Every day was like a huge awakening for me; every class lesson. [...] Basically, my mom told me the only thing that I was really going to learn in college was finding out about yourself and why you believe what you believe—and so this was the class for it. And that's what Sam taught right away in his class that I had never heard. It's always, "what's the professor going to do for you." This is the first class at Penn State that was "what can you give and how?" Because growing up I was in a homogeneous high school...then coming to college, I saw a different side of the world. And I thought it would be great to be in this class that just kind of brings that out. And it's always been fun to me to talk about different cultures and see how different people live different lifestyles. I liked the interaction between Sam and the students in the class; just the encouragement to speak your mind and ask any question you want and never have really a wrong answer, unless there was something that was going to be on a test. Everything else was simply discussion, the talking, and hearing different people's opinions and sides, which was a completely new concept of how to run a class for me. I guess being in SOC 119 for me was almost like studying abroad. I mean it really was. It was like taking a class on how to prepare to study abroad and this is what

the culture is going to be like, and this is how people are going to react to you, and this is what you need, and this is how you should communicate with them.

(Amaya)

Taking the class changed a lot of my perspective on things, and I had fallen in love with the course and its curriculum. I guess you could say that I'm kind of a blunt person sometimes; I don't like to be taboo. So, it was kind of nice to get into a class that not everything was taboo...I would say that was very refreshing for me...especially because the subjects sometimes are so taboo there's not a lot of knowledge out there...a lot of things to me were kind of new, and I was like "this is nice, no one's ever told me how much white privilege really is in existence." You hear about it, but when you see it, it's just, "wow." I hate that things are not equal, that there are people suffering, yet here I sit in this building and I have [so much], and so it was definitely one of those things where the ideals taught in that class very much kind of matched with my spiritual faith. People shouldn't be treated unequally. I like that [they're connected] and it made me even more interested in this because things that I've been hearing about loving everyone and not judging people, that's how it is connected. I think that's the thing, because it's a class where it's not a right or wrong answer thing. So, it does take a lot more thought. I think the problem is that a lot of people want to come out with a stance. They want to be able to say "this was right, this was wrong," and I think that's a hard part of the course because you're not told what's right or wrong. So, you have to come up with that opinion on your own and I

don't even know if it's a good thing to do, to try and figure out what's right and wrong. I think you just need to take it in and I think that's what's really hard to do on your own. (Brooke)

I love race relations. I feel like 119 was a blessing for me. College definitely is what opened my mind to a lot of things. Even like, as far as white privilege and all that stuff goes, I was never really aware of that until I started taking these classes, especially Sam's. It is what really like sparked interest in [race relations] because I guess it was like the fish in water type of thing. I just never even really thought about it. A class like Sam's, I think, should be mandatory for people to take. Even if it doesn't change them into wanting to be active like me, at least people are made aware of things. (Elizabeth)

I thought that class was a mini-revelation for me. A lot of the race stuff I knew a lot about beforehand...a lot more of it for me was learning about the world situations, learning about all the crazy amounts of slavery that's going on and the famine and the hunger that people go through. That to me was more of a jab in the stomach than anything else in that class was. And I tell people to take it. I tell a lot of people to take it for the experience of Sam, just because I think that if you have a teacher like that somewhere along the line, you're going to be like, "yeah." (Jan)

When I asked John, "Do you think SOC 119 made you look at things differently?" He

replied, "I think so, yeah. I mean, not so much from any of the data or things...so, more of hearing people's stories and what they felt and what they had to say, things like that."

He added the following:

[Also, the article we read] about white privilege. The one part was that if you're a white guy you can go anywhere to get your haircut. But, if you're not you can't. And I didn't even realize that...so, that was something I never even thought of and didn't even realize. And I'm sure there's a ton of other things that I can't even remember, all 47 reasons they listed. But, I'm sure there's a ton of things now that I would be like "Oh wow, I didn't even realize that even now."

When I asked Nate if SOC 119 changed how he thought he replied, "It did, because it made me think more along a SOC minor. It made me think more about 'Wow, this stuff really isn't fixed like I hoped.'" He continued,

...not that I ever was under the delusion that [racism] was fixed, because it's not possible to have that delusion and live where I lived. Because it wasn't fixed; it wasn't anywhere near fixed. It's much easier where I'm from to say it's never going to get fixed than it is to say that it is fixed. So, I don't think that it's the case that it is impossible to fix. I think that it may be the case that it's going to be real stinking hard to fix on any kind of large scale.

Tiffany also shared how she "didn't know everything that Sam taught." But she did "know a lot of the stuff that Sam did teach in class, especially about the drug statistics and everything, because my major is Crime, Law, and Justice." She was also astonished to learn that slavery still exists. She explained, "But, with the whole slavery bit and minority groups, they're the ones that usually get hit the hardest for slavery and stuff."

That tore me up personally.” Other powerful learning that occurred for her during the course came from the following:

And the one book...*My First White Friend*, I thought that book was really good. I really did because it shows how this one woman combated racism that was a family-bred thing and she finally became friends with a white person. [...] I took that class, and then that class just touched me.

Shasta connected what he was learning in his Women’s Studies courses to SOC 119, and he shared, “It’s totally interesting...once I really got into race with SOC 119 I realized how much my feminism and all those other issues that I had, intersected.”

*How did you experience the discussion group?*

Participants gave a range of responses when asked about their experiences as students in their SOC 119 discussion groups. From Amaya who said, “Oh yeah, I spoke a lot in my recitation class” to Allison who recalled the following:

In my discussion group I was very quiet, being intimidated. I was afraid. I was actually more afraid of the white people in the class than anyone of color because I didn’t want [the people of color] to think I think like [the whites]...I was the only freshman in the class. I couldn’t relate to what [the white students] were saying and I could relate more [to the students of color] but then it was just “okay, the white girl is trying to say she’s diverse or whatever.” So, it was really an internal struggle as far as like that class. I loved going through it but it was hard for me to speak up just because I felt like it was a very big conflict then.

Jan reported, “My discussion group for that class was incredible.” She explained that it was incredible because of the racial diversity of her section. She stated:

There was two other white girls in my class, a boy from the Dominican Republic, a couple of black gentlemen from the cities—different cities, Philly, DC, New York, all of them—we had an Indian boy who’s a foreign student he’s an exchange student. So, he’s just here for his education. And learning a whole lot about it. Everybody was mixed. Seriously, it was like the three white girls, one white guy, and everybody else was mixed.

Nate reported feeling that the discussion groups were a significant part of the learning experience of SOC 119:

But, that’s why I like these discussion groups because you’re not trying to fix [racism] on a large scale. You’re trying to get 15 people to talk about it. And that’s possible. And I know good and well that you can fix little stuff. And if you fix enough little things it becomes a big thing. So, that’s one of my main points about throwing my support behind this class and really thinking that this is a very worthwhile thing.

*How did you become a Teaching Assistant (TA) for SOC 119?*

*Invitation and opportunity.* More often than not, white students do not seek their first racial justice action experience on their own, an invitation is often required. Broido (2000) found that an invitation into social justice action was necessary for many of the participants in her study. Her participants reported becoming active in social justice by “chance” or “recruitment.” Reason et al. (2005) confirmed this phenomenon when they found that the Ally participants reported close friends or trusted individuals invited them into racial justice actions, or another opportunity served as a catalyst for such behavior. Thus, the first theme occurred before the participants began the SOC 300 course. The



data in the next section describes the significance of providing opportunities for racial justice action as well as inviting white undergraduate students who may not otherwise get involved to participate.

What follows is a critical thread that links each opportunity for racial justice ally action to an invitation by a trusted individual, which provides the participant with the increased confidence to participate in potential racial justice ally activities, such as being asked to TA for SOC 119 discussion groups, which requires enrollment in SOC 300. All participants expressed an interest in being a TA, however, most shared that they would not have applied without some sort of encouragement. Only John and Allison applied without a formal recommendation from either a TA or a Race Relations Project facilitator. Allison shared her experience:

Well actually, I applied as a freshman to be a TA, right after [taking SOC 119] even though my performance in the TA class had been less than stellar because of my discomfort originally...so, I actually wasn't accepted the first two times I applied, which was when I was a freshman and they didn't accept freshman at that time. And as a sophomore again I didn't either. So, I was like "okay, do I really want to do this."

John explained how and why he became a TA: "I was not recommended because I was very quiet in group. My TA's were quite surprised that I even applied. I applied because I liked the dialogue and wished to have it continue." John also shared that he "liked the discussion group" although he "didn't so much like the class [119] and even though [he] had a really weak discussion group..." He explained his enjoyment of his discussion

group, although it “kind of stunk,” was because he “really wanted to hear what other people had to say...” he added:

I did like the few moments where someone would come through and say something meaningful. Or, somebody would be like, “Oh, I never quite thought about it that way,” I really did enjoy that. I think that was one of the main reasons why I wanted to go on to be a TA, was just to get another chance to hear more discussion and maybe look at things a little bit differently or think about things a little bit differently. Or like I said, I wondered why maybe some people won’t talk about it, or why some people get so angry about it. I can understand why they get angry, but I don’t think I will ever be able to relate to their anger. When people talk about racism and stuff like that, I understand why you would get angry about it but, I don’t understand why sometimes that anger carries over...like the whole distrusting thing. [...] I guess that was maybe something else I kind of wanted to figure out, why maybe people would be distrusting of another group for one reason or another.

Of those encouraged to apply, Brooke felt she was recommended due to her active participation in the Race Relations Project, not her SOC 119 section in which she was “quite quiet.” She expressed delight and amazement when she was called to be a teaching assistant, although it took some convincing by Laurie to make her believe she was good enough to do it. She stated:

I can honestly say it was unexpected. I probably never thought I would TA a class in college to begin with...and I kind of took Soc 119 by chance, so when I became a facilitator it was wonderful, but still a surprise. Actually, what

happened was, I was quite quiet in my section when I was taking the class, but later I did the Race Relations Project—I did that a couple times...as a participant—and so, I was getting phone calls, they're like, "we want you to be a TA." And I'm like, "oh my god what!" It was actually funny because taking the [SOC 119] class changed a lot of my perspective in things and I really wanted to get more involved in it and when they called me, I was just so excited, I was hoping this would happen, but I never thought it would. So, it was very unexpected. Well actually, I didn't even get into SOC 300 the first round. I guess three or four people had dropped out in the section, and then Laurie called and she was like, "would you be willing to come in?" And I was really torn about it...I didn't get in the first time, maybe I was no good. But, she was like, "I just want you to understand we don't ask everyone who tried out to come back." She's like, "we had you on reserve. We wanted you to come. We wanted somebody to drop out so you'd have the experience."

Amaya recounted being "recommended and expressing an interest" in becoming a TA. She connected with the course material and the course instructor, which incited her interest, but when she was also recommended by a TA who liked how she "contributed in recitation" she decided to apply. She recalled:

I talked to Sam almost every day after class and I thanked him every day just for ever coming to Penn State and staying here and teaching. I told him a lot about my own life and what I've been through and how amazing it is to have his class be there as a support network, and then to have what he's teaching be self-empowering. And I wanted to do everything I could; I didn't want that class to

end; I didn't want spring semester to end. I was scared. But then, towards the end, when they started saying "hey, we're looking for TAs," and I think I was asking about it before they even advertised that they needed TAs. So, I definitely asked about it and then I signed up for it and went through the process. I had been an RA for a year here so I was familiar with the process of how to get selected and going through the interviews and I know we were chosen based upon who we are in our own beliefs, but I also was familiar with the process of being selected as an employee. [...] I was recommended, and I also expressed an interest. And so I guess that's what my TAs had done but, the one girl, I can't remember her name, she just came up to me and she's like "oh, I really like how you contribute to recitation...are you interested in being a TA? Because if you are, I'll recommend you." I said, "sure." And then after that, it was pretty much e-mail back and forth. And then finally, there was a meeting time with a former TA...who interviewed me. But it was just a quick 20-minute interview.

Jan very simply felt she was recommended because of her "outspoken" personality and her race. She said, "I was asked to be a TA perhaps because I was a white girl, which was probably it. But I can be really outspoken when I want to be; when I think that something needs to be said I'll say it." She described her SOC 119 discussion group as having only "two other white girls...and everybody was very quiet...everybody else was a person of color."

Shasta expressed how being recommended provided the support he needed to actively pursue being a TA. Without the invitation he, and many of the others, may not have applied. He shared how the process worked and how being "chosen" made him feel:

I was recommended by one or both of my TAs. The TAs recommend two people from each section. In our little book [TA handbook] at the very end there were recommendation sheets. So, it's built into the course so you can recommend somebody. And then it's also open to anybody. During SOC 119 Sam would say "here's Laurie's contact. Go there, set up an interview." But what gave me the idea...I got an e-mail saying "You've been recommended." I'm like "hey." It's a morale booster. It's like "hey, now there's a reason"...there's enough of a reason for me to want to do it. But, if you're just toying with the idea or you haven't really thought about it at all, for someone to say "you" out of all these other kids, "I think that you'll be good Shasta." So, I started thinking about it, went for the interview, and started thinking more and more about how neat it would be because of how much I really enjoy my class.

Like Jan, Amaya, and Shasta, Nate "was recommended by [his] TAs and applied on their recommendation." He expressed how "before they recommended me, I wanted to do it because I thought the topic was needful and interesting at the same time, which doesn't always happen." His career goal to be a college professor added to his desire to participate as a TA for a college-level course, he explained:

And I also thought that it would be awfully good experience if I wanted to teach, to put myself in a classroom setting. So, not that I'm teaching, I'm facilitating, but still I wanted to be able to see how I would do in a collegiate classroom setting. So, I had decided that I wanted to try for it before I was recommended.

But their recommendation was like icing on the cake. So, I decided to try out and here I am.

## SOC 300

In the next section of this chapter I present the themes which further explore the second research question, focusing on the primary learning contexts of this study found in the SOC 300 learning contexts. The themes presented here extend from those discussed related to the learners' developmental complexity, their experiences from SOC 119, and now as they discuss the SOC 300 learning contexts. Data analysis revealed the racial justice ally development concepts (Reason et al., 2005) materialize within two distinctive yet interrelated learning contexts, intergroup dialogue and a "hands-on" facilitation experience.

The discussion in previous sections specifically addresses the developmental complexities of the learners and what developmental capabilities they bring to the SOC 300 experience. The next step is uncovering how the educational interventions influenced the participants' racial justice ally development. SOC 300 comprises many characteristics of an intergroup dialogue learning experience even though, as discussed in Chapter Three, Laurie did not intentionally follow any recipe for its design. Also described in Chapter Three is the two-prong structure of the course, the intergroup dialogue component and the bi-weekly facilitation experiences—the "hands-on" component of the course. I discuss these components as interrelated and complimentary learning opportunities; one may not be successful without the other.

### *Intergroup Dialogue*

The inductive process of grounded theory analysis unexpectedly resulted in particular themes directly relating to the characteristics associated with an intergroup dialogue learning experience, while also fitting within three of a four-part theoretical

construct: embodied, reflective, dialogic, and actionable space (Sharma-Brymer, 2005). Because these theoretical frames compliment one another and offer greater depth to my explanation of the themes, I include them both in the following discussion.

Although the intent of Sharma-Brymer's (2005) theoretical construct of "actionable space" was to link human rights and education, the developmental concepts naturally emerged during the analysis of the learning contexts in this study that attempts to link *racial justice allies* and education. The application of her construct is appropriate here because the focus is on action. A racial justice ally must develop the capability to actively engage in antiracism action, which is an outcome of racial justice ally development.

These themes emerged as the participants shared experiences from SOC 300, which also relate to the characteristics of a dialogue intervention comprehensively presented in a book edited by Schoem and Hurtado (2001). The characteristics of intergroup dialogue were later reiterated in a journal article authored by Schoem (2003). He defined an intergroup dialogue as a process, not an event, about relationship-building and thoughtful engagement around difficult issues such as race. It involves face-to-face interactions and is focused on intergroup conflict and community building and thus, may be intense difficult work and only occasionally a "feel good" experience. Intergroup dialogues are led by skilled facilitators and are about inquiry and understanding of self and others through an integration of content and process. They are primarily focused on talking, but authentic dialogue often leads to action. (Schoem, 2003, p. 216).

The following selections from the interviews illustrate how these elements were lived by the participants during the SOC 300 intergroup dialogue experience. The themes

for this discussion occur within two interrelated learning contexts, the weekly intergroup dialogue course, and a bi-weekly “hands-on” participatory experience where the learner facilitates a race relations discussion. Within these contexts I present the three constructs developed by Sharma-Brymer (2005) that originally emerged from the interviews (reflective, dialogic, and actionable space) and the themes relating to the Reason et al. (2005) conceptual model of racial justice ally development.

I use the Sharma-Brymer (2005) concepts for organizing purposes and to show how reflective (internal/self) and dialogic (relational/social) processes of learning occur within SOC 300 along with interactions with diverse others, racial justice ally role models, “minority” experiences, and levels of racial justice action (Reason et al., 2005). First, I offer a description of the themes, which influence the learning process as the participant reported experiencing it. Next, I use selected quotes to illuminate the theme. Lastly, I infuse throughout some general characteristics of intergroup dialogue which relate back to the Schoem (2003) model of intergroup dialogue.

### *Embodied Space*

Embodied space is one’s physical presence within her or his environment (e.g., home, community, campus). It represents the student’s identified presence and locale within various issues (Sharma-Brymer, 2005). This space reflects unawareness, the pre-“ah-ha” presence that most of the participants reported having before experiencing SOC 119. Therefore, none of the data suggested that the educational context I examined provided this type of learning environment for the participants. All participants reported at least an initial awareness of race and racial issues before entering SOC 300. They no



longer felt oblivious to issues of race, rather they expressed that SOC 119 heightened the salience of race, others and their own.

### *Reflective Space*

Reflective space relates to the learner's intrapersonal dimension of intercultural maturity or the learner's inward examination of self-identity, values, culture, and beliefs. Reflective space represents a deeper, more critical and internally directed reflection where the learner is becoming aware of the self through examination. In this inward space the learner may begin to consider recreating her sense of self, which is often sparked by external perceptions (Sharma-Brymer, 2005). Participants in the reflective space may also begin to see that they are learning about themselves with others. They may be ready for dialogic space, but only with people they trust. According to this framework and the student data presented above, SOC 119 provided the participants in this study a reflective space to privately explore their personal beliefs about their racial identity and that of others, while also offering a dialogic space through the discussion group component of the course.

When I asked Elizabeth if she was learning anything about her whiteness in the dialogue class she said, "Well, maybe I do think about it just because of being involved in something like SOC 300. I have to think about myself and who I am and the biases. It has definitely made me think about the person that I am and the person that I want to be." Jan commented on how it is important to share personal experiences, which requires knowing how you feel and why, and not discussing issues of racism in the abstract or hypothetical. She stated:

I feel that we need to bring some personal experiences in here and look at what's

here... “Here’s what I feel and this is why,” not, “well say, so-and-so this happens to somebody on the street and you know this happens and that happens.” Who cares? That’s not personal...so I feel like, *yes* we have to talk about the bigger picture, but at the same time we have to start with a small ideal.

Many of the participants reported feelings like Jan’s, that other group members were not sharing more “personal stories.” This may be due to their intercultural maturity which is often indicated by a lack of self-understanding and inability to undertake thoughtful reflection. Tiffany revealed a similar concern with people not talking in her group, yet her frustrations were only with the other white students in her group. She felt her concerns were also those of the students of color and gives an example of how the whites in her group were not willing to join the dialogue around race, she shared:

You can still tell people are holding back because people still do not talk. There’s another white girl in that class that has said maybe about four comments the whole semester. Like “how are you sitting in a dialogue discussion group and you’re not even participating in the discussion. There’s only 15 of us. Come on!” It’s just so frustrating. And other people have brought it up...there’s this one girl that’s Mexican and Lebanese and her personality is like mine. She’s Mexican and Lebanese and Polish or some part of white...but she don’t act white, she doesn’t. She’s in a sorority with all her little white friends but she still don’t act white which is great because she came from a very predominant Mexican culture. Well, from what I heard . . . she flipped out on the majority of people in class that don’t talk, which is good because it went on to a point where besides like black people we also have other people of color who are also feeling a tension from white

people because they come to this dialogue expecting, not answers from white people, but to see where white people are coming from.

What I find most interesting about Tiffany's comments here and in the data not shown is her propensity to completely disassociate herself from the other whites. Her behavior reflects an eagerness to take sides with the students of color against the other whites. She does not appear capable of looking critically at herself, examining how and why she feels the way she does about whites because she basically disowns her whiteness and openly reveals her disdain for those who are white.

Nate provided his insight into the need for the individual to undergo some level of self-examination in order to "be okay with their thoughts" and thus, participate effectively in an intergroup dialogue experience like SOC 300. He revealed:

It's not only confidence in your ability to deal with confrontation, it's confidence in your being okay with your thoughts, it's confidence in your being okay with them labeling you with your thoughts, it's confidence in your being able to deal with them not talking to you any more. I mean there are so many levels that you have to be okay with, or you have to just be able to go "I don't care what you think anyway and that's just how you're wired, which I'm not wired that way, and this person isn't wired that way either." But you can get past that...that's why we're not dogs you know. When presented with this situation we can make a choice. We're not just going to eat the bowl of food. We can choose not to. [...]

Another thing that you learn [is that] you don't just jump in and attack somebody because...you think the conversation was stupid. You don't do that because they're shutting you off now and they may shut you off forever.

The capability to bridge the reflective and dialogic space and maneuver between the two, such as Nate expressed above, allows for learning to occur and accumulate within both spaces. The learning that occurs is about the self through reflection (intrapersonal) while simultaneously learning about the other in social interaction through dialogue (interpersonal). Undoubtedly, successful navigation of these contexts requires increasingly sophisticated developmental complexity and intercultural maturity.

### *Dialogic Space*

Dialogic space is the space, environment, or educational experience in which one safely gives voice to personal reflections, learning, and critical thoughts. It represents a critical interaction with one's world or an experience that facilitates the learner toward a critical transformation and consciousness raising (Sharma-Brymer, 2005). The dialogic space goes beyond the reflective (intrapersonal) space to the social, relational, or interpersonal space. It relies on intercultural development in the cognitive, intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions. The varying developmental complexity of the participants which relates to the difficulty in any intergroup dialogue, even among those of the same race, becomes evident as they express their experiences in the dialogue class.

Most participants discussed how SOC 300 offered a place to share personal experiences; a space to “learn from each other.” Amaya stated:

When you go through any type of oppression, if you're raped once, or if you are with an abusive parent for years, or if you suffer a death in the family, I mean all of it relates to the same basic feelings and emotions and recovery process. And that's something that everyone can learn from each other. That's why I'm really big on doing things with groups; group-sharing experiences. And just being open

to hearing what other people have to say.

This quote and other data not shown here reveal Amaya's unique motivation for participating in SOC 300. Unlike any of the other participants she is in a "recovery process." Intergroup dialogue is not counseling or group therapy and it is recommended that these individuals be advised of this before committing to such an experience (Schoem, 2003; Schoem & Hurtado, 2001). This type of dialogue is not meant to heal wounds inflicted by one individual against another due to individual hate-based pathologies, such as those of a child abuser. SOC 300 is not a group counseling class for victims of child abuse like Amaya. Rather, intergroup dialogue intentionally creates connections and conflict in order to improve relations among and between binary social groups such as those determined by race, gender, sexual orientation, and the like. The examples Amaya uses above to show that all oppression "relates to the same basic feelings and emotions and recovery process" are personal traumas, which depending on the individual's "stage of recovery," I would argue that personal traumas are not analogous to the oppression resulting from social group membership. The ability to see beyond the personal pain is critical to achieving the intended outcome of this type of intergroup dialogue process. In the case of this study, one outcome may be that the dialogue influences the racial justice ally development of whites who may then begin to actively promote racial justice in varying contexts.

John's experience is quite different, but he also sees the dialogue as a space to share personal reflections and stories in order to learn. Unlike Amaya, he reported feeling SOC 300 was a place for him to primarily learn from others through "social interaction." It was a place to discuss "taboo" topics and seek understanding through borrowed

approximations (Hogan & Netzer, 1993). He said:

I think mainly it's a drive...I kind of like to have answers about as many things as I can. Not that I necessarily want to know everything, I just enjoy learning. I enjoy the social interaction and what other people have to say. [...] It's also one of those things where the whole topic of race seems so taboo and you're not supposed to mention it...people are afraid of how others will react. [...] I guess to a limited extent it helps me think about things in other ways I guess.

Elizabeth expressed conflicting feelings that occurred in the dialogue course. On the one hand she said, "I feel like I need to be stimulated by other people...I think that I have a lot more to offer but I need more people surrounding me to push me." Yet, on the other hand, she shared that when challenged by others in the class, she would "shut down" because, she stated:

I'm also a very emotional person...and when I feel put on the spot, I'll cry. It's not because my feelings are hurt or anything like that but I feel . . . overwhelmed, and then my mind goes blank, and I can't say what it is I want to say. I don't like to be confronted like that. I don't like to be pressured, especially not in front of a group of people. So then, I definitely shut down.

*Intergroup conflict and community building.* Intergroup dialogue is inevitably an intense and difficult process and "only occasionally is it a 'feel good' experience" (Schoem & Hurtado, 2001, p. 12). Constructively using and managing conflict for building community and addressing social injustices are at the core of intergroup dialogue. Thus, avoiding conflict or difficult discussions is not the goal. Elizabeth's conflicting feelings relate to the difficulty of the often intense and difficult process of

learning through intergroup dialogue. Many of the participants reported feeling similar emotional intensity, albeit at varying degrees of comfort and readiness. These are illustrated in the following examples.

In one of our earlier interviews, Shasta assumed his classmates were as reflective and emotionally ready for conflict as he was and he stated:

I want to see some conflict, not like “let’s get into each other’s heads and fight.”

But, just to see how people react... I think a good place for that is going to be the [SOC] 300 section because everyone’s been through that. They know where they stand on a lot of things. They want to get right into it.

Shasta, who exhibited characteristics associated with intermediate intercultural maturity, experienced the course much differently than those indicating less intercultural maturity such as Brooke. Her experience in the course represents the emotional discomfort that was common among the majority of participants, especially when sharing personal stories that are culturally mediated and not necessarily the experience of culturally-different others in the group. She shared:

When I talk, I tell more personal stories. So, it’s kind of hard to relate. But I’ve seen other people jump on each other. There have been times in SOC 300, the one time actually, I just started to crack up because four people just got in this fight...yelling back and forth and I just started to laugh. And everyone just got quiet and looked at me. I was like “you guys, what are you fighting over? Do you even know?”

The emotional and cognitive discomfort felt by participants, perhaps due to their limited developmental complexity, can also cause cognitive dissonance potentially

resulting in learning, but reportedly it also creates disdain for the dialogue experience.

Elizabeth explained:

Being in [SOC] 300 is sometimes exhausting. And sometimes when I leave I don't necessarily feel on top of the world. I feel kind of drained sometimes...after talking about really serious stuff like that. My [SOC] 300 group, where we sit there for three hours, I don't like that...I hate it because some people in that class think that they know everything about race and it's so annoying. It's so annoying to me that I just don't even want to say anything. And, [a woman of color in the class] makes me feel stupid and it seriously makes me not say stuff a lot of times. I try and just ignore it and put myself out there, but a lot of times I won't say what I'm really thinking because I don't want to feel like an idiot in front of the rest of the class when she shoots me down.

Another interesting complexity of whites confronting racism in a dialogic space occurs within the white race, not necessarily across the different racial groups. Tiffany, also illustrating traits of an initial level of intercultural maturity, revealed little patience for her white peers who allow emotional barriers to get in the way of the dialogue process. Coincidentally, her experience exemplifies what Audrey Thompson warns of in her article, *Tiffany, friend of people of color*. Thompson is concerned that progressive whites do not critically examine their ways of being a "good white" which may do more harm to antiracism efforts than good (Thompson, 2003). When discussing her experiences in SOC 300, Tiffany stated:

SOC 300 to me just takes SOC 119 and just really narrows it down. You're in a discussion group for three hours and it just...frustrates me...it doesn't frustrate



me because Laurie's not a good teacher. Laurie's a good teacher, but she lets us talk about whatever we want. But the problem with that is she lets us get on these tangents where we're talking about absolutely nothing; we're talking about talking. They'll talk for half an hour about talking. "Will someone pick a damn topic so we can talk about it?" It also frustrates me because there are certain people in our class that don't talk. Or, the one girl in our class decides to get up and leave the room the first *real* discussion that we had because it got too intense. "Bitch, this is intensive racial discussion. If you cannot handle it, get the hell out." If you're at the table and you're willing to stay when shit gets rough and people get offended and you're willing to sit there and be like "you offended me," fine! But if you can't do that and you have to get up and leave that circle, that circle is broken. And once that circle is broken, the trust is so hard to gain back because then people won't bring it to the table because we're worried that we're going to hurt your feelings. "Get the fuck over yourself!"

Tiffany's evident frustration with some of the other whites in her SOC 300 group, without any apparent critical reflection on her behaviors or how others may perceive them—even the students of color—are characteristics indicative of an initial level of intercultural maturity. By acting like, what she and Thompson (2003) would consider a "good white," she leaves unexamined her feelings about racial others, such as the feelings she shared in Chapter Four about never wanting to date a black man or her thoughtless use of the word "nigger."

*A process not an event.* Schoem (2005) stresses the importance of prolonged contact for a powerful dialogue process. The design of SOC 300 fits this criterion and

most participants note that the extended process is necessary for such an experience to be effective.

Three hours a week, that's really the proper [amount of time]. It's really good because you have a group of people that, whether they like the conversation or not, they're dedicated to talking about stuff. And, they're there by choice to have three hours, they know they're going to be there three hours. And so we're good with being able to talk at length on certain topics, which puts a lot more backbone into being able to go out there and then talk in other groups, in social settings, or in other classroom settings where we don't have that long. I just like...I like the discussions. (Shasta)

Jan also supported the notion that such an intensive topic, with a relationship-building purpose, requires this kind of structure because it is critical to learning the skills of a race relations facilitator or, as I argue, an ally for racial justice. She said the following about her learning experience in SOC 300:

I like SOC 300 because you get to spend so much time with [the other TAs]. Like three hours a week okay, you could spend three hours a week in a lecture hall, you're not going to learn anything about the kid sitting next to you. But, when you're in a group like that where we have to learn to trust each other, and maybe not to like each other, but to listen to each other, that's a big step. And for me, if I learn nothing more than how to actively listen from that class, I learned how to actively listen.

*Interracial interactions and racially diverse friendships.* Reason et al. (2005)

found that interactions with racially diverse others, which often lead to the formation of

friendships, appeared to influence the development of racial justice allies during college. Similarly, the Schoem (2005) model of intergroup dialogue discusses the importance of relationship-building and thoughtful engagement around difficult issues among the various social groups represented. A few of the participants in this study noted the positive influence of interacting and connecting with certain students of color in SOC 300 both during the dialogue class and co-facilitating SOC 119 discussion groups. Some interactions further developed into friendships which involved contact outside of the course or facilitating a discussion group.

Amaya recalled connections she made with both of her “co-TAs” that extended beyond the classroom:

There are [certain] people in the group that I click with much more. I hung out last night with one of the kids from group and we had a great time. We happen to have the most moderate views when it comes to political topics, and so we always support each other and stick together and yet we get a lot of negative feedback from the rest of the group.

She later described her relationship with her other co-TA:

After class later on that night, I spoke on the phone with my co-TA for an hour. She’s a black female. And we found out that we had way more in common than we ever thought and she was very surprised at how much I could relate to the black female experience. And she was also surprised to learn about my past and where I’m coming from, and we both ended up realizing that we’re very much the same person.

Brooke also reported “hanging out” socially with a couple of the men of color

from her SOC 300 group. She expressed how these interracial friendships, growing out of the SOC 300 experience, added meaning and personalized issues of race especially for her as a white person. Later, when I discuss “minority” experiences, I offer a story Brooke shared where she gained new insights into the lived experiences of people of color by experiencing one first-hand with her new friends. Brook provides another example of the importance of prolonged, face-to-face, interracial interaction when exploring the complexities of race with racially diverse groups. When I asked her if she thought she was getting to know herself in SOC 300, she answered:

I personally am getting to know myself better *and* everyone else. I’ve grown really attached to certain people and I love it. But there are also certain people that I, for some reason, just can’t click with, which I think is really weird. I like to think I do [click with most people]. But, that’s a boastful thing to say. I guess I think it’s hard because we really don’t sit down and say “oh, how are you? Who are you?” We kind of jump right into the information.

These examples may offer some insight into why it is difficult to talk about race in any conversation, even those purposefully designed and facilitated as educational interventions. The participants come to the conversation at very different levels of racial understanding and developmental complexity. They possess different ways of understanding themselves and themselves in relationship with racial others. Their intercultural maturity, life experiences, and cultural backgrounds necessitate a purposeful commitment to learning, or relearning as the case may be, how to talk to one another about race, racial issues, and the like. Such complex conversations require a certain level of trust, which takes time and energy from all participants.

Previous quotes by the participants hinted at the importance of trusting others in SOC 300 as a precursor to building relationships and engaging in thoughtful conversations about race. Many participants shared how others in the class were not being “personal” enough which prevented them from telling their own personal stories and reflections because exposing such feelings may place them in a vulnerable position where they may be “attacked” by the students of color or perceived as “racist.” Jan stated, “People tend to talk on all these hypothetical plains...it’s not personal.” Amaya’s feelings illustrate how trust is what enables her to put her story out there for others to “learn” from, and she noted:

What SOC 300 brings out is how to trust other people with what you’re about to share with them; trust that they will know how to see it. All I can do is say like “here I am, this is what I believe, this is what I’ve been through, and here’s where I am now.” And if someone sees that as good and something that they’d like to do, then they might be interested to learn how I got to be where I am.

She then elaborated on how difficult the intergroup dialogue environment is for discussing race, especially for whites because they do not always have support, which is what she feels the SOC 300 group is for. Amaya said, “If you’re not supported by your own white race going into it and your whole idea is to try to have support from people of color, and they don’t trust you either, you’re really going in on your own. So, that’s why we need to have this group.”

For those not ready to engage in the difficult dialogue, whether because they do not trust others in the group yet or they may not exhibit a sophisticated level of intercultural maturity, choosing not to speak but rather to “listen” was a common

response. Brooke explained, “In SOC 300 I’m kind of quiet because there’s so many people, like new people there that I’ve never heard their opinions before, and so I’m really interested in hearing them.”

Nate summed up some of the barriers he noticed in his SOC 300 group preventing relationship-building and thoughtful engagement around the topic of race. He explained:

I think that SOC 300 is a very valid place to be. I feel like my particular SOC 300 group hasn’t come to the point where all of us own our conversation in there. A lot of generalities are spoken because...a lot of people speak about being on another level than the SOC 119 students, and we’ve achieved this *other* level. And in so doing, they tend to make everything a generality, everything is somebody else’s opinion, nothing is personal and that becomes...really antiseptic and really stagnant...because no one wants to be labeled. And, I don’t feel like that’s what we’re there to do. I feel like we’re there to continue to give out our viewpoint and our situation and our experience and come to a better understanding than SOC 119 gave us, and I feel that my particular group is having difficulty grasping that we’re not just there to show how much better we became.

Unlike the other participants, Nate mentioned a phenomenon that the others seem less aware of due to their perceived initial or intermediate levels of developmental complexity. He attributed a sense being a “good white” (Thompson, 2003), of “achieving another level,” as preventing the personal stories from emerging which ultimately disrupts the process of intergroup dialogue, albeit a necessary disruption that may result in increased understanding as the dialogue proceeds.

*Inquiry and understanding through an integration of content and process.* As a process where different individuals come together and challenge ideas, listen to the viewpoints of others, and hopefully gain new insights, “opportunity for presentation and discussion of information, theory, and perspectives of students and scholars in the field” must be incorporated into the learning context (Schoem & Hurtado, 2001, p. 13). The SOC 300 dialogue group primarily relies on the sharing of experiences and beliefs of the students as content for discussion in class, which integrates what was learned in the more content-driven course, SOC 119. Amaya, however, reportedly was surprised of the powerful learning experience that a conversation-based course could produce when she acknowledged “[SOC 300] is really teaching me a lot. It’s not just a discussion group, but it is learning. It is very academic. I never thought of seeing conversations as a process.”

*“Minority” experiences.* As defined by Reason et al. (2005), “minority” experiences are situations in which students recalled they were numerical minorities. These situations may lead to reflections on whiteness. For most participants in this study such experiences occurred outside of the course. However, Brooke noted, “This is...the first class ever where there are more people of culture in it than white people. And it’s definitely a reality check...finally you get to see the world.” She continued, “It’s just so weird because I look around there are only a few white people here and I’m one of them. It’s just crazy!” Like Brooke, Jan recalled her first experience as a racial minority occurred in college. It was during her junior year in her SOC 119 discussion group that she noticed “Everybody was mixed. Seriously, it was the three white girls, one white guy, and everybody else was mixed.”

In addition to Brooke's previous example about SOC 300 as a "minority" experience, she also shared the following story which demonstrates how a "minority" experience can become a racial "eye-opener":

Last night I hung out with a couple of guys from my class, from SOC 300. And I was the only girl there and I was the only white person there, they were all black. And I noticed that when I walked in the room—not in a bad way—but I was so interested...I had never been in a situation [like that] before. And we went down to the HUB to get some food and we walked back to their house, and maybe it's just me looking for something or maybe it was reality, but I'm walking amongst these black guys, like they're just around me and we're just hanging out and I'm thinking nothing of it. Everyone's staring. Everyone! And I was like, "no, I'm just looking for this." I asked the one guy, I was like "is everyone staring at us?" And he was like, "Honey, you're the only white girl amongst black men. What do you think?" And I was like, "*Hell*...I don't like this." And I was like, "Do people just stare at you all the time because you're black?" He's like "there are times...especially on this campus." I went home and I was thinking, how many times when a black person walks into the HUB do I just stare at them? Do I do it and not even notice? And I'm thinking that maybe I do. For me it's more like I'm interested to see who they're hanging out with; if they're hanging out with all black people or just white people...I'm drawn in that sense. But I could see some people would be like "Oh, look there's a black person." But yeah, so like last night was a big eye-opener for me because you hear all the clichés like "oh, they stare at the black people"...or if there's a white girl with a black man the cops



will pull up or whatever...it was just weird like that. I was like “huh, everyone *is* starting at us. Why?” And before, I just thought it was so untrue, not untrue, but it wouldn’t happen to me...it would be more in an inner city or something dumb like that...it’s stereotypical.

Most participants readily recounted “minority” experiences during college but, unlike Brooke’s, they occurred in other courses before enrolling in SOC 300. Allison reported realizing she was in the racial minority in “[Counselor Education] 497.” She explained:

[CNED 497] was also discussion, and it was interesting too because the dynamic in there...I was the only white student there. And the TAs were Mexican and Eastern European, so it was interesting to see the other perspective; because that was one of the first times I’d been in a group where I was the only student representing [whites] so that also showed me a different perspective than I had before, just as far what they thought of who I was and everything.

Elizabeth also took a college course where she was one of only a few other whites. Although she loved the course content, she recalled the discomfort she felt when forced to participate in class:

When I took my Malcolm X class I was one of five white people in that entire class. It was all black people. And that was the first time that I was ever a minority within a group. And I would be so nervous to go to that class. I loved that class. I love Malcolm X. I loved reading his speeches all of that. But every class—the class was based on participation—so you had to raise your hand and make a comment every class. So every time I went there I knew that when I was

raising my hand I was going to be put on the spot. And I knew that people were looking at me. And it was so important for me to make sure that I had a good point, a valid point, something smart to say because I felt so under pressure. Everybody was looking at me in that room, like, “What are you doing in here in the first place?”

After completing a reportedly powerful SOC 119 experience, Amaya took an internship in a city where she lived another powerful racial consciousness-raising experience. This time, she immersed herself in a racially heterogeneous urban environment. She explained:

This summer I had an internship in [a large city] and I was living [just outside of where I worked]... And because it's one of the most diverse places in the world, and it has a large Greek population, next to that of Athens and some township some place in Chicago, it was great. I loved it. I was one of the only white people I ever saw...so that was kind of neat.

Shasta's first “minority” experience during college was when he took his first Women's Studies course. He could not recall any comparable experience as a racial minority. He knew going into the class that he would be one of only a few men but, unlike Elizabeth's experience, he “knew he would have to be quiet” perhaps out of a fear that he may misrepresent men, like the gentleman he described here:

In my women's studies class, my first one, there were maybe four guys...and one guy talked a lot. He had good things to say. But he talked so much people started tuning him out. And I'm thinking “you're giving a bad name to the guys in this class” because I'm reserving myself to one bold comment each time. Something

that actually sparks up a new conversation that I want people to react to, not just like “I agree” and everyone says their piece and moves on. I want it to be like “Wow, I didn’t think about it that way!”

Most of the “minority” experiences of the participants occurred in other courses before enrolling in SOC 300. But, from the interviews I am able to conjecture that the experience of SOC 300 may influence the learning from a previous experience because it provides a space for further reflection and dialogue around these often uncomfortable situations. Without further reflection and exploration of these feelings incurred through the “minority” experience, increased intercultural maturity and racial justice ally development may not take place. SOC 300 allowed for new perspectives and understandings of race which the participant could apply to lived experiences, such as those described above.

*Support and racial justice role models.* The Reason et al. (2005) pilot study strengthened the claim that finding like-minded others to draw support, provide and interpret information (Broido, 2000), and overcome obstacles and challenges to maintaining racial justice action (O'Brien, 2001) is an important part of becoming a racial justice ally. Support from white role models was especially important for students just beginning to reflect on their whiteness (Reason et al., 2005). Schoem’s (2003) model for intergroup dialogue also stresses the importance of skilled facilitators, who may personify role models during the learning process.

The participants in this study not only looked to the course facilitator (Laurie) for information, support, and inspiration but they reported turning to like-minded others that they trusted such as close friends or roommates. These individuals represent only a few

of the various types of role models for understanding race, race relations, and racial justice. Regardless of *who* the participants looked to for support, they all looked to a like-minded and trusted other as a racial justice ally role model.

When describing their perceptions of Laurie, many of the participants revealed attributes of a good facilitator, which were skills Laurie purposefully modeled for them but provided no deliberate instruction. Amaya described Laurie as the following:

She's very reliable. I mean she's always there for you. And she's very level headed. She doesn't let things happening outside of class influence her when she comes into class, whereas a lot of us do...Laurie's always very calm and listens to everyone...and is very accommodating. She doesn't really speak a lot during SOC 300 unless the conversation is not going anywhere and no one's changing it. But she's always very reliable. It's just nice to know that Laurie's there just in case. When she's there and saying "I'm not a teacher but I'm the one that's overseeing all of this and you are all equal" that's nice to know that she's always there telling us that.

In addition to modeling her facilitating techniques, Jan added how Laurie's "insight" is something she hopes to have some day. She commented, "She's got an insight that I want...maybe it doesn't need to be the exact same understanding, but she is at a level that I think that almost everybody should strive for. It's like she has something to teach me even though she's not my *teacher*." Tiffany tied the two functions—model facilitator and racial justice ally role model—together when she stated:

[Laurie's] both a facilitator and a role model. She is a good facilitator because she makes you stay, not on track per se, but she brings up the questions to us.

Like if we're stuck in the silence, that you dreadfully always end up in with a discussion group no matter what the discussion is about, and if we're quiet for two minutes, Laurie will be like "okay, well so-and-so how do you feel about this?" [...] But then, on the other hand, Laurie is at a different place about race than I am. Just like I'm at a different place about race than the white people in my class are. [She's] above me, I know that much. Where above me, I'm not quite sure; but I know she's above me, I know that for a fact.

Allison shared how connecting with "other people who felt the same way she did" about social justice issues in college and having those people to "talk to" affected her overall enjoyment of her college experience, and she said:

I don't know that I would have enjoyed college as much had I not had the chance to meet with other people who felt the same way as I did. If I didn't, I think it would have been really hard for me to enjoy my college experience as much. To have friends up here that are equally appalled [at racist behavior]. They don't have to have the in depth interest that I do, but just say, "I can't believe it." [...] I've never hunted before and a lot of people here do a lot of hunting, and I can't relate to it, so they'll be able to talk other people [who hunt]. So, on the same token, this kind of [race relations] stuff is like something I consider a section of culture that not everyone is privy to, but it's nice to be able to have those people to talk to.

Shasta extended this sentiment to include the need for other whites who want to actively resist racism for support and maintenance of activist behaviors.

When I come to something like SOC 300 and there are other white people, or in

other classes where it's mostly white but they all care, it becomes like the support [I need]. Sometimes we'll have disagreements, but still, out of 18 people there are seven people that are white, and so you have half the class that says, at one point that a light bulb went off and saw that there is something to be done. There's a responsibility, not *just* a responsibility, but there's a *need* that they feel in their gut that they want to be part of this greater justice.

Much like Shasta and Allison, Amaya reported looking to like-minded others to validate how she thinks and what she is doing are "good and promoted" by trusted others:

It really gives me a sense of calm and reassurance within myself. It's validating to know that my beliefs and my actions as far as being open and accepting of everyone is something that is good and kind of promoted. Because I never saw that in any other group I was with until I came to college. And it allows me to see where other people are coming from and how they came to their conclusions, because in SOC 300 it's just like the group sits around and talks about how we came to specific conclusions and beliefs. And I know how I...everybody knows how they came to their own conclusions and beliefs. But then when you find someone who has a similar feeling and you know they didn't grow up like you did...you feel like well, "how could they ever come to that belief if they didn't go through what I went through?" So, that's another reason that I do it, I just like to see where other people are coming from. And to know that there are other people out there who have gone through the same things I have and I'm not alone.

The powerful influence of trusted others for validating beliefs and attitudes, sharing information, and choosing to act often lead to invitation and opportunities for racial

justice ally development.

*Invitation and opportunity.* As mentioned previously, an invitation from a trusted individual or participating in another opportunity by chance or recruitment is often necessary for whites to first engage in racial justice actions (Broido, 2000; Reason et al., 2005). Here the participants reported this influence on their racial justice participation beyond being invited to TA SOC 119 discussion groups, as discussed earlier. Amaya attributed her transformative internship experience to “coincidence,” which she also related back to a book she read in SOC 119. She stated:

I have had so many coincidental things happen in my life to the point where when I sit down and tell people how many coincidences have been in my life they kind of look at me and say, “I think you’re just very aware of your life.” [Coincidences such as, the] people I’ve been friends with, people I’ve had relationships with, how I got my internship in [the city], I don’t know. But when I was taking SOC 119, we read a book called *Crossing the Boulevard* and I visited every spot in that book.

The following examples further reveal how invitation from trusted others, often in the form of role models, and opportunities outside of SOC 300 may influence racial justice ally development.

Trusted peers, friends, and roommates such as Elizabeth’s best friend exemplify the substantial influence such a person may or may not have on decisions to pursue racial justice. The individual’s developmental complexity must also be considered when interpreting the following statements. Earlier in this chapter I pointed out Elizabeth’s characteristics which indicated an initial level of intercultural maturity. Thus, it makes

sense that she would place an excessive value on the opinions of an external, yet culturally similar, other. The seemingly more developmentally complex participants did not mention having any such co-dependant relationships as Elizabeth did or relying so much upon the support and guidance of others. Elizabeth described her relationship with her role model and best friend as:

She and I feed off of each other, literally. We are the ones that are concerned and want to be socially active and want to be aware of what's going on. And she encourages me and I encourage her. And if she reads something cool...we're constantly giving, feeding each other, new pieces of information.

Reportedly, demonstrating characteristics associated with an intermediate level of intercultural maturity, Shasta recalled the powerful influence of his former girlfriend, who is his current roommate and trusted friend, in providing the impetus for his involvement in confronting critical social issues such as sexism and heterosexism. Supporting his sense of a more developed self-reliance since beginning college is the fact that he is no longer dependant upon her to be a social justice ally. He has even branched out into racial justice issues on his own; an area she is not actively involved. He stated:

I want to say that if [my former girlfriend, best friend now] wasn't in my life...I would still have the same views on certain issues, but I wouldn't be as critical of certain things. I mean, if I never knew her and someone said "what do you think about gay marriage?" I'd be like, "yeah, go ahead, get married." If someone said "what [do you think] about abortion" I would still say "I'm pro choice." But that might have just been the end of the conversation. Maybe a little bit further on rights and stuff but not to the extent of how invested I've gotten since. [I]



probably wouldn't have taken the classes I've taken. Probably wouldn't have labels that I've associated myself with. [I] wouldn't look beyond the simple "I agree or disagree with this issue." [Now] I can look further into it and give multiple reasons for why I think something or multiple standpoints and viewpoints that I have acquired and stuff. Because when you start thinking more critically about something you can broaden your horizons and, it was like a floodgate. A person comes into my life and says "hey, I'm interested in X, Y or Z." And I'll go "well, I'm interested in you, so I'm interested in this." And here I am now.

Just as role models are essential to initiating racial justice ally development through invitations and opportunities for engagement in race relations conversations, so too is the communication that occurs within SOC 300 that may lead to another level of participation in racial justice efforts. Elizabeth explained how she and her role model desire to move beyond talking to action:

Well our thing is like we talk a lot. But what we're trying to do now is make the steps into doing something about the things that we talk about. Because we have a ton of great ideas and feelings and we seriously feed off of each other. I mean we just start going and now we actually want to *do* something about it instead of just talking about it.

The next section brings alive the claim that to move dialogue participants "beyond the intellectual and abstract to personal change and collective action based on the dialogue discussions" (p. 14) they must actively engage in personal and collective risk or increasing levels of racial justice action (Schoem & Hurtado, 2001).

### *Facilitating SOC 119 Discussion Groups*

*From dialogue to action.* At the core of intergroup dialogue is communication, which arguably could be enhanced by bringing a real-world experience back to the group to enrich the dialogue, especially if that experience is shared with others from the group (Schoem & Hurtado, 2003). “Dialogue involves talking, but taking action often leads to good talking, and dialogue often leads to action” (p. 14). Although many intergroup dialogues use talk only, SOC 300 integrates a “hands-on” experience where the TA facilitates two SOC 119 discussion groups per week with a different co-TA of color for each section. This allows for extended opportunities with a co-TA of color to gain new understandings beyond the intellectual and abstract occurring within the intergroup dialogue. Facilitating SOC 119 discussion groups with another TA from the group may involve an increased level and purposeful application of what the participants are learning during intergroup dialogue and personal reflection. Facilitating a race relations conversation as a TA may indicate racial justice action, albeit at different intensity levels. Regardless of the level, some personal and collective risk is involved when acting as a race relations facilitator. The level of and commitment to consistent action depends on the racial justice ally development of the participant. The more interculturally mature the individual, the greater transferability and consistency across different contexts of racial justice ally actions (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005).

### *Actionable Space*

This space represents the interactions of the embodied, reflective, and dialogic dimensions that result in an asserted stance—an action towards racial justice. It requires personal agency and an ability to illustrate and live according to one’s personal value

orientations (Sharma-Brymer, 2005). Further, actively working toward social change as a racial justice ally doubles as a form of resistance to hopelessness. The following section begins with participant's voices that generally capture the array of responses about facilitating SOC 119 discussion groups, followed by other examples of racial justice actions performed outside of the intergroup dialogue course and facilitating the discussion groups. The reflections of the participants demonstrate the varying degrees of confidence, intercultural maturity, and skills learned in promoting improved race relations. Put simply, their development as racial justice allies.

*Facilitation experience.* The interviews revealed that the participants experienced facilitating the SOC 119 discussion groups in very different ways. I determined this through their reported behaviors which also indicated their level of intercultural maturity. Facilitating SOC 119 discussion groups with a co-TA provides an opportunity for the learner to not only apply what they learn in the intergroup dialogue, but to do so in a physically safe, non-threatening, and emotionally and cognitively challenging environment. They could choose to "practice" acting as a racial justice ally in a space where the consequences of their failures are minimized. The SOC 300 instructor is not in the classroom, the TA represents the authority-figure, and she or he can choose not to engage as racial justice allies if she or he wishes. This bi-weekly participatory learning experience, coupled with the ongoing dialogue process, may move their racial justice ally development beyond the abstract to personal change which may potentially lead to action, either individual or collective.

All of the participants described facilitating SOC 119 discussion groups as a positive experience, although at times it was challenging to get some groups to talk about

racial issues. Elizabeth said she “love[s] reaching people and...being in the classroom and seeing people actually really listen to somebody else, and maybe seeing something click with them that they didn’t realize before.” She added, “It’s my favorite thing to do and I find that I’m most at peace...I feel the best about myself when I’m leading my group discussion. I just found that that’s what I’m definitely best at.” Amaya also indicated, “I always look forward to the recitation because it’s fun for me...we always let the group talk about what they want to talk about. I feel most fulfilled when I see that the students walk out feeling fulfilled.”

Allison, who said “I like [TAing] a lot actually,” also explained some challenges she and her co-TA faced when trying to get white students to talk about race:

I have two different discussion groups; one of them is primarily white students. Everyone is always like “everything is good” and “nothing bothers us...we all think the same.” So, that’s been more intriguing...that’s been intriguing to try to see where they’re really coming from. The other group is a little bit more talkative, a little bit more up front, honest, a little bit more culturally diverse as well. So, their discussions have always been interesting. [...] I think it’s been hard...they’ve gotten better but at first it was very PC like “I think everything is great”...not delving any deeper because “we love everybody” kind of thing.

Of the participants, Nate reported demonstrating the most interculturally mature behaviors, which may be related to his age and willingness to “put himself out there.” This developmental complexity uniquely equips him with the confidence to share personal stories without concern for what the SOC 119 students will think of him. He said:

I am not concerned about what they take away from this class thinking about me. I don't care what they think about me. If my experiences, even if it makes me smaller in their eyes, if the experiences that I've had and can help them have now helps them whether they remember me or not, whether they think I was an idiot, whether anything, I don't care. [...] I'm not shy, embarrassed, or afraid that anyone's going to find out anything about me.

Nate also commented on the importance of applying what they are learning in SOC 300 as TAs for the SOC 119 discussion groups i.e., testing out the tools they are trained to use. He said:

I think that all this stuff is really necessary to give [other TAs] the tools to make that choice [of when to act], because they're not going to know the choice that they'd make until they're presented with the opportunity to make it. And the same goes for me...I don't want to just say *them*, because it's not like I'm done living.

Additionally, Nate purposefully transfers techniques learned in the intergroup dialogue class to how he facilitates SOC 119 discussion groups, and vice versa. The following example revealed how he shared a very personal story to engage the students in a conversation about racism. He purposefully told his story to promote a dialogue with a noticeably reserved group. He also saw this need in his SOC 300 group although he did not think it was *his* story the other TAs would need to hear. He explained:

I've noticed that both of the SOC 119 discussion groups that I TA are very reserved and last week I gave out personal information about my upbringing. One of the students asked "When can somebody who's raised racist start to make

decisions against that?” And I just said “here’s what happened to me, here’s where I’m coming from.” And it was like flipping a switch in that class because I allowed myself to be vulnerable and I allowed them to see into my past and that led them to start asking questions, to me, to each other, and that was a big step. And, I think that this was the same step that we needed to take in the SOC 300 class. And I don’t know who it’s going to take doing that to open that up because I don’t have a problem telling them my stuff. But my stuff may not mean anything to them. But somebody’s will open this up...and I’m just hoping that that somebody is willing to share.

Elizabeth also revealed how applying or practicing what she learned in SOC 300 to her SOC 119 discussion groups created powerful learning outcomes for her. She commented:

I feel like one thing that I definitely get from the discussion groups, besides me actually facilitating, is I’ve learned a lot from listening to people. I used to be the one who always was talking like, “this is how *I* feel.” But I’ve learned a lot, especially this year, that listening is so important. And sometimes you can learn so much more just by being quiet and maybe listening, and not just listening, but *really* listening. Like really trying to *feel* what the other person is saying—active listening.

Amaya summed up the cyclical nature of this learning process beginning with the lecture course (SOC 119), then integrating the SOC 300 experiences. She discussed both the intergroup dialogue course (SOC 300) and facilitating the SOC 119 discussion groups. She said:

SOC 119 is kind of like you're being coached and trained, in [facilitating the SOC 119 discussion groups] you're kind of like the coach, and if you're a bad coach you see that right away and it kind of shocks you, and then you go back to [the] SOC 300 [intergroup dialogue] and you kind of talk about what problems you're having and hopefully your other teammates can help you out.

*Level of racial justice actions.* The findings from Reason et al. (2005) support that varying levels of racial justice action result from a mixture of one's understanding of whiteness and confidence level. The small number of racial justice actions evident in the participant's experiences as SOC 119 facilitators appears congruent with their reported behaviors associated with initial or intermediate levels of intercultural maturity. King and Baxter Magolda's (2005) claim that the interpersonally mature learner understands that individuals and community practices influence social systems and she or he is willing to actively work for the rights of others is supported by the evidence presented thus far.

Interestingly, participants in this study also revealed aspirations of becoming racial justice allies. Brooke reported wanting to act for racial justice consistently, throughout varying contexts, and appeared disappointed when she did not. After watching *Crash*, a very powerful movie about contemporary racism and interracial conflict, Brooke explained her disappointment in her decision not to engage her friends in a conversation about the movie. She said:

I feel like any conversation I would have started would have felt almost rehearsed because they know that I'm into this stuff. They'd be like "Oh, Brooke set us up." I think that I can put [being an ally] in a closet, and that's upsetting. I almost wish there were some way we, as white people, weren't allowed to...I wish there was

some kind of mechanism that forced us to always look at it. [...] I feel like when I deny stuff like [acting as an ally] or I don't let [myself act against racism], I'm not fully embracing what I could be, or what I could give to people. So, I just get more upset with myself.

Many of the participants revealed consciously facing the struggle of knowing what is the "racially just" thing to do, yet not doing it for whatever reason. The following examples of the participants' varying comfort levels with racial justice ally action represent how this struggle can be an indicator of racial justice ally development. I also argue that these moments may be potentially fruitful learning opportunities if the individual chooses to reflect upon or discuss the situation with others.

The level of racial justice action Amaya says she would be willing to take is consistent with her initial intercultural maturity and seemingly underdeveloped sense of self.

If I see someone telling a racist joke, would I walk up to them and say "hey do you ever think about...?" That's not me. No. That's not me at all. I certainly feel a little sad for them and I certainly hope that part of their journey is ending and that they're moving forward from that...and it could just be the way that I grew up, that I don't want to see ugly. I don't want to see negative.

Very different from Amaya's perspective is Allison's on taking action against racism. She stated, "I just feel a personal responsibility, knowing that it affects me a certain way, to let people know how it affects me and if they want to hear why then I'll be more than willing to talk about it."

Brooke falls somewhere between Amaya and Allison in her comfort with racial



justice ally action. She is “trying to figure out how [she] feels.” She appears conflicted between actively disrupting racism all the time and passively waiting for others to “get it” on their own when they are ready. She shared:

I would say there’s of course a line you cross. Like if I’m walking around with one of my black friends and someone yells out the N-word, I’m not going to be like “Oh, that’s okay. Think about it.” I’ll be like, “That wasn’t very cool...you *need* to think about it!” But if it’s blatant racism...we were actually talking about this in group the other day, like “Whose place is it to fix the racist...is it the white person, is it the racist themselves?” Or, is it the minority who’s going to fix this?” And I think it is circumstantial. [...] I would say most people like themselves the most...people are kind of into themselves. So, until they convince themselves to do something it’s not going to make a difference. So, I would probably say something, but I wouldn’t sit there and lecture them for four hours because I understand, like even for me, there are certain things...people can talk forever and I will tell them, “I’ve got to get there myself.” And that’s when it’s more real and that’s when it’s more powerful. And that’s when it’s even more beautiful because it’s...themselves and it’s not other people’s pressure, like peer pressure. As lame as that sounds, it’s just doing their own thing, and it’s better.

On the other hand, Brooke is comfortable privately engaging in conversations about race with trusted others. She shared:

I was talking with my boyfriend and he doesn’t really understand...he’s always like “I don’t understand why you’re so worried about this people stuff.” And it’s really hard talking to him when it’s such a passion of mine. I’m just like,

“No...racism is still here.” And he’s like, “No, that’s so 20<sup>th</sup> Century...jump into the 21<sup>st</sup>, we’re not like that any more.” I was like, “Babe, you have got to open your eyes.” And I told him last night...“Go to sleep tonight and think about what your white privilege is...especially since you’re a white male.”

Unlike the participants above, John’s story of handling a difficult interracial confrontation revealed a level of confidence greater than those described above, yet he seemed unsure whether or not he acted in the appropriate racially just manner. Arguably this confidence, coupled with his intermediate intercultural maturity, equipped him to handle this situation and potentially learn more from it through further personal reflection and incorporating it into what he is learning about interracial communication and understanding. This racial justice action is unique because he took action while in confrontation with a person of color to promote race relations by not letting frustration, fear, or anger drive his behavior. John calmly dealt with the situation regardless of how uncomfortable and discouraging it may have been.

The experience John recounted happened recently while working at a local restaurant. He explained how he felt a person of color surreptitiously accused him of being a racist when a large group of racially diverse people wanted to be seated and he told them they would have to wait while they prepared the tables. The African American woman in charge of the group became very upset, John recalled how this made him feel by saying, “It really pissed me off because, not only did I think she was insulting me...that I would be so petty as to not seat her because of her race, but also the whole idea of what people actually have to deal with because of race.” He continued, “And she just throws [the race card] out...that she can’t get a seat in a full restaurant discredits the

whole [struggle for improved race relations].”

Shasta provided evidence of how actively working toward social change as an ally can be a form of resistance to hopelessness. He expressed:

I don't think I'm going to give [up]...I don't think I could go back to being sheltered...because if I took away that feminist lens that I try to keep on 24/7 and I just walk around trying to live like “everybody else” I'm going to die inside...there's no turning it off. So, the only thing I could do is make sure everybody else can't turn that off and if you can get everybody to care about something socially, where even in one sliver of their life they can't revert back to the way they thought because they feel sick. If everyone could do that then there's going to be some kind of change. And that gives me more hope because if I'm going to go down, I'm going to bring all you mother fuckers with me. So, I don't want it to be cynical or depressing. But, it gets that way when you feel like there's no progress being made. And last night I did the demonstration [a student protest] and is *that* a major huge thing? No. Is it going to make laws? No. Is it still a presence? Yes. Does it feel good? Yes. And then that little way it makes you feel like I'm doing more than sitting in the women's studies class and complaining, which we don't do...we theorize and that's really cool too. I'm just giving an example. [...] I can sit in all my classes and we can just say here are all the problems and we can think about what needs to be done, but we all will feel hopeless as individuals. And then we go, “well, aren't we doing something now, just discussing it,” in a way isn't that activism? [...] But also, in a way I feel like I'm just going to cop out. Because to me it's like I do these classes where I talk to

people, I talk to my friends, and that's educating, and that's great, and that's activism. But at the same time...I am only reaching the people that want to talk about that type of stuff. And then I'm thinking, "well maybe they'll reach other people." Because if we all just keep it within our circle, it's just going to stay within the circle. So then, we go out and do whatever we have to do.

Nate very succinctly calls what Shasta is describing above as "putting legs on your words." He explained:

You're owning a conversation when it's because that's how you feel, and it's because it's what you do, and it's because it's you. Not because it's what you learned. Not because it's some dry fact that you pulled out of something. It is you. It is what you are. It's your experience. It's every part of you.

#### Chapter Summary and Transition

While addressing the questions which guided this study: (1) how do white undergraduate students at a predominantly white institution experience an intentionally designed racial justice curriculum and; (2) how do those educational interventions influence their racial justice ally development, this chapter revealed that a racial justice ally predisposition may not be necessary to become a racial justice ally, nor does a predisposition toward racial justice *guarantee* a person will experience SOC 119 the way most of these participants reportedly did. Also illuminated in this chapter are the themes and sub-themes generated at the two analytical levels: the learner, and the learning contexts.

The next chapter introduces conceptually how an intentionally designed racial justice curriculum influences racial justice ally development by interrelating the themes

to form a theoretical explanation of the process. During this presentation I link the concepts to the appropriate literature reviewed in Chapter Two which provides additional support for or may contradict these findings. I conclude with implications and recommendations for using these results and new directions for research on the topic of racial justice ally development.

## Chapter 6

### Summary and Reflections

After a brief recap of the previous chapters, I introduce conceptually how the racial justice curriculum influenced the racial justice ally development of the participants by interrelating the themes to form a theoretical explanation of the process. Within the narrative description of the conceptual diagram (Figure 2.), I link the information from the study to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two, articulate its relevance, and discuss how the literature supports or contradicts the data collected. The chapter concludes with implications and recommendations for using these results and new directions for research on the topic of racial justice ally development.

#### Recap and Summary

Chapter One presented the problem of enlisting support from the white majority to combat racism, and how new and innovative educational interventions within higher education are needed to promote the development of racial justice allies. Chapter Two further elucidated the problem under investigation, revealed gaps in the literature, and established a theoretical foundation for investigating the development of racial justice allies as a potential avenue for combating racism and illuminating how an intentionally designed racial justice curriculum could influence this developmental process.

Chapter Three presented the overall qualitative paradigm used for this study. This included the specific case study research design, data collection methods, and the grounded theory approach to the analysis. The overarching purpose of this chapter was to describe the research design according to Arminio and Hultgren's (2002) concept of

“goodness” in qualitative research. The elements of the meaning making process employed in this study and discussed in Chapter Three included the following: (1) epistemological and theoretical foundations; (2) methodology; (3) research context and data collection methods; (4) researcher reflexivity; (5) analysis and interpretation; and (6) ethical considerations and trustworthiness.

The purpose of Chapter Four was to introduce the nine participants from the study using their voices to richly describe their childhood experiences, attitudes and values, and influential incidents related to racial diversity, race relations, and social justice occurring before college. Chapter Five presented and discussed the themes and sub-themes which emerged from the data across the nine interview transcripts, focusing on participant reflections of experiences related to SOC 119 and SOC 300.

#### *A Theoretical Explanation of the Process*

This study revealed that a complex set of influences contribute to the racial justice ally development of white students experiencing an intentionally designed racial justice curriculum. Through a naturalistic inquiry process I illuminated that the following concepts played a predominant role: the developmental complexity/intercultural maturity of the learner; an invitation from a trusted other providing an opportunity to participate in racial justice activities; and the distinctive educational conditions found within the varying learning contexts (SOC 119 and SOC 300) i.e., support from others and racial justice role models; “minority” experiences; interracial interactions and racially diverse friendships; and the opportunity to practice varying degrees of racial justice action.

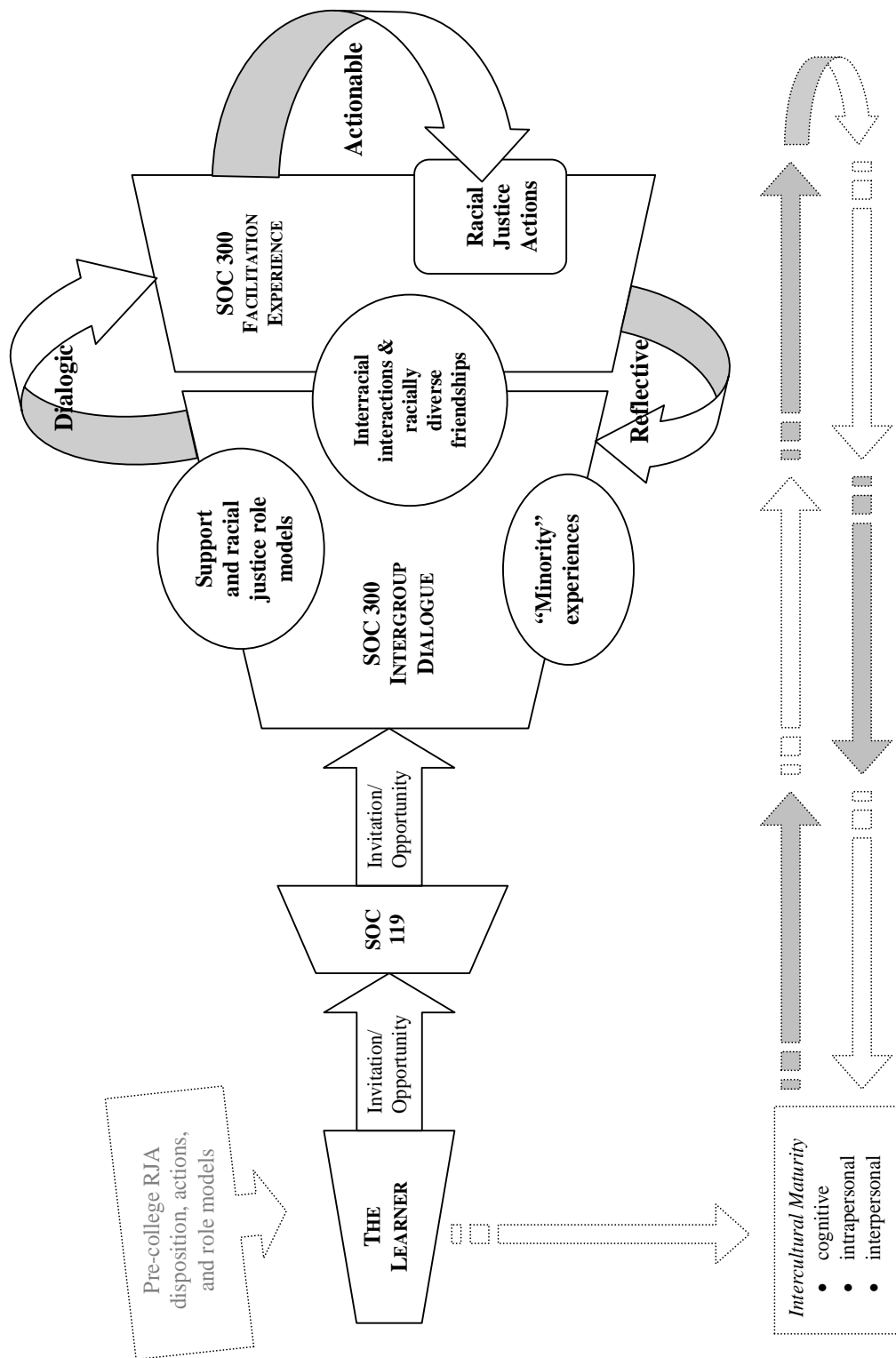


Figure 2: Conceptual Diagram



The conceptual diagram above visually expresses how the participants in this study experienced the intentionally designed racial justice curriculum and how it influenced their racial justice ally development. The students (learners) enter college with pre-existing racial justice ally predispositions and intercultural maturity. Through invitations and opportunities they partake in educational interventions such as SOC 119 and SOC 300. Within the learning contexts they experience the dialogic, reflective, and actionable spaces. It is these experiences and interactions that influence their development as racial justice allies. Though organized to be read from left to right, I do not intend any hierarchical ordering of the concepts. One does not necessarily lead to or depend upon the other and they are often interrelated and overlapping. The following narrative explains the diagram and links the information from the study to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two.

### *Pre-College*

The experiences and predispositions leading up to college were important to this study because they revealed predispositions or developmental capabilities that related to how the participants experienced the racial justice curriculum and how it influenced their racial justice ally development. In the following I discuss the concepts, Pre-college Racial Justice Ally Disposition and Actions and Invitation/Opportunity. Of these, Invitation/Opportunity occurred both before SOC 119 and during the SOC 300 experience.

*Pre-college racial justice ally disposition and actions.* The dashed-line around this concept denotes that it occurred before the learner entered the racial justice curriculum. The data gathered in this study did not reveal any racial justice ally behaviors

before coming to Penn State. Most participants recalled being “open” to racial difference and having an interest in learning about diversity before attending college, even though most did not grow up in racially heterogeneous neighborhoods and they reported little interracial interactions before attending college. The research of Engberg, Meader, and Hurtado (2003) exploring the pre-college factors which may influence students’ development of pluralistic orientations supports these findings. They revealed that white students who live in white neighborhoods, attend predominantly white high schools, and have white friends are less likely to interact with diverse others, potentially limiting their development of a pluralistic orientation.

Being open to racial difference before coming to college may not be a necessary quality to become a racial justice ally during college, nor does a predisposition toward racial justice *guarantee* a white individual will experience SOC 119 the way most of these participants reportedly did. Further, the evidence does not suggest that a pre-college disposition toward racial justice or a significant SOC 119 experience directly leads to racial justice ally behavior, although there seems to be an indirect relationship with the process of becoming a racial justice ally.

*Invitation/Opportunity.* The data presented here supports the claim that white students do not typically seek out interracial interactions or participate in their first racial justice action on their own. An invitation or gateway opportunity is often required (Broido, 2000; Eichstedt, 2001; Goodman, 2001; O'Brien, 2001; Reason *et al.*, 2005). For example, an invitation into social justice action was necessary for many of Broido’s (1997, 2000) participants to become active in social justice activities, either by “chance” or “recruitment.”

Reason et al. (2005) reiterated this phenomenon when the Ally participants reported close friends or trusted individuals invited them into racial justice actions or another opportunity which served as a catalyst for such behavior. Similarly, an invitation and/or opportunity was necessary for the participants in this study to become involved in racial justice behaviors. First, when they chose to register for SOC 119, an elective course, because a trusted individual advised them. Secondly, when they were recommended by their SOC 119 TAs to become peer-facilitators. And finally, role models, either friends, course instructors, or other significant people in their lives, reportedly influenced their choices to engage in social or racial justice efforts beyond SOC 300.

Each opportunity for racial justice ally action found in this study can be linked to an invitation by a trusted individual or role model, which provided the participant with the increased confidence to participate in potential racial justice ally activities. An invitation from a trusted individual or participating in another gateway opportunity by chance or recruitment is often necessary for whites to first engage in racial justice actions (Broido, 2000; Reason et al., 2005). The participants in this study reported the influence on their racial justice participation extended beyond being invited to TA SOC 119 discussion groups to involvement in social activism for environmental, sexual orientation, and gender issues.

#### *The Learner Experiencing the Racial Justice Curriculum*

Integral to answering how the racial justice curriculum influenced the participants' racial justice ally development was understanding how they experienced SOC 119 and SOC 300. This speaks to the individual-level characteristics of the learner

as they reported experiences from the learning contexts. Because Chapter Five thoroughly presented these results, I only briefly discuss Intercultural Maturity here and connect it to the other appropriate literature. The rectangle to the far left of the diagram symbolizes the learner as they experienced the racial justice curriculum. And the dashed box connected by an arrow below the rectangle represents the salient developmental characteristics of the learner. The arrows extending from this box to the right and circulating back to the learner signify the developmental and interdependent nature of intercultural maturity and the learning contexts under investigation. Development occurs throughout the life span. And, as noted earlier, the learners' intercultural maturity affects how they experience the learning contexts while the learning contexts reciprocally influence their intercultural maturity.

*Intercultural maturity.* The participants in this study revealed characteristics at varying sophistication within the three dimensions of intercultural maturity, which is an integrated developmental approach authored by King and Baxter Magolda (2005). Intercultural maturity is the developmental aptitude that provides the foundation for the way learners approach, understand, and behave related to cultural and racial differences. The findings from this study support the literature arguing that the process of becoming culturally aware, exploring one's own racial identity, establishing an antiracism perspective, and actively engaging in social and racial justice change efforts requires an integrated developmental approach to illuminate its complexities (Chavez *et al.*, 2003; Hurtado *et al.*, 2002; Jones & McEwen, 2000; Reason *et al.*, 2005).

Chavez *et al.* (2003) propose such complex development is a process in which an individual learns to be aware of, explore, understand, integrate, and value various types

of otherness such as race, gender, religion, and sexual orientation, including her or his own “internal otherness.” The authors’ claim that “most individuals begin at the cognitive level and at some point leap to emotional practice and on to the behavioral components of each dimension of the model” (Chavez et al., 2003, p. 458). Evidence from this study partially supports this claim. Not all participants reported beginning at the cognitive level, and most identified that an emotional, moral, or value-based element prompted them to learn more about race and race relations before even attempting to understand it. Overall, this theoretically supports the notion that in order for an individual to develop as a racial justice ally the cognitive and affective dimensions must both be adequately developed to a certain level of maturity. This is a developmental level where perspective taking, empathy, and morality may be employed while simultaneously engaging higher-order cognitive capabilities.

Evidence from this study also attests to the importance of moral development and empathic reasoning, which includes the capacity to take another’s perspective. A plethora of research points to this facet as imperative to the development of an antiracism perspective potentially leading to racial justice ally behaviors (Broido, 2000; Engberg et al., 2003; Gurin *et al.*, 2002; Hogan & Netzer, 1993; O'Brien, 2001; Reason et al., 2005; Schoem & Hurtado, 2001). Related to the importance of the interpersonal capacity to take another’s perspective to become a racial justice ally is the intrapersonal dimension which encompasses one’s racial identity.

The aspiring racial justice allies in this study exhibited characteristics which represent an increasingly mature level of intercultural competency (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005). This includes learning to understand and critically examine their

whiteness (Broido, 2000; Eichstedt, 2001; Giroux, 1997; O'Brien, 2001; Reason et al., 2005), which requires positively shifting racial attitudes and coming to terms with unconscious bias toward non-whites (Engberg, 2004). Thereby, obtaining an antiracism perspective, or what Engberg et al. designate a “pluralistic orientation” (2003).

Ultimately, developing racial justice allies may identify and be capable of behaving as allies for racial justice with greater consistency and in varying contexts (King & Baxter Magolda, 2001, 2005), thus committing to an activist identity where action stems from social and personal responsibility (Giroux, 1997).

The findings from this study also support that the racial identity development of the individual directly relates and interacts with the level of intercultural development within the intrapersonal dimension (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005). Although racial identity development is situated within King and Baxter Magolda's (2005) theory of intercultural maturity, developing whiteness proves uniquely problematic for whites striving to engage in racial justice efforts (Eichstedt, 2001; Giroux, 1997). The conditions causing white antiracism activist orientations to be problematic are the simultaneous beliefs that “all whites are racist” and that this essentialist, static notion of whiteness cannot be deconstructed (Eichstedt, 2001). They find themselves navigating between conflicting identities with no way out. Critical social awareness relies upon the ability to be critical of personal social group memberships. Developing a sense of whiteness that enables critical social awareness requires purposeful attention to learning to accept that whiteness does not have to be negative or static. Becoming a racial justice ally is a way of taking social responsibility while simultaneously pursuing a positive sense of what it means to be a white person within a racist culture.

As the participants in this study revealed, coming to terms with what it means to be white in today's society, realizing how that whiteness has been shaped within a broader racially-prejudiced culture, and then accepting responsibility for working against the system that privileges them based on social membership, is difficult and often creates complicated obstacles during racial justice ally development. Many authors either do not address the conflicting identity development issues of whites or justify discounting them entirely while focusing on "marginalized identities" (Allen & Chung, 2000; Chavez et al., 2003; Jones & McEwen, 2000). If whites are expected to become allies for racial justice, purposeful and appropriate educational interventions need to be provided to teach whites that they can overcome the unique circumstances preventing them from pursuing such a counter orientation.

The participants in this study communicated their developmental progression as allies through the experiences they shared. These reflections provided additional evidence related to the literature on social and racial justice ally development. Most of the participants in this dissertation study reported being motivated by the three factors expressed by Goodman (2001): empathy, moral and spiritual, and self-interest. These findings surprised me because I did not initially appreciate the compelling influence of intercultural maturity on the participant's capability in developing as an ally. The motivators for ally action presented by Goodman (2001) signify characteristics appropriate to an initial level of intercultural maturity. Further, although these motivators may not sustain ally behavior, they are necessary gateways into racial or social justice ally development.

Bishop's (2002) study proved less useful than I had suspected due to its focus on

becoming an ally for individuals with intersecting *oppressions*, which suggests a liberatory process like that espoused by Freire (2000). Only one participant in this dissertation reported having any significant consciousness of an oppressed identity from which she was striving for liberation. The white, upper socioeconomic status, heterosexual, Christian, male participant would be considered the least oppressed. Thus, the remaining seven participants reportedly were not conscious of their oppressed identities (e.g., female, Jewish, and low socioeconomic status). Only one of the nine participants identified with some sort of oppression which lends minimal support to Bishop's work. However, her story supports Bishop's proposition that being a survivor of abuse often motivates individuals toward ally action. The weight of the evidence seems to lessen the power of Bishop's proposition because most of the participants in this study did not identify any oppressed statuses, although the majority reported being members of a marginalized social group (such as women and Jews). Perhaps this discrepancy is related to the intercultural maturity of the participants in this study compared to those in Bishop's. Her respondents were significantly older and had different experiences than those reported in this dissertation.

The study by Eichstedt (2001) examined how participants managed their white identities while striving for acceptance as an activist for racial justice. Eichstedt's findings, how they relate to the scholarship in this area and this dissertation study, are as follows. Her participants assumed an oppressor status (Delgado & Stefancic, 1997; Frankenberg, 1993; Giroux, 1997; Ortiz & Rhoads, 2000; Perry, 2001; Roediger, 2002) and balanced this negative identity with some positive constructions of self (Eichstedt, 2001; Giroux, 1997; Ortiz & Rhoads, 2000) often by connecting with a history of white



resistance to racial oppression (Stokes Brown, 2002). Apparently, they had to overcome white guilt in order to act at all. Almost all were involved in other activism prior to racial justice, which meant they created or already espoused an “activist frame.” This activist identity may have helped them move from an antiracism perspective, past feeling helpless in the face of a grim social issue, to action as an antiracism activist.

Eichstedt’s (2001) investigation offers valuable insight into what may lie ahead for the participants in this dissertation study because most are only beginning the journey as racial justice allies, unlike the participants in Eichstedt’s research who were “seasoned” antiracism activists. During our interviews, most of the participants revealed only some level of acceptance of their oppressor status, and they appeared to overcompensate for this negative feeling with positive constructions of self (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005). Some revealed this phenomenon by sharing how being TAs and “getting it” gave them a positive sense of achievement about what they were doing to improve race relations.

Further, the participants from this study did not report connecting with a history of white resistance to racial oppression. However, they recounted looking to role models such as Sam, Laurie, friends, and the students of color in SOC 300 for support and guidance. Most reported overcoming their white guilt with the exception of the two participants who chose to become facilitators for the Race Relations Project. This illuminates the importance of thoroughly understanding the intercultural maturity of the individual when interpreting indicators of racial justice ally development. Reportedly, most participants did not feel white guilt any longer, which could mean they have not developed the intercultural maturity to uncover deep-seeded sources of white guilt, thus

potentially hindering their developmental progression as racial justice allies.

*SOC 119 Learning Contexts*

The first rectangle to the right of the Learner, after the first Invitation/Opportunity arrow, is SOC 119. The “Race and Ethnic Relations” course (SOC 119) is a prerequisite to the SOC 300 experience and essentially, the introductory or “gateway” course of the racial justice curriculum. These findings support those of Reason et al. (2005) who found SOC 119 to be a powerful, reflective learning experience for those demonstrating characteristics indicative of racial justice ally development. Interviews with the participants in this study revealed that SOC 119 significantly influenced their understandings of racial and cultural differences. The participants in this study attributed much of their heightened cultural awareness, both of racial others and their own whiteness, to SOC 119. This may not have occurred naturally without such an educational intervention or another experience focused on cultural, racial, or social difference. Engberg et al. (2003) concluded that cultural awareness was shown to be the strongest predictor of a pluralistic orientation for both white and racial minority students.

*SOC 300 Learning Contexts*

While this research exposed a complex developmental process occurring for the learner as she or he experienced SOC 300, the learning contexts influencing the racial justice ally learning process proved just as dynamic, multifaceted, and interrelated. The two boxes labeled Intergroup Dialogue and Facilitation Experience represent the structural components of the SOC 300 course. The arrows marked Dialogic, Actionable, and Reflective are the learning spaces I defined and discussed in Chapter Five. The arrows symbolize the process-oriented nature of the course which implicitly links the

learning contexts to the developmental characteristics of the learner. The learner is in constant movement from one space to another in multiple directions as her or his developmental capabilities evolve. Although seemingly unidirectional, the arrows are meant to show constant motion and the interconnectedness of the two learning contexts where one continually interacts with the other and vice versa.

The findings from this study support the literature in Chapter Two by showing that educational interventions focused on diversity can produce growth and development of students' openness to diversity and challenge (Whitt *et al.*, 2001), influence the quality of interactions with diverse others, and increase their commitment to social action and engagement (Henderson-King & Kaleta, 2000; Laird *et al.*, 2002; Villalpando, 2002; Zuniga *et al.*, 2005). More specifically and similar to the findings from the Reason *et al.* (2005), they revealed that coursework related to race, particularly coursework focused on race relations (SOC 119 and SOC 300) can positively influence a student's sense of whiteness.

Reason *et al.* (2005) found that the "First-year students not in a race relations course rarely reflected on what it meant to be White or the influence of race in society" (p. 16) and none of them indicated any plans for studying race or racial issues later in college. The findings from this study, which was conducted with upper class students, reinforces the Reason *et al.* (2005) results. The upper class participants—the Reason *et al.* (2005) Ally students and those in this dissertation—demonstrated a significantly greater understanding of whiteness than the first-year students in the Reason *et al.* (2005) study. Further, the upper class participants from both studies expressed a desire to learn more

about racial issues, their whiteness, and how to disrupt racist social systems during college and after graduation.

### *Intergroup Dialogue*

Schoem (2003) defined an intergroup dialogue as a process, not an event, about relationship-building and thoughtful engagement around difficult issues such as race. It involves face-to-face interactions focused on intergroup conflict and community building. Thus, it may be intense difficult work and only occasionally a “feel good” experience. Intergroup dialogues are led by skilled facilitators and are about inquiry and understanding of self and others through an integration of content and process. They are primarily focused on talking, but authentic dialogue often leads to action. Findings from this study support the power of the learning contexts when these characteristics were evident, which also verified the findings of other researchers focusing more specifically on the impact of intergroup dialogue on diversity-related outcomes.

The empirical research on intergroup dialogue programs suggests that courses purposefully focused on interracial interactions, such as intergroup dialogue, increased motivation for intergroup learning, importance of and confidence in taking action (Nagda *et al.*, 2004), and motivation to reduce one’s own prejudice and taking action to promote inclusion and social justice (Zuniga *et al.*, 2005). These conclusions correspond with the findings of other scholars more generally concerned with the educational outcomes of campus racial diversity (Engberg *et al.*, 2003; Gurin *et al.*, 2002; Hurtado *et al.*, 2002; Vasques Scalera, 1999). The results of this dissertation support these findings as well as those directly related to the influence of the course on the racial justice ally development process discussed in the next sections of this chapter.

The three ovals within and straddling the borderlines of the learning contexts, which signify that the factors also occurred outside of the course, are the concepts within the SOC 300 experience that influenced racial justice ally development: Support and Racial Justice Role Models, Interracial Interactions and Racially Diverse Friendships, and “Minority” Experiences.

*“Minority” experiences.* According to Reason et al. (2005), “minority experiences” are situations in which students were numerical minorities. These instances may lead to reflections on whiteness. Most of the participants I interviewed reported having such experiences before beginning SOC 300, although some participants reportedly felt SOC 300 was their only “minority” experience during college. Much like the Ally participants in the Reason et al. study, these participants were also more apt to have reflected upon their whiteness even beyond the context of the “minority” experience itself.

Although only one situation arose where an individual recounted feelings of empathy while being a “minority” was reported, an unexpected result of this dissertation lends support to the significance of “approximating experiences” (Hogan & Netzer, 1993) especially when coupled with a “minority” experience (Reason et al., 2005). The participant shared that her “minority” experience occurred with a group of friends of color, which reportedly incited feelings of empathy, as well as discomfort. By having a “minority” experience with friends of color she was able to channel the discomfort into empathy by immediately discussing it with her friends and relating the discomfort to what her friends of color felt quite routinely, which created a dually powerful experience for her. This appeared to influence reflection and increased her racial consciousness and,

in turn, increased her awareness of white privilege, causing her to think about her role as a racial justice ally.

*Support and racial justice role models.* Beyond serving as trusted others that provide invitations for racial justice action as discussed previously, the importance of support and racial justice role models for developing racial justice allies becomes clearer through this study. The literature related to this concept presents multiple forms and functions of racial justice role models: the historical and courageous white figures that struggled against racism (Stokes Brown, 2002), and like-minded others who provide and interpret information and assist in overcoming obstacles and challenges to maintaining racial justice action (Broido, 2000; O'Brien, 2001; Reason et al., 2005). The latter is directly relevant to the role models discussed by participants in this dissertation, while the former was not mentioned at all. This was not surprising since participants were not directly asked about white role models.

The racial justice role models reported by the participants in this study extended beyond what is reported in the literature. Schoem (2003) stressed the importance of skilled facilitators in intergroup dialogue. A skilled facilitator may act as a role model and provide support for up-and-coming racial justice allies. Not unexpectedly, the instructor/facilitator of the SOC 300 course in this study personified just such a role model for the participants as they went through the intergroup dialogue learning process. However, the participants in this study not only looked to the course facilitator for information, support, and inspiration they reported turning to like-minded others outside of the course that they trusted such as close friends or roommates.

*Interracial interactions and racially diverse friendships.* This dissertation confirms the literature reviewed in Chapter Two that claims interracial interactions and racially diverse friendships influence diversity-related educational outcomes. Arguably, racial justice ally development exemplifies such an outcome. Whitt et al. (2001) found that a positive relationship exists between racially diverse student acquaintances and a student's openness to diversity and challenge. Reason et al. (2005) established that interactions with racially diverse others appeared to influence the development of racial justice allies during college. Eichstedt's (2001) participants noted experiencing significant relationships with people of color and having "approximating experiences" of oppression (Hogan & Netzer, 1993). Her participants also reported connected with other white activists and activists of color (i.e., support networks) to meaningfully locate themselves within the larger struggle for racial justice (Bishop, 2002; Broido, 2000; O'Brien, 2001; Reason et al., 2005; Tatum, 1994). Several other studies implicitly support the connection between interacting with diverse others and the development as racial justice allies such as Springer et al. (1996), Meader et al. (1998), Hurtado et al. (2002), Gurin et al. (2002), and Schoem (2003).

### *Facilitation Experience*

Although many intergroup dialogues use talk only, SOC 300 integrates a "hands-on" experience where the TA facilitates two SOC 119 discussion groups per week with a different co-TA of color for each section. This provided an opportunity for the participants to not only apply what they learned in the intergroup dialogue, but to do so in a physically safe, non-threatening, yet emotionally and cognitively challenging environment. While few participants in this dissertation revealed any significant level of

racial justice behaviors while facilitating the SOC 119 discussions, the opportunity to “practice” attributes contributing to racial justice development were prevalent. Most reportedly did not choose to engage in behaviors indicative of racial justice allies, which coincides with the traits they shared that demonstrated their intercultural maturity. However, this bi-weekly participatory learning experience, coupled with the ongoing dialogue process, may have moved their racial justice ally development beyond the abstract to the personal, which may someday lead to action—either individual or collective (Schoem & Hurtado, 2001).

The findings from the Reason et al. (2005) study suggested that students who applied the course content to cocurricular experiences reported significant racial attitude changes reflected in an increase in positive feelings about people of color, which are indicators of racial justice ally development. The facilitation experience discussed in this dissertation could arguably represent such a cocurricular activity. The participants who reported applying what they were learning in SOC 300 to their facilitation experiences demonstrated capabilities associated with racial justice ally development.

*Racial justice actions.* The final concept, Racial Justice Actions, is located within the box furthest to the right in the diagram. Although actively participating in an intergroup dialogue or engaging in a conversation around racial issues could be considered a form of racial justice action, the data did not support this argument. It did, however, expose that even if at a minimal level, some racial justice action was indicated as the participants facilitated their SOC 119 discussion groups, therefore, I situated it in the Facilitation Experience box.



An intended outcome of the SOC 300 process is a progression in the learner's racial justice ally development indicated by her or his capacity to act with increasing consistency as a racial justice ally in changing contexts. The outcomes of the learning process are observable racial justice ally actions. Additional indicators of racial justice ally development are increased intercultural maturity, commitment to racial justice, and confidence in capabilities as a racial justice ally. Although one should not assume an achieved level or "competence" is possible, successfully accumulating racial justice ally knowledge and applying it in multiple increasingly complex environments indicates racial justice ally development. For example, beginning racial justice allies may not be willing to organize a public protest for racial justice, but they may begin to act in personal situations by disrupting a racist comment or pointing out the existence of racial inequality to a white friend. They are beginning to publicly act according to their racial justice ally attitudes, which indicate that the student is developing as a racial justice ally.

The limited research specifically addressing social and racial justice ally development offers support for the findings of this study, which assumes ally actions occur at varying intensity levels (Adams *et al.*, 2000; Broido, 2000; Reason *et al.*, 2005). The participants in this study reported racial justice ally behaviors varying from disrupting racist remarks made by friends and encouraging a significant other to think differently about racial justice issues, to engaging SOC 119 students in difficult conversations about race, whiteness, power, and privilege. The findings from Reason *et al.* (2005) show that varying levels of racial justice action result from a mixture of one's understandings of whiteness and confidence level.

The seemingly small number of racial justice actions evident in the participant's experiences as SOC 119 facilitators appeared congruent with their reported behaviors associated with initial or intermediate levels of intercultural maturity. This supports the King and Baxter Magolda (2005) claim that the interpersonally mature learner is willing to actively work for the rights of others, which was only evident in the participant from this study who indicated the most intercultural maturity.

### Reflections

This study advanced the extant knowledge through an exploration of the influences of a racial justice curriculum on the racial justice ally development process experienced by college students. A salient finding indicated a theoretical link between intergroup dialogue and the development of racial justice allies during college. Practically applying this and the other results could provide higher education personnel with a better understanding of the development of racial justice allies and how to facilitate this development through innovative approaches integrated into educational interventions. The factors that influenced the development of racial justice allies during college included the following: intercultural maturity, SOC 119, SOC 300 (an intergroup dialogue course with an experiential component), an invitation and opportunity to participate in racial justice action, "minority" experiences, support and racial justice role models, interracial interactions and racially diverse friendships, and racial justice actions. By purposefully integrating these concepts into the collegiate learning experience the potential for promoting racial justice allies during college increases substantially. Either one or many of the factors could be integrated into curricular and cocurricular educational interventions.

*Recommendations for Practice*

The major findings of this study support my argument that racial justice efforts within higher education could address the problem of enlisting the active participation of individual students who constitute the racial majority (i.e., white students). Prioritizing antiracism education at the institutional level and intentionally designing racial justice interventions may result in the development of racial justice allies. These efforts could ultimately improve race relations on college campuses and within the larger society.

Students enter college with pre-existing racial justice ally predispositions and intercultural maturity. Therefore, for facilitators, instructors, and practitioners of existing racial justice interventions, it is important to understand what values and beliefs students bring to the class/experience and learn the indicators of intercultural maturity and racial justice ally development in order to understand how to promote the development of racial justice allies. An important note here regarding interracial learning contexts is the importance of considering the developmental complexities of *all* learners, not just the white students as discussed in this dissertation. It is especially important to consider and learn about the racial identity development of people of color who are equal participants in interracial learning contexts.

Also, the instructor must be aware of her or his own developmental capabilities in order to fulfill the responsibilities of a skilled facilitator. For most diversity or multicultural experiences the attitudes and behaviors of an ally are preferred (Howard, 1999; Reason & Broido, 2005). The success and quality of experience for all students and the instructor could be influenced by consciously providing the appropriate levels of challenge and support for each individual based on her or his developmental needs.

Actively and purposefully provide invitations and opportunities to partake in educational interventions *such as* SOC 119 and SOC 300. SOC 119 appears to be a gateway course, where an “a-ha” moment reportedly occurred; other courses or experiences focused on raising critical social awareness may have similar results. Thus, these courses should be promoted and students advised to take them early in their undergraduate career. An experience like SOC 300 may require an openness or readiness that many first-year white students may not have until experiencing a course like SOC 119. But, because the participants in this study all took SOC 119 before experiencing SOC 300, I cannot make any conclusions regarding the strength of the SOC 300 experience without previously experiencing SOC 119.

Design intergroup dialogue educational interventions, which could be cocurricular programs. Provide these opportunities to experience the dialogic, reflective, and actionable spaces. Further, intergroup dialogue experiences offer the opportunity for meaningful interracial interactions. These may result in interracial friendships and may provide opportunities to discuss “minority” experiences that are often emotionally challenging and appear to commonly occur for the first time during college, and sometimes within the intergroup dialogue experience itself. Purposeful reflection and discussion with other whites and students of color about these experiences may provide deeper understandings once discussed, reflected upon, and understood as new perspectives are considered, questioned, and accepted (approximating experiences).

Create learning contexts such as SOC 300 where support from racial justice role models can be realized. Where the aspiring racial justice ally can connect with others they see as working toward the common goal of disrupting racism. They can learn with

these role models and apply or practice varying degrees of racial justice action in increasingly complex and different situations. By first practicing in a safe environment such as TAing SOC 119 discussion groups, they can gain the confidence to enact their racial justice beliefs in varying contexts. Especially powerful is the combination of intergroup dialogue and the facilitation experience which provides a “hands-on” opportunity to test the racial justice ally behaviors being modeled in the intergroup dialogue seminar before “taking it to the streets” so to speak.

The list below represents some specific suggestions for practice that emerged as I learned of the potentially powerful influences of racial justice ally development within an intentionally designed racial justice curriculum.

1. *Experiential learning* (i.e., practice): Provide opportunities for students to practice racial justice ally actions through experiential activities combined with a dialogue process. Beyond coursework with an opportunity to practice what is learned, other cocurricular programs (such as service learning and leadership programs) should provide experiential activities with a dialogic reflective process, both before and after the hands-on experience.
2. *Interracial interactions*: Racially diverse friendships may evolve from interracial interactions that occur in and out of the classroom. Therefore, promote such interactions through collaborative projects which can occur in a formal course or in an informal activity, such as a cross-club collaborative fundraiser.
3. *“Minority” experiences*: Intentionally recruit white student employees for on-campus jobs that primarily serve students of color, with the caveat that the majority of students working within that area are students of color in order to

ensure the environment is perceived as safe and welcoming by those seeking services.

4. *Racial justice role models*: Encourage and reward campus staff, faculty, and professionals who behave as racial justice role models within their respective positions. Create a mentoring program to connect racial justice role models to aspiring racial justice allies.
5. *Invitation and opportunity*: Invite students from all racial backgrounds to participate in multicultural experiences; more intentionally focus on those who may not think such events are for them (whites). Send a racial justice ally and person of color to invite an entire class of students to attend a multicultural program. As the course instructor, take an entire class of students to a multicultural program or event that fits with the overall goal of the course such as, attending a rally promoting racial justice in a Sociology course discussing social movements. For both of these examples, provide a forum for dialogue regarding the experiences, relate those experiences back to coursework or programmatic learning outcomes, and talk about how the invitation influenced their willingness to participate.
6. *Racial justice actions*: If you are a racial justice ally, continue to challenge yourself to behave as a racial justice ally in different contexts requiring increasingly difficult levels of action. Put yourself in uncomfortable situations where you open yourself up to others who may challenge your intercultural competency. Reflect on your racial justice actions and why you took them, but especially reflect on those situations when you chose *not* to take action and

contemplate why.

7. *Research:* Conduct and fund studies that explore the influences of racial justice ally development during college. Actively encourage students (undergraduate and graduate) to become involved as participants, or co-researchers, in such research. Expand the scholarly dialogue on this topic to other educational settings and disciplines; the study of racial justice allies must span disciplinary boundaries.

#### *Recommendations for the Racial Justice Curriculum*

The following are recommendations for the racial justice curriculum and more specifically, the SOC 300 course. These recommendations may also be applied to educational interventions with similar structures and goals.

1. Continue to enhance the SOC 300 course by more intentionally incorporating the characteristics of an intergroup dialogue.
2. Assess, define, and document the racial justice curriculum, from SOC 119 through the Race Relations Project, as it relates to the diversity goals of Penn State.
3. As a part of improving the racial justice curriculum, share mistakes and successes, actively listen and learn from others doing similar work, and include disparate voices in order to advance the knowledge of how to influence racial and social justice action among white students.

#### *Future Research*

The limitations of this study lead me to the following suggestions for future researchers: utilize participant observation to gain greater insight into how an intergroup dialogue course influences racial justice ally development; begin to conceive of a

quantitative tool which may support the expansion of the research scope; enlist a team of racially-diverse researchers. The course instructor/s could provide the observations, minimizing the problem of access, while the other researcher/s could conduct the interviews. Not only would this serve as a measure of trustworthiness, the first-hand account of what occurs during the course would provide valuable insight. By including observations throughout the course of the intergroup dialogue experience, the researcher could witness and report how the students of color are engaging in the dialogue. Also, seeking the perspectives of the students of color in the course through interviews, either one-on-one or focus groups, would provide greater understanding of how the process unfolds and how intergroup dialogue influences learning from both sides of the conversation.

The findings of this study generated many questions for guiding my future research agenda regarding how an intentionally designed racial justice curriculum influences racial justice ally development and, more generally, on the developmental process of becoming an ally for racial justice:

- How does engagement in cocurricular programs augment academic experiences, like SOC 119 and SOC 300, which are components of an intentionally designed racial justice curriculum?
- How does whiteness relate to racial justice ally development? Is becoming a racial justice ally an *identity* development process?
- How does racial justice ally development occur throughout the college years and beyond? Which influences during college are lasting and which appear to be temporal?



- What is the link between this type of development and social learning theory? Is learning a part of development or vice versa? How does *learning* to be a racial justice ally relate to the *development* of a racial justice ally? Have development and learning been rendered incompatible because of disciplinary incongruence (philosophical incompatibility)?
- How does the process of becoming a racial justice ally differ for multiracial students who look white? What is a racial justice ally? Who decides what racial group the person is a member of, the person or society? Who decides if they are an ally or not, the individual or society? Does a person have to *identify* as an ally in order to be an ally, or do external others decide?
- Are “minority” experiences connected to empathy? How do these concepts interrelate and influence racial justice ally development?
- What distinguishes a racial justice action? What are the characteristics of the various intensity levels of racial justice action? How and by who are they determined? At what point is the action considered constant and transferable from context to context?

### Final Thoughts

This study illuminated how white undergraduates at a predominantly white institution experienced an intentionally designed racial justice curriculum, and how these educational interventions influenced their racial justice ally development. Although specific to the contexts of this investigation, their experiences demonstrated that an intentionally designed racial justice curriculum that incorporates an intergroup dialogue intervention has the potential to create transformative learning experiences, albeit not

necessarily immediate nor without considerable effort from educators within the varying spheres of academe.

I don't know that [SOC 300] is an experience that many people *want* to become involved in. And, I think it wouldn't be as effective if it had less selective criteria to get in because the people that got in wouldn't necessarily all want to be there. They would just want the four credits. [*So, why don't more people want to be there?*] It's hard. [*Why is it so hard?*] Because it's stuff that we're not supposed to talk about. [*Why aren't we supposed to talk about it?*] Because we're not supposed to drag dirty things out into the light for other people to see. That's the white side of this...we're not supposed to talk about this because we were the ones at fault. If we keep quiet long enough everybody will forget. So, it's white people, in my experience, that don't like talking about race. They don't like the conflict of talking about race because you have to admit that you're wrong. [...]

I do think that there is a certain time when you have to be ready. I'm not sure that everyone experiences that time...they may never feel the need to be ready...I think you have to want to be [ready] and something will trigger it but I'm not sure if it triggers in everybody. I don't know yet I guess, and I always wonder.

(Nate)

*Epilogue*

As I reflect on my personal journey since the completion of this study, I find myself in a conflicted place. In my heart I realize this journey is not over, that much of my personal work is yet to come and many struggles—perhaps the most difficult—lie ahead. On the other hand, my head tells me I have made great strides in my efforts to unlearn racism, to heal from the unconscious racial bias learned from the society in which I live. My head tells me to celebrate, to rejoice and pat myself on the back. I *can* “wrap my head” around this stuff now. But, my heart reminds me that racial awareness, antiracism attitudes, and *wanting* to participate in racially just ways are not enough. I find myself unsettled in knowing that consistent ally actions are not as easy or come as naturally as I had hoped.

My willingness to take the necessary risks and act consistently in more complex situations will require my personal attention and active continuation of what I have started. My head and heart may not yet be harmonized. I find my head often dominates when dealing with critical and personal issues such as racial justice. However, as I allow my heart to become more engaged in the process of developing and sustaining a racial justice ally orientation, I realize this difficult process will also carry great rewards, personal and societal. The challenges I face of unlearning racism and acting as a racial justice ally require constant and thoughtful *emotional* energy. I also realize that the privilege of spending intensive time, reading, thinking, and reflecting on my racial self as a member of a racialized society will doubtfully happen again. For this transformative opportunity I am truly grateful, and will take what I have learned and “pay it forward.”

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## Appendix A

### Informed Consent Form

**INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR  
SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH**  
The Pennsylvania State University

**ORP USE ONLY: IRB#21511 Doc. #1**  
The Pennsylvania State University  
Office of Research Protections  
Approval Date: 08/26/05 JKG  
Expiration Date: 08/22/06 JKG  
Social Science Institutional Review Board

**Title of Project:** The Development of Racial Justice Allies during College

**Principal Investigator:** Elizabeth A. Roosa Millar  
Phone: H (814) 234-8533 and W (814) 863-9609

**Advisor:** Robert D. Reason  
Phone: (814) 863-3766  
Email: [rreason@psu.edu](mailto:rreason@psu.edu)

**1. Purpose of the Study:** This study will investigate how white, undergraduate college students experience SOC 300 and how that class, along with other experiences during college, influences their racial justice ally development.

**2. Procedures:** You will be asked to participate in at least three audio taped interviews this fall semester and allow the researcher to observe one of your SOC 119 sections. Each interview will consist of questions about your experiences as a student in SOC 300, and how you think these experiences and other college experiences have influenced your development as a racial justice ally. The observation will focus on you as you facilitate the class discussion (this is not an evaluation or judgment of your abilities as a facilitator, it merely offers more insight into your experiences).

**3. Discomforts and Risks:** Some interview questions, such as those regarding race and race relations, may be considered personal and cause discomfort to some.

In the event that you feel distress and need to speak to someone about it, here are some campus and community resources to call: **CAPS** (814) 863-0395, and the **Centre County CAN HELP Line** (1-800-643-5432), which is a 24-hour crisis hotline available to Penn State students.

**4. Benefits:** The results of this study could provide higher education personnel with a better understanding of the development of racial justice allies during college and how to facilitate this development through educational interventions (classes, workshops, living arrangements, etc...).



**5. Duration/Time:** Each of the three interviews will require 60 to 90 minutes per session and the observation will last 50 minutes (1 class period); the interviews and the observation will be completed during the fall semester, 2005

**6. Statement of Confidentiality:** The Office for Research Protections and the Social Science Institutional Review Board may review records related to this project at any time. Confidentiality of your responses is assured. There will not be identifiable information published throughout this study.

- records will be coded and pseudonyms (“fake” names) will be used during recordings;
- only the researcher will have access to your identity (found on the participant data sheet and consent form);
- all tapes and written records will be kept in a locked cabinet at the researcher’s home;
- tapes will be destroyed once the project is completed (July 31, 2006);
- the researcher will have access to the tapes; for transcription purposes, a professional transcription expert will have them for a short period of time (only your pseudonym and participant code will be on the tapes; nothing that can reveal your true identity).

Please indicate your willingness to be audio recorded during the interviews *only* by checking one of the following:

\_\_\_\_\_ I give my permission to be audio taped during the interviews.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not give my permission to be audio taped during the interviews.

**7. Right to Ask Questions:** You can ask questions about this research. Contact the Principal Investigator, Elizabeth A. Roosa, or her advisor, Robert D. Reason; contact information provided above. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, contact The Pennsylvania State University’s Office for Research Protections at (814) 865-1775.

**8. Voluntary Participation:** Your decision to be in this research is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. Participation is strictly voluntary and has no bearing on your course grade. No professors will be informed about your participation in this project. You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to take part in this research study. If you agree to take part in this research study and the information outlined above, please sign your name and indicate the date below. You will be given a copy of this signed and dated consent form for your records.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix B

### Participant Data Sheet

Please choose a pseudonym: \_\_\_\_\_  
*(A pseudonym is a false name that will be used when referring to you during interviews, data analysis, publication, and presentations. Using a pseudonym helps to ensure your confidentiality)*

**The following information will help in understanding your data in relation to other students in this study who may share similar characteristics. As with all information you give, it will be kept confidential.**

Age: \_\_\_\_ Class rank (*circle one*): Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior (4<sup>th</sup> yr) Senior (5<sup>th</sup> yr)

College Major: \_\_\_\_\_ Minor: \_\_\_\_\_

High School GPA: \_\_\_\_\_ College GPA: \_\_\_\_\_

Hometown: \_\_\_\_\_ Would you classify your hometown as  Rural  
 Urban  
 Suburban

Religious affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_

Please provide the following information, to the best of your ability, about your parent(s) or primary adult caregiver(s) before college.

Primary Caregiver 1  
 Relationship to you: \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Caregiver 2  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Racial identity: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Highest educational level: \_\_\_\_\_ some high school  
 \_\_\_\_\_ high school graduate  
 \_\_\_\_\_ some college  
 \_\_\_\_\_ college graduate  
 \_\_\_\_\_ more than college

\_\_\_\_\_ some high school  
 \_\_\_\_\_ high school graduate  
 \_\_\_\_\_ some college  
 \_\_\_\_\_ college graduate  
 \_\_\_\_\_ more than college

Political ideology \_\_\_\_\_ Conservative  
 \_\_\_\_\_ middle-of-the-road  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Liberal

\_\_\_\_\_ Conservative  
 \_\_\_\_\_ middle-of-the-road  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Liberal

**Please tell us a little about your current roommate(s).**

Do you have a roommate, or roommates? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_ If yes, how many? \_\_\_\_\_

Race of roommate(s): \_\_\_\_\_ (check here \_\_\_\_ if this race is DIFFERENT than yours)

Did you know your roommate(s) before coming to Penn State? Y N

Did you *choose* to live with your roommate(s)? Y N

## Appendix C

### Initial Interview Protocol

**Interview 1.** Goal: To build rapport; discuss pre-college characteristics and experiences; start reflecting on early influences of interest in racial justice, race relations, or issues of race

Introductory Questions:

1. Tell me about your life before coming to Penn State. Prompts: hometown, family, friends, high school
2. How do you identify yourself to others? Prompts: race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, political ideology, etc...
3. Tell me about your interactions with people of different races other than your own before coming to Penn State.
4. How and when did you become interested in racial justice, race relations, or issues of race?

**Interview 2.** Goal: To explore college experiences and influences on racial justice attitudes and actions; and explore the influence of SOC 300 on racial justice ally development

During College:

5. Tell me about your life since coming to Penn State. Prompts: perceptions of diversity
6. Tell me how you have changed, if at all, in regard to how you think about race and racial issues since coming to college? Prompt: experiences (in and out of class) during college
7. Tell me about your interactions with people of different races than your own at Penn State?
8. How has SOC 300 influenced your interest in race relations work, if at all?

**Interview 3.** Goal: To dig deeper into specific areas related to race, especially their sense of whiteness, as determined by previous interviews and observation

9. What does it mean to you to be white? Prompt: how changed
10. Have you ever found yourself in an uncomfortable or challenging situation where race was the primary source of your discomfort? Prompt: during SOC 300 or facilitating class
11. Has SOC 300 or other college experiences affected what it means to you to be white?
12. How will your experiences during college, including SOC 300, affect the rest of your life? Prompt: racial justice work; sense of whiteness

## Appendix D

### Data Analysis Codes

#### Open Codes

##### PRE-COLLEGE

1. High school/Hometown racial diversity
2. Racial and peer interactions
3. Parent/Sibling/Adult influence
4. Social justice values
5. Religious/Spiritual values
6. Whiteness

##### COLLEGE

1. Friendships/Diverse interactions
2. "Minority" experiences
3. Intergroup dialogue - SOC 300
4. Opportunity/Invitation

##### *Developmental characteristics*

5. Affective/Empathy
6. Spiritual/Religious
7. Psychosocial
8. Cognitive
9. Gender identity
10. Political/Social justice
11. Whiteness
12. White privilege
13. White guilt
14. White culture

15. DNA project
  16. Blame for racism
  17. Self-description/“Identities”
- Educational spaces/Learning contexts*
18. Reflective space
  19. Dialogic space
  20. Actionable space
  21. Experiential – SOC 119
  22. Other involvement
  23. Facilitating/TAing SOC 119
  24. RJA role models
  25. Perceptions of Laurie
  26. Perceptions of Sam
  27. Role of facilitator/TA
  28. Membership sought/commitment
  29. Participant’s perspective on RJA development
  30. RJA continuum/“good whites-bad whites”
  31. What influenced your RJA development?
  32. Can anyone be a RJA?

**Categories, Category Labels, and [Themes]**

*Characteristics of Developmental Complexity [Intercultural Maturity]*

**Cognitive/Epistemological**

**Intrapersonal**

- Gender identity
- Political/Social justice
- Spiritual/Religious
- Self-description/“Identities”

**Interpersonal**

- Affective/Empathy
- Psychosocial

**Whiteness**

White privilege  
 White guilt  
 White culture  
 DNA project  
 Blame for racism

*Educational Spaces/Interventions***Embodied** space**Reflective** space**Dialogic** space**Actionable** spaceSOC 300: **[Intergroup Dialogue]**SOC 300: **Facilitating SOC 119 Discussion Groups** [Facilitation experience]**Other involvement****RJA role models** [Support and white racial justice role models]

Perceptions of Laurie  
 Perceptions of Sam  
 Friends/roommates

**Friendships/Diverse interactions** [Interracial interactions & racially diverse friendships]**“Minority” experiences** [“Minority” experiences]**Opportunity/Invitation** [Invitation and opportunity]*RJA actions* [Level of racial justice actions]

Role of facilitator/TA  
 Membership sought/commitment

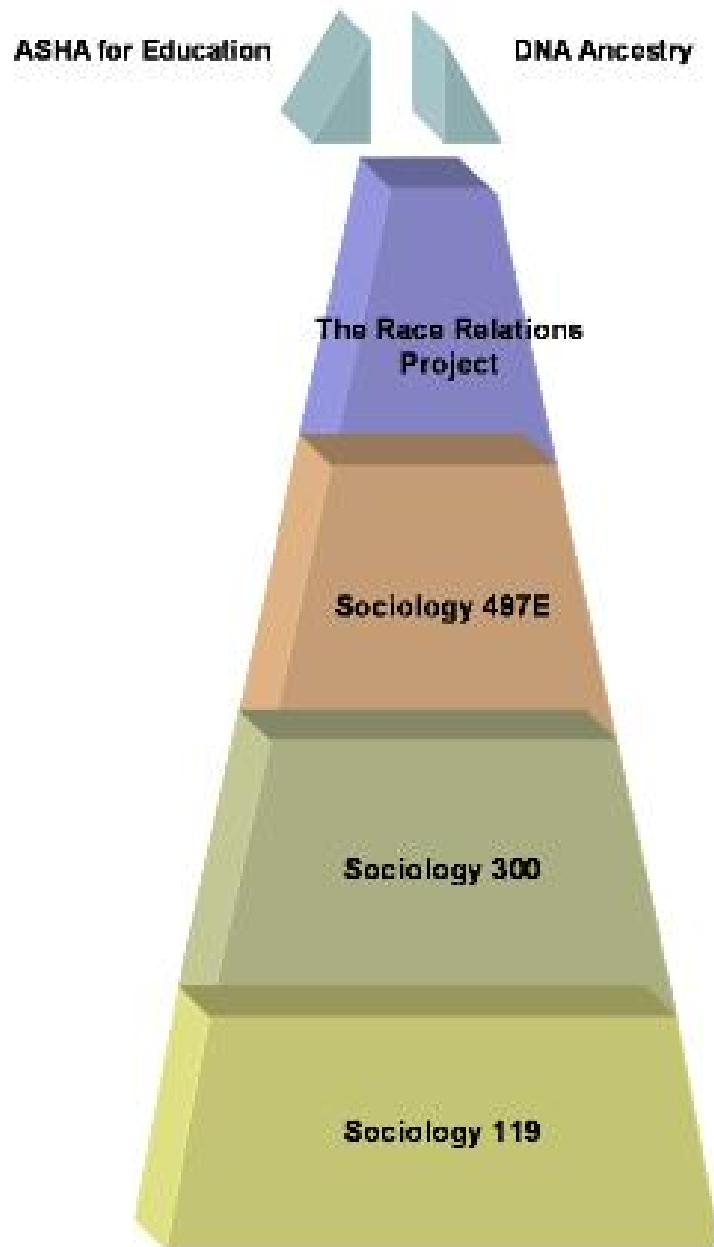
*Miscellaneous*

Participant’s perspective on RJA development  
 RJA continuum/“good whites-bad whites”  
 What influenced your RJA development?  
 Can anyone be a RJA?

## Appendix E

### Racial Justice Curriculum

Race Relations Project (2005) <http://www.racerelationsproject.psu.edu/index2.htm>



THE RACE RELATIONS PROJECT (SOC 497A) is a paid internship that includes a weekly training seminar and project meeting. Undergraduate students who reach this level in the system have had extensive exposure to conversations about race relations and the study of group dialogue. Using the Socratic Method, these facilitators engage their peers across the university in small group conversations about race relations. The goal is not to teach or preach, but to provide the kind of environment where students can speak candidly to each other about their personal views and experiences. RRP facilitators are observed on a regular basis and participate in personal coaching sessions once a month to provide individualized and intensive training.

SOCIOLOGY 497E is a secondary training course for undergraduate students transitioning from the role of teaching assistant for SOCIOLOGY 119 to paid facilitator for the RACE RELATIONS PROJECT. This small class of 8-10 students is hand-selected to pursue further study of the dynamics of small group discussion in order to be eligible to audition for the RACE RELATIONS PROJECT. For the first half of the semester, students observe, evaluate and discuss the RACE RELATIONS PROJECT and are more directly trained to use the Socratic Method. During the second half of the semester, they audition to be a facilitator with the RACE RELATIONS PROJECT.

SOCIOLOGY 300 is the primary training class for students who have been selected to be undergraduate teaching assistants for SOCIOLOGY 119. Under the supervision of Dr. Laurie Mulvey, the teaching assistants participate in a weekly experiential training seminar while concurrently co-facilitating two weekly sections of SOC 119. During the



seminar, the student facilitators explore group dynamics and facilitation techniques (such as the Socratic Method), as well as concerns, challenges and successes they are having with their own discussion groups. This forum creates a peer-to-peer learning dynamic for the teaching assistants which is meant to parallel and support their work in the SOC 119 discussion sections. Unlike SOC 119, SOC 300 shifts the focus from the understanding the sociology of race relations, to active engagement in the process of helping others to find their own voice in the dialogue.

SOCIOLOGY 119 is a four-credit course in Race and Ethnic Relations, explores the historical patterns and current status of racial and ethnic groups in the U.S. This is a large, 500 student class with small, fifteen member discussion groups where students have an opportunity to voice their thoughts about the material from lecture. Taught by Dr. Sam Richards, SOC 119 has become one of the most popular classes at Penn State because of Sam's willingness to treat what are often taboo issues with frankness and openness, as well as his overall desire to bring all opinions into the mix.

## VITA

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### SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Reason, R.D., Roosa Millar, E.A., & Scales, T.C. (2005). Toward a model of racial justice ally development. *Journal of College Student Development*, 46 (5) 532-548.

Reason, R.D., Scales, T.C., & Roosa Millar, E.A. (2005). Encouraging the development of racial justice allies. In R.D. Reason, E.M. Broido, T.L. Davis, N.J. Evans, & Associates (Eds.), *Developing Social Justice Allies* (New Directions in Student Services, Jossey-Bass Publishers).

Roosa, E.A. (2004). Cutting the cord: Wireless technology and the college union. *The Bulletin of the Association of College Unions International*, 72 (3), 12-18.