THE JOURNEY TOWARD UNDERSTANDING WHITENESS AMONG STUDENT AFFAIRS PROFESSIONALS: AN ACTION RESEARCH STUDY IN ANTI-RACIST EDUCATION

A Thesis in Adult Education

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to develop a program aimed at increasing an understanding of whiteness among student affairs professionals, and to examine the process of how they attempted to understand whiteness and white privilege while participating in the program and while dealing with diversity issues on campus. This was an action research study intended: to develop and implement a program for student affairs professionals to understand whiteness as an important component of anti-racist education; and to examine their process of coming to understand whiteness during the program itself and their own perceptions of the process shortly after the program was over.

Since this study investigated the process of how student affairs professionals attempted to understand whiteness and white privilege while dealing with diversity issues on campus, it was critical action research that represented an appropriate research design for utilization. Individual semi-structured interviews and a focus group were the main data collection methods used in this study. The findings of this action research study were presented in conjunction with the four-step action research cycle (plan, act, observe, and reflect) in order to illustrate and support the action research process.

The findings presented were discussed in light of three themes: race and whiteness: the absent presence, learning in action, and making it personal. The discussion of these themes attempted to highlight two specific areas of this study that were worth further examination. First, a further look at how the concepts of whiteness and white privilege were included in the study as not only learning material, but also how these concepts operated as an ever-present invisible social construction. Second, the value of incorporating a critical or engaged pedagogy was considered followed by a discussion of the unexpected merits of utilizing an action research
methodology. The findings of the study were further considered with regard to the implications of the study for practice.

There were several implications of the findings for the practices of adult education and student affairs that can be considered in light of this study. They included: the importance of including whiteness in anti-racist education, the value of professional development, the need to discuss white identity, the value of including participants of color, the role of time, and an ongoing awareness about the impact of whiteness on findings. As well as future iterations of the action research cycle with the participants included in this study, future research should replicate this study to consider findings with other participants as well. It should also investigate additional program materials, additional ways to support group interactions, and different program models that have a lesser time commitment but still value participant discussion.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Higher education has seen many changes in the composition of its study body since its inception in the United States. Higher education began with Harvard in 1643 and existed exclusively for the education of white males for almost 200 years. Finally in 1837, Oberlin College in Ohio inaugurated coeducational higher education when it enrolled four female freshmen and around the same time, in 1828, two black men graduated from Bowdoin and Ohio University (Rudolph, 1962). However, it was not until over 100 years later in the 1960s that black students were regularly seen in the mainstream of United States higher education. Today, higher education is significantly more diverse. College enrollment figures from 1996 indicated that students of color represent 26 percent of college students and women outnumber men, representing 56 percent of all students (Wilkinson & Rund, 2000). Over the past decade, the number of black and Hispanic undergraduates enrolled in colleges and universities nationwide has increased by 32 percent and 98 percent, respectively, whereas the number of white undergraduates has declined by one percent (Perna, 2000). Student demographic changes have occurred over time in U.S. higher education and present a reality today that makes the topic of diversity worth further consideration.

In 1998 the American Council of Education (as cited in Wilkinson & Rund, 2000) reported that many educators and administrators in colleges and universities share a common belief that diversity in their student body is important to fulfill their primary mission of providing a quality education. Several recent studies examine perspectives from faculty, students, and the general public, which suggest that student diversity is important and valued in higher education (Anonymous, 2000; Gose, 2000; Manzo, 2000; Yates, 2000). While some significant legislative actions and laws might underscore the importance of student diversity for colleges and
universities (Allen & Hunt, 1997; Baez, 2000; Howard-Hamilton, Phelps, & Torres, 1998; Thompson & Tobias, 2000), with examples including civil rights codes, the First Amendment, and the Americans with Disabilities Act, there is still continuing evidence that indicates higher education is not “conducive, growth enhancing, or healthy environments for many students” (Howard-Hamilton et al., 1998, p. 58). According to Howard-Hamilton et al., minority groups voice specific concerns about quality of life issues, such as unwelcoming campus environments and personal safety.

Although some literature suggests that the current climate on many campuses may not reflect an appreciation for diversity in practice, there is also literature that speaks to the value diversity brings to higher education. For example, Baez (2000) suggests that diversity presumes social differences, which can lead to experiences that promote particular kinds of knowledge, perspectives, and values that promote racial understanding and enable individuals to consider multiple perspectives. Therefore, advocates of diversity, “seek through higher education to expose and to know, and so to appreciate and celebrate, the experiences of individuals and groups of different cultures, ethnicities, and races” (p. 47). Both the current situation on many campuses coupled with the rewards diversity can bring, again make this an area of higher education worth further consideration.

The role of student affairs professionals is crucial in assisting higher education to effectively address diversity (Dixon, 2001). Student affairs professionals play an important part in helping institutions provide a comprehensive, quality education. This education includes not only the academic, curricular, but the co-curricular or out-of-classroom learning opportunities as well. Asher (1994) suggests that student affairs professionals are “the valued architects of campus life, personal development, and involvement of students since the birth of the
Dixon (2001) further suggests that student affairs professionals as campus leaders, managers, and educators play a significant role in meeting student needs to acquire the necessary experiences, knowledge, and skills to function effectively in the workplace. Although student affairs professionals might be well informed about the changing demographics of their college campuses, they still may not have consciously thought about the varied needs of the diverse students they represent and serve on their respective campuses (Wilkinson & Rund, 2000). Thus, student affairs professionals must be more reflective about personal and career needs of the diverse student population present in higher education today (Dixon, 2001).

Student affairs professionals, like all people, bring to their work a worldview that is constructed within unequal racial relationships that are often unconscious and unrecognized. White people and people of color are located differently in the racial structure (Sleeter, 1994). Most white people live and operate in mostly or all white neighborhoods, families, social groups, and churches and utilize predominantly white media. They spend little or no time in non-white worlds although they may incorporate a few people of color in their lives (Sleeter, 1994). What does it mean to be white? It would be safe to suggest that most white people, including most white student affairs professionals, have never considered this question.

Whiteness is learned as a person grows and develops although in most cases it is so subtle that it is not examined or questioned by white people themselves. Typically, white people do not examine their whiteness. Not only do they not think to do it, they often do not even understand the need for it in the first place. In the United States whiteness represents the majority perspective, which permits its invisible power structures and inherent privileges to go unchallenged. Ramsey (1994) states it simply, “seldom do whites think about their whiteness” (p. 65). White privilege is also an important concept to examine in an attempt to understand
whiteness since “the highlighting of the white power bloc enables individuals to see the previously invisible role of whiteness as the norm, the standard by which everyone is measured” (Kinchenlo, Steinberg, Rodriguez, & Chennault, 1998, p. 18).

McIntosh (1989) discusses the invisible knapsack of white privilege where conditions of daily experience that she once took for granted, as neutral, normal, and universally available to everybody are outlined. She explained that while she was taught about racism as something that puts others at a disadvantage, she was not taught to see its relationship to white privilege, which as a white woman put her at an advantage. “I was taught to recognize racism only in individual acts of meanness by members of my group, never in invisible systems conferring racial dominance on my group from birth” (p. 81). Simply put, part of white privilege is white people’s ability to ignore the ways white racial identity benefits them (Alcoff, 1998).

Levine-Rasky (2000) suggests that studies are silent on possibilities for dismantling white privilege and overlook the conditions that produce white privilege. McIntosh similarly suggests that a greater understanding of how white privilege affects white people is needed since it does not affect non-whites in the same ways. White privilege is an elusive and fugitive subject according to McIntosh. “The pressure to avoid it is great, for in facing it I must give up the myth of meritocracy” (p. 76). It is no wonder that little has been done to dismantle white privilege since, as the literature suggests, most white people rarely, if ever, think about their whiteness in the first place.

It is true that some studies in adult education (Barlas, 1997; Barlas, Kasl, Kyle, MacLeod, Paxton, Rosenwasser & Sartor, 2000; Frankenberg, 1993; Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 1998; Ndura, 2004; Tisdell 1993, 2003; Welp, 2002; Yorks & Kasl, 2002) discuss issues of whiteness and white privilege. There are also a few studies represented in the literature that demonstrate
efforts in higher education to address the concepts of whiteness and white privilege (Maher & Tetrault, 1997; McIntyre, 1997). There are no studies, however, that involve incorporating action research to understand whiteness, which would contribute to understanding the ongoing process of change as people come to understand their whiteness and its associated white privilege.

Additionally, very little literature exists with specific regard to student affairs professionals and the concepts of whiteness and its associated white privilege. Therefore, it would be fairly safe to suggest that most white student affairs professionals do not consider their whiteness and white privilege. While student affairs professionals may be viewed as well informed about changing demographics on their respective campuses, the literature strongly suggests that diversity is an area needing further consideration in relationship to the student affairs profession. Theodore K. Miller, one of the most prominent figures in the field of college student affairs, suggests that the whole area of diversity is a difficult issue that must be addressed and ways discovered to manage, work with, and value it by student affairs professionals (as cited in Cooper & Dean, 1998). Further, Howard-Hamilton et al. (1998) suggest that there is a compelling need for educational programs to address diversity issues and prepare culturally sensitive and skilled student affairs professionals.

The literature uncovered thus far presents mainly conceptual information related to diversity and the student affairs profession. This study is not only an attempt to address a lack of data based research that deals with diversity and the student affairs profession, but also to examine the missing discussion about how student affairs professionals deal with whiteness and white privilege through the action research process.
Statement of Purpose

A basic assumption of this study is that most white people, including white student affairs professionals, have little understanding of what it means to be white. With that as an assumption, the purpose of this study is to develop a program aimed at increasing an understanding of whiteness among student affairs professionals, and to examine the process of how they attempted to understand whiteness and white privilege while participating in the program and while dealing with diversity issues on campus. This is an action research study intended: (1) to develop and implement a program for student affairs professionals to understand whiteness as an important component of anti-racist education; and (2) to examine their process of coming to understand whiteness during the program itself and their own perceptions of the process shortly after the program is over. Although this is an initial investigation of student affairs professionals in higher education, it is hoped that the findings will not only illuminate what is currently known about what it means to be white and the relationship of white privilege, but also suggest new possibilities for anti-racist education to improve practice and create environments in higher education that foster quality education for all students. Given the fact that whiteness is so pervasive that it is both subtle and unconscious, even among those who have attempted to understand it, this study lends itself most particularly to action research.

As Merriam and Simpson (2000) note, action research can be used to address specific social problems, such as a need for a greater understanding of diversity, that are found in our environment. According to Noffke and Stevenson (1995), action research is a process that embraces basic democratic beliefs and promotes a “radically restructured role for practitioners as actors in a larger emancipatory project” (p. vii). Action research from this perspective is termed critical. The word ‘critical’ represents a process of questioning and problematizing all aspects of
educational practices and relations in an effort to create better ways of living in the world (Martusewicz & Reynolds, 1994). Critical action research, therefore, is distinguished by its intentional and continuous engagement in ethical and political discourse that focuses on challenging power relations based on structural factors of race, gender, and class. Action research is not just a staff development strategy, but also a means to uncover the beliefs of practitioners and the settings in which they work. The action research cycle is one of analyzing, gathering facts, identifying the problem, planning, and taking action on the problem, then repeating this process as new information is presented (Merriam & Simpson, 2000).

Research Questions

Being that student affairs professionals bring to their work a worldview that is constructed within unequal racial relationships that are often unconscious and unrecognized, this action research study attempts to first understand how student affairs professionals attempt to understand whiteness and white privilege and second to develop and implement a professional development program for these professionals to understand whiteness as an important component of anti-racist education. Therefore, given the process-oriented nature of action research, the following research questions are set up in light of the phases of the research project:

**PHASE I: IN PREPARATION FOR DESIGNING THE PROGRAM**

1. How do student affairs professionals understand whiteness?
2. What is it that student affairs professionals want to learn about anti-racist education, and how and why is it important to them?

**PHASE II: INVOLVEMENT IN THE PROGRAM**

3. What are key moments in the lives of the participants, either during the program itself and/or in their life experience, when they had some sense of
PHASE III: FOLLOWING THE CONCLUSION OF THE PROGRAM

4. What do program participants feel are significant aspects of their learning and how are they implementing what they learned in their practice?

Significance, Limitations, and Assumptions

For Pennsylvania’s public universities, the Board of Governors of the State System identified the following priorities: programs in science, technology, and other high employment need areas; credit and non-credit initiatives that support workforce development; student retention and graduation rates; and cultural diversity levels for students and employees (Morrison, 2000). Diversity is the priority considered in this study since the Vice President for Student Affairs at the university where it was conducted made it a goal for all directors (I am one of these directors) in the division. The Vice President for Student Affairs affirmed that all directors must develop and implement an effective, measurable plan, which more clearly delegates responsibilities and accomplishes increased recruitment and retention particularly for students of color. All directors are to be rated as ‘needs improvement.’ Annual evaluations are used to substantiate progress in this vital area deemed a priority by the State System and the university.

The importance of diversity performance indicators stressed by the Board of Governors of the State System and its relationship to funding are not the only reason that Pennsylvania’s public universities must acknowledge the significance of diversity. The realities of current and future student demographics suggest that the issue is significant, regardless of whether or not it is set as a performance indicator by a governing board. In order for the Pennsylvania public
university considered in this study to remain a vital institution of higher education it must effectively address the issue of diversity.

Additionally, in January of 2005 all directors received a written outline of expectations related to enhancing multicultural competence. The outline communicates basic expectations for multicultural competence in the areas of: mission statement; program; leadership; organization, management, and human resources; campus and external relations; ethics; and assessment and evaluation. These areas are very similar to those represented by the Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) in Higher Education in their publication *The Book of Professional Standards for Higher Education* (Miller, 2003). The CAS standards are used in the Division of Student Affairs for assessment and evaluation purposes including the external review process. A specific CAS standard relates to diversity, which is seen as enhancing the collegiate experience for all involved. The Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (2004, July) also clearly communicated the core values underlying the State System in its *Plan for Strategic Directions 2004-2009*. One of the six values speaks directly to diversity: “Promoting diversity as a key element in the intellectual and interpersonal development of members of the University and extended communities” (p. 2).

Therefore, this study is important as an attempt to assist one of Pennsylvania’s public universities to maximize its efforts related to diversity. In addition, it is important because it attempts to discover information that can help student affairs professionals to better perform their work in an attempt to facilitate the greater good of equality for all. This study would not be possible if I did not believe that something else could be investigated to assist in eliminating racism and fostering equality. Although it is not the central reason for this study it is important to note the underlying moral and ethical significance it hopes to achieve.
At this point it is also important to make note of an unavoidable limitation of this study presented by the use of language. Language, a significant aspect of this study because it is the primary way information is communicated by myself as the researcher as well as the study participants, also presents a fundamental limitation. In the United States the dominant discourse is one of whiteness and white privilege. Therefore, one of the limitations of language in this research is the idea that whiteness is being studied from within a discourse that is predominantly white. This point is important to acknowledge. However, it is equally important to note that this limitation of language is unavoidable since it is impossible for white people to completely escape their whiteness and white privilege even though they attempt to study it.

Thus, the outcome of this study is data based information on what it means to be white and what happens when student affairs professionals study whiteness including its associated white privilege. A further outcome is the development of a program or model that includes whiteness as an important component of anti-racist education. It is important to conduct this research since a cursory review of relevant literature produced little information related to anti-racist education program initiatives for student affairs professionals nor did it yield much mention of educating student affairs professionals about whiteness and white privilege. Student affairs professionals represent those most often charged with out-of-classroom personal and community development opportunities for students so it only makes sense that relevant education programs will assist them to perform their duties more effectively and equitably in order to support an institution’s overall mission to provide a quality education. Howard-Hamilton et al. (1998) suggest that there is a compelling need for education programs to address diversity issues and prepare culturally sensitive and skilled student affairs professionals since it is generally accepted that every student affairs professional is responsible for promoting diversity.
It is not my contention that student affairs professionals are inadequately performing their current job related duties. What is a closer representation is that higher education, and thus student affairs, is not insulated from the challenges that face greater society. The issue of diversity is important to student affairs practice because of the vital role student affairs professionals play in achieving and maintaining quality higher education, which is dependent on successfully addressing issues related to diversity. Most student affairs professionals enter the field with a genuine interest in working directly with students in the areas of personal and career development (Dixon, 2001). A holistic view of student development requires diversity as a necessary characteristic of higher education. Student affairs professionals are clearly involved in higher education’s response to diversity. Therefore, this research contributes not only to the field of student affairs professional practice, but to its literature base as well.

This study is also important to adult education since it contributes to the literature with regard to action research and program planning in a specific area of practice: the education of student affairs professionals around the area of diversity. Action research is identified as an appropriate research method in this study because of its strengths, which are: its relevance to an actual situation in the field of practice, its focus on a systematic process for problem-solving and project development, and its responsiveness to inquiry and change (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). In addition, Elliott (1991) suggests that action research improves practice by encouraging the development of practitioner capacity for discrimination and judgment in complex, human situations. Action research “unifies inquiry, the improvement of performance, and the development of persons in their professional role” (p. 52).
Study Overview

An issue at the forefront and that currently needs addressed at a Pennsylvania public university is student diversity. It became apparent through interviews conducted with institutional leadership, that student diversity is a challenge facing the organization considered in this study. Performance indicators stressed by the Board of Governors of the State System of Higher Education are important because success in addressing these indicators is directly tied to funding. The role of student affairs professionals is crucial in assisting higher education to effectively address student diversity issues (Dixon, 2001). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to develop a program aimed at increasing an understanding of whiteness among student affairs professionals, and to examine the process of how they attempt to understand whiteness and white privilege while participating in the program and while dealing with diversity issues on campus.

This is an action research study intended to develop and implement a program for student affairs professionals to understand whiteness as an important component of anti-racist education and to examine their process of coming to understand whiteness. Since the researcher’s role is generally trying to make something happen in action research, it is important to acknowledge both my own interest in this topic and how I view my role in this research process. This is discussed next, and then I discuss the action research process itself.

Researcher Role

I am employed at a mid-sized, public, predominantly white, regional institution of higher education in eastern Pennsylvania. The Office of New Student Programs is one of twelve departments in the Division of Student Affairs and I am the Director of this department. I have held this position since March of 1999. Prior to that time I was the Associate Director of Career Services for over ten years. As a student affairs professional, I have attended numerous sessions,
workshops, and presentations that focused on the topic of diversity. These formal programs all centered on why diversity should be valued and celebrated, yet rarely if ever did suggestions about how to put an appreciation for diversity into practice or how to challenge systems, structures, or practices occur. After some time I felt inundated with the same message as if I could not understand the value of diversity. Maybe others did also because after a while an undercurrent of comments like, “No, not another diversity program!” could be heard and not long after that most diversity training initiatives virtually disappeared. It is my contention that the value of diversity is understood, but what is not understood is what to do in practice.

My interest in this study stems not only from a desire to improve practice for student affairs professionals, but from an exploration of the concepts of whiteness and white privilege, which began in coursework required to complete my adult education doctoral program. This is a significant aspect for me because I believe that the examination of whiteness and white privilege could suggest answers to questions related to practice. Since I have undertaken this vein of study, the way I view myself as a white woman and part of a larger world has changed and causes me to think and do things differently. It made me take action not only in regard to this study, but to new program development and staff hiring decisions in my workplace as well. This makes me wonder if other white people who learned about whiteness and white privilege would also in some way take action or change the way they think. I regard myself as an educated woman who is generally aware of the world, yet these ideas about whiteness and white privilege were new concepts to me.

*Action Research Process*

Action research is a cyclic process that involves four-steps: plan, act, observe, and reflect (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). Action research can be used to solve specific social problems, such as a
need for a greater understanding of diversity, that are found in our environment (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). Action research upholds the belief that those who experience a phenomenon are those most able to investigate it. Its purpose is to generate knowledge to inform practice especially where results are intended for immediate application. In action research the researcher serves as a facilitator for problem solving and actual design is formulated during the action research process. Data is collected in the iterative, spiral fashion inherent in action research.

Typically, modes of data collection in qualitative research include interviews (both one-on-one interviews and focus group interviews), observations, and the use of documents (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). As a qualitative action research study, all of these modes are employed. In-depth, semi-structured interviews and a focus group are the main data collection methods used in this study. Participants are asked to participate in an interview prior to the start of the program and a month after the program concludes. They are also expected to participate in a six-session interactive program on whiteness, which ends with a focus group to further understand participants’ perspectives and feelings. Program sessions are recorded, transcribed, and field notes are taken. Study members are also expected to participate in group activities and complete program session evaluations and reflective writings.

The role of the participants is further discussed along with the action research process in conjunction with the four-step action research cycle (plan, act, observe, and reflect) supported by Carr and Kemmis (1986).

Plan. The planning stage provides the necessary information, through semi-structured interviews, to develop and format an anti-racist education program that is meaningful and beneficial for this study’s participants.
Act. A plan is developed and program constructed that lasts six weeks and includes discussions and scenarios designed to elicit further understanding about whiteness as an important component of anti-racist education. Generally the format resembles small group discussion with assignments completed outside of the discussion group used to facilitate the process. Roughly the six-week program entails two-hour weekly sessions that include activities that stimulate discussion related to diversity issues specifically those that relate to whiteness and its associated white privilege.

Observe. Participants identify how they gathered their own information about whiteness and white privilege from their own practice and what they learned from their investigations. A focus group is utilized to facilitate discussion central to the observation phase of the action research cycle.

Reflect. Individual interviews are used with the participants to identify what is ultimately learned about whiteness and white privilege after the formal program ended and what this suggests for future professional development programs related to diversity.

Action research is appropriate for this study because it is a research method that is designed to solve problems in applied settings. In addition this study lends itself most particularly to action research since whiteness is considered so pervasive that it is both subtle and unconscious and requires a methodology that allows meanings to develop in addition to formulating plans for a program that includes understanding whiteness as an important component of anti-racist education. Purposeful sampling strategies are utilized to identify eight student affairs professionals for study participants. Four females and four males including three participants of color are selected. Data are collected in the iterative, spiral fashion inherent in action research. In-depth interviews and a focus group are the specific data collection methods
used in this study. Data are analyzed to discover emergent themes. Data are analyzed both within data collection method and across data collection methods. Findings are considered in relationship to program initiatives related to diversity in higher education and contributions to the fields of student affairs professional practice and adult education.

Definitions

In order to more clearly understand the terms presented in this study the following definitions are offered to provide clarity.

Anti-racist education attempts to make invisible racial structures visible and includes any educational initiatives or programs that directly address the issue of race in order to improve the status quo for all persons.

Critical action research is distinguished by its intentional and continuous engagement in ethical and political discourse. In general, the action research cycle is one of analyzing, gathering facts, identifying the problem, planning, and taking action on the problem, then repeating this process as new information is presented (Merriam & Simpson, 2000).

Diversity can be defined as differences such as race, class, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, culture, ethnicity, and disabilities. Definitions of diversity used throughout the literature vary widely and often are determined based on the specific nature of the context in which they are used. In today’s society diversity is often thought of as pertaining only to race. In this study diversity relates most directly to race not simply because society views it this way, but because this research relates directly to anti-racist education and the unveiling of the race related concepts of whiteness and white privilege.

Higher education refers specifically to formal education that takes place in colleges and universities in the United States.
**Student affairs professionals** are described with regard to common areas of responsibility and concerns that are present regardless of specific job descriptions since specific tasks vary with institutional size, type, culture, and structure. These areas are: student learning and development, community development, reflective practice, and research and assessment (Whitt, 1997). In this study, student affairs professionals have approximately five to thirty years of professional experience in the field.

**Whiteness** is a social construction that represents power, structural advantage, race privilege, and cultural practices that are currently unnamed. Whiteness marginalizes those that are not white in an effort to ensure existing privileges for white people. No matter how dominant, whiteness is more often than not an invisible social category rarely questioned by white people. Whiteness is viewed as a social construct that can and will change over time.

**White privilege** is manifested in the invisible role of whiteness as the norm, the standard by which everyone is measured. Simply put, white privilege is white people’s ability to ignore the ways white racial identity benefits them (Alcoff, 1998).

**Summary**

The intent of this first chapter is to present initial information to serve as a foundation to consider when reviewing this research study. The study’s purpose along with its relevant research questions is incorporated in this chapter along with a discussion related to the significance of the study and appropriate definitions. This is an action research study intended to develop and implement a program for student affairs professionals to understand whiteness as an important component of anti-racist education. The following chapters continue to detail this research study. Relevant literature is discussed in Chapter Two along with the study’s theoretical perspective. Chapter Three describes the methodology employed in this study
including a discussion of the merits of qualitative research. Chapters Four and Five discuss the findings of the study along with the reflections of the researcher. Lastly, Chapter Six outlines the implications of the study along with its strengths and weaknesses as well as recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study is to develop a program aimed at increasing an understanding of whiteness among student affairs professionals, and to examine the process of how they attempted to understand whiteness and white privilege while participating in the program and while dealing with diversity issues on campus. This is an action research study intended to develop and implement a professional development program for student affairs professionals to understand whiteness as an important component of anti-racist education and to examine their process of coming to understand whiteness, as the continued education of student affairs professionals is a valuable area of consideration for adult education. Therefore, this literature review focuses on three main areas of literature that relate to the purpose of this research: whiteness, anti-racist education, and student affairs professionals. In the first section whiteness is explored relative to its history, definition, approaches, and relevant research. In the second section, anti-racist education is considered in relationship to critical theory, critical pedagogy, engaged pedagogy, and an engaged pedagogy of whiteness to provide a theoretical framework for the research. In the final section, literature on the role of student affairs professionals in addressing diversity and the significance of student diversity in higher education is presented.

Whiteness

Whiteness and its associated white privilege are the focus of this research. Therefore, an understanding of the concepts relative to a history and respective definitions are necessary. In addition, approaches to considering whiteness and white privilege and relevant research are considered to provide a basis for both what is meant by whiteness and white privilege and what has already been investigated both theoretically and empirically in the literature.
History

A historical context related to whiteness is presented in order to set the stage for further consideration of the concept. Some basic ideas are suggested, but it is important to keep in mind that whiteness as a historical construct is always evolving as new information and ideas are uncovered. With this in mind, a brief overview of the history of whiteness is presented to underscore two main ideas. First, the notion that whiteness is not new and second, that the category of ‘white people’ has not always existed.

The history of whiteness in the United States is suggested to be based on the idea that “a dominant impulse of whiteness took shape around the European Enlightenment’s notion of rationality with its privileged construction of a transcendental white, male, rational subject who operates at the recesses of power while concurrently giving every indication that he escaped the confines of space and time” (Kincheloe, 1999, p. 164). Whiteness begins to establish itself as a norm. It views itself in opposition to those that are not white. Whiteness represents orderliness, rationality, and self-control and non-whiteness represented chaos, irrationality, violence, and lack of self-control (Kinchele, 1999). This notion becomes important to the history of whiteness as white Europeans begin to establish themselves in the colonies.

American whiteness is first defined in opposition to Native Americans (Christensen, K., 1997). Much like white people would later use their oppositional position with black people to rationalize slavery, colonists did the same to justify their increasing possession of Native American land. Native Americans were “demonized and diabolized” in the minds of the white colonists according to K. Christensen (1997). From the beginning in the United States, whiteness is defined in opposition to Native Americans, Africans, and other colonized and enslaved peoples of color (Christensen, K., 1997).
Prior to the late 1600s the label, *black*, is not used to describe any race of people (Kincheloe, 1999). It is not until after the racialization of slavery around 1680 that whiteness and blackness come to represent racial categories in the United States according to Kincheloe (1999), who specifically suggests that “only at this historic juncture did the concept of a discrete white race begin to take shape” (p. 167). Racist ideologies developed among white people, particularly slave owners, as a way to justify the inhumanity of slavery (Christensen, K., 1997). Manglitz (2003) asserts that for most authors, relations of domination can be seen as developing over time as a way to justify disparate treatment for those people judged to be outside of or in conflict with the white norm. Other groups of people are also represented in the literature that faced racist ideologies associated with whiteness.

One example is the Irish in the 1800s. Similar to African slaves, the Irish, though not enslaved, suffered extreme labor exploitation as indentured servants and wage laborers (Leonardo, 2002). The Irish were perceived as closer to blacks than whites and similar descriptions, such as low level of intelligence, lack of self-control, and sexually animalistic, were leveled against them (Leonardo, 2002). However, even though there are similarities, Irish people eventually were regarded as white whereas Africans and Native Americans have not been. There are certainly more examples related to the many people of color represented in the United States today. It is beyond this brief history of whiteness to trace all their origins.

This brief history of whiteness attempts to illustrate not only the origins of the concept, but some examples of its relationship to various peoples over time. The examples provided by Native Americans, Africans, and the Irish also demonstrate how whiteness serves as a social construction. Whiteness as a social construction refers to the ways that white as well as other racial identities have been historically, socially, politically, and culturally produced over time.
(Omi & Winant, 1994). Jackson (1998) further explains that social construction theories do not suggest that race is non-existent or has no material effects, but that racialized ways of thinking and the practices that they inform vary significantly from different times and from different places.

According to Kincheloe (1999) “whatever the complexity of the concept whiteness, at least one feature is discernable – whiteness cannot escape the materiality of its history, its effects on the everyday lives of those who fall outside its conceptual net as well as on white people themselves” (p. 166). Therefore, an understanding of the history of whiteness is presented as a foundation to consider when further examining a definition related to whiteness since defining whiteness in the United States is distinctly different than describing whiteness in another country. It is a product of U.S. society and U.S. history as mentioned by several authors (Bonnett, 2000; Christensen, K., 1997; Kincheloe, 1999; Leonardo, 2002). Not only is it important to consider the history of whiteness, a definition supported by the literature is provided for additional consideration of the concept as well.

**Definition**

By far the most prevalent perspective regarding whiteness in the United States is that of whiteness as a social construction, that is to say whiteness is learned as a person grows and develops (Bonnett, 2000; Helms, 1992; Denevi, 2001; Hytten & Adkins, 2001; Jackson, 1998; Kincheloe, 1999; Kincheloe, Steinberg, Rodriguez, & Chennault, 1998; Leistyna, 1997; Leonardo, 2002; Levine-Rasky, 2000; Marx & Pennington, 2003; Manglitz, 2003; McIntosh, 1989; McIntyre, 1997; Nguyen, 2000; Ramsey, 1994; Schick, 2000; Thompson, 2003; Ware & Back, 2002; Yancy, 2000). Whiteness can be considered a social construction that represents power, structural advantage, race privilege, and cultural practices that are currently unnamed.
Relevant literature is used to underscore these aspects of whiteness as they relate to whiteness as a social construction.

First, the relationship of power to the social construction of whiteness is explored. Levine-Rasky (2000) refers to the social construction of whiteness by proposing that whiteness be considered a constructed category that involves contradictory relations to the process of racialization. “It is a phenomenon produced by and productive of social contexts of power shaping the relative meanings of whiteness and of difference” (Levine-Rasky, 2000, p. 274). K. Christensen (1997) clearly states that whiteness is a social construct that prescribes power differentials to biological differences. Whiteness has no biological reality according to Christensen. “It represents an amalgam of previously disconnected ethnic cultures (English, German, French, Portuguese, etc.) whose economic and political fortunes became tied together by the historical process of colonial expansion and slavery” (Christensen, K., 1997, p. 623). Jackson (1998) also references the lack of connection with biology, “… it is now generally recognized that race and gender are social constructions, rooted in politics and history rather than in genetics or biology” (p. 99). Kincheloe (1999) sums it up by suggesting that even though whiteness is difficult to define, it is intimately involved with issues of power relations between white and non-white people.

Not only does the literature suggest that power is important to consider in relationship to whiteness, but related to power, or perhaps even a result of power, structural advantage and race privilege are important to consider as well. According to Yancy (2000), whiteness represents structural advantage and race privilege. Helms (1992) acknowledges that “in this country, every white person is born into or immigrates into a society in which it is better to be perceived as white than not” (p. 24). Therefore, whiteness marginalizes those that are not white in an effort to
ensure existing privileges for white people. However, no matter how dominant, whiteness is 
more often than not an invisible social construction rarely questioned by white people.

The literature supports the idea that white people are often unaware of what it means to 
be a white person in the United States. Leistyna (1997) suggests that the underlying, evasive 
beliefs that inform the social construction of whiteness is strategically infused, since those who 
live by it are unable, or simply unwilling to see and name it. Kincheloe et al. (1998) also suggest 
that individuals are unable to separate where they are positioned in the ‘web of reality’ from 
what they perceive. McIntyre (1997) goes a bit further by remarking that, “the lack of self-
reflection about being a white person in this society distances white people from investigating 
the meaning of whiteness and prohibits a critical examination of the individual, institutional, and 
cultural forms of racism” (p. 14). Being that white people are often unable to articulate or 
address their whiteness, creates a situation whereby one’s position or privilege in society may or 
may not be questioned.

In the United States today whiteness represents the majority perspective, which permits 
its invisible power structures and inherent privileges to go unchallenged. Ramsey (1994) states it 
simply, “seldom do whites think about their whiteness” (p. 65). A related concept, white 
privilege, a form of race privilege, is manifested in this invisible role of whiteness as the norm, 
the standard by which everyone is measured. Simply put, white privilege is white people’s 
ability to ignore the ways white racial identity benefits them (Alcoff, 1998). Kincheloe (1999) 
points out that scholars of whiteness seem better equipped to explain white privilege than to 
define whiteness itself.

Lastly, cultural practices that are currently recognized by others yet unnamed in the 
literature are mentioned only to acknowledge their existence. For the very reasons suggested in
discussing whiteness as a social construction that represents power, structural advantage, and race privilege provides for these cultural practices to exist yet remain unnamed. White people must first acknowledge and consider their whiteness before these practices can be specifically named. With this in mind, a definition of whiteness is presented for consideration. Whiteness, therefore, is a social construction that represents power, structural advantage, race privilege, and cultural practices that are currently unnamed. Whiteness marginalizes those that are not white in an effort to ensure existing privileges for white people. No matter how dominant, whiteness is more often than not an invisible social category rarely questioned by white people. As illustrated by the previous discussion of the history of whiteness, whiteness is viewed as a social construction that can and will change over time.

In summary, the ideas that are most central to developing an understanding of whiteness and its associated white privilege are explored in an attempt to understand what is suggested in the literature and arrive at a definition of whiteness. This definition points heavily to the idea that whiteness is learned as an individual enters society although in most cases it is so subtle that it is rarely questioned or examined by white people themselves. Most white people do not examine their whiteness. Therefore, what previous scholars have suggested with regard to how white people can uncover their whiteness is the focus of the next examination of the literature.

Approaches

The definition of whiteness provided (as a social construction that represents power, structural advantage, race privilege, and cultural practices that are currently unnamed) leads to an examination of the social science and education literature to explore approaches to studying how white people can uncover their whiteness and white privilege. This base of literature is considered not only because it relates to my research interests, but also because it connects to
adult education and it best represents the literature base available which relates to approaching the study of whiteness and its associated white privilege (Manglitz, 2003).

There are two main perspectives represented in the social science and education literature that address approaching the study of whiteness and white privilege with white people. One perspective deals with white identity development as a way to rearticulate whiteness to develop an antiracist white identity. The other perspective views whiteness and its inherent oppression and associated privilege and recommends the exposure of privilege to foster its elimination in order to change the dominance whiteness currently represents in the United States.

Several authors suggest that white identity development should be used to present the study of whiteness and facilitate the discussion of race among white people (Helms, 1992; Kincheloe et al., 1998; McIntyre, 1997; Nguyen, 2000; Sue, 2003; Thompson, 2003). This seems evident since, as suggested previously, whiteness from birth is so strong that it is rarely questioned by white people themselves. Observation of individual experience and its correspondence to a typology of attitudinal development are the emphasis of white racial identity development. However, Kincheloe et al. (1998) caution that as white people become aware of their racial identities, they may feel guilty about their association with a group that has perpetrated racial oppression. “Such shame can be immobilizing to the extent that it interferes with the construction of a progressive white identity that is psychologically centered and capable of acting in opposition to racist activity” (Kincheloe et al., 1998, p. 10).

Alcoff (1998) also suggests that white identity combined with the realization of the implications of white privilege, can disable a positive self-image as well as a felt connection to community and history, and can disrupt identity development. Therefore, she believes whiteness is best approached through a two-sided analysis rather than an argument that focuses on either
the positive or negative aspects of whiteness. Sue (2003) also recognizes the role of guilt and shame in developing a white identity. The most desirable white identity development, according to Sue, is one where whiteness is accepted but also defined in a non-defensive and non-racist manner. This must be accomplished in an ongoing, active process without guilt, but with an understanding that to deny the humanity of any one person is to deny the humanity of all (Sue, 2003). Overall, the assumption of white racial identity development is that being white is learned and can be changed as a person begins to examine their attitudes and question their system of beliefs.

In addition to white identity development, the exposure and ultimate elimination of white privilege is the other approach used to introduce the study of whiteness. McIntosh (1989) discusses the invisible knapsack of white privilege where conditions of daily experience that she once took for granted, as neutral, normal, and universally available to everybody are outlined. She explains that while she was taught about racism as something that puts others at a disadvantage, she was not taught to see its relationship to white privilege, which as a white woman put her at an advantage. “I was taught to recognize racism only in individual acts of meanness by members of my group, never in invisible systems conferring racial dominance on my group from birth” (p. 81). Simply put, part of white privilege is white people’s ability to ignore the ways white racial identity benefits them (Alcoff, 1998).

Levine-Rasky (2000) suggests that studies are silent on possibilities for dismantling white privilege and overlook the conditions that produce white privilege. McIntosh (1989) similarly suggests that a greater understanding of how white privilege affects white people is needed since it does not affect non-whites in the same ways. White privilege is an elusive and fugitive subject according to McIntosh. “The pressure to avoid it is great, for in facing it I must give up the myth
of meritocracy” (p. 76). It is no wonder that little has been done to dismantle white privilege since, as the literature suggests, most white people rarely, if ever, think about their whiteness in the first place.

In summary, two main perspectives appear in the social science and education literature that relate to approaches used to further understand the concepts of whiteness and white privilege. One approach examines white identity development and the other the exposure and elimination of white privilege. While both perspectives have their inherent differences to approaching whiteness, there are common beliefs that are shared. Basically both perspectives agree that whiteness is a social construction that can change over time and reflects power, structural advantage, and race privilege (Manglitz, 2003). In addition to the perspectives offered by the social science and education literature with regard to how the concept of whiteness can be approached, the historical overview of whiteness along with the discussion regarding a definition provides a foundation to further consider specific research efforts in adult education and higher education, which are the basis for most of the relevant literature for this study.

Research in Adult and Higher Education

Research efforts are targeted for inclusion in this review by utilizing selected electronic databases included in EBSCOhost Research Databases, such as ERIC, Academic Search Premier, and the Professional Development Collection. ERIC is selected because it contains more than 2,200 digests and 980 educational and educational-related journals. Academic Search Premier is utilized since it includes 4,450 scholarly publications of which 3,500 are peer-reviewed. Lastly, the Professional Development Collection, which is designed specifically for professional educators, provides access to a highly specialized collection of nearly 600 journals, including more than 350 peer-reviewed titles. This database claims to be the most
comprehensive full-text collection of education journals in the world. An inspection of the list of included journals reveals all major titles associated with both adult education and higher education.

A search of these three databases yields over 750 matches for the key word whiteness, 385 of which are full-text articles. A further search combining whiteness and race yields 180 full-text matches; whiteness and privilege yield 27; and whiteness and white privilege just 13 matches. The 180 full-text articles are ultimately reviewed for relevancy to this work and represent both conceptual and research articles along with articles that were not relevant. The work identified as research is slim in numbers so each effort is discussed individually in this review. These figures were generated on March 2, 2004 and are important because they illustrate the general volume of sources available for consideration.

In addition, the Pennsylvania Keystone Library Network Catalog is incorporated to identify books on the subject. The search words whiteness and whiteness privilege are used to identify potential sources. The combination of whiteness and privilege yield the longest relevant list of potential sources, 98 in total. A search for white privilege results in too many associations with only the word white, over 3,400, namely relating to white as a color and literary critique. With this in mind, 98 sources are further reduced by a visual inspection of the list screening for the concepts of whiteness and white privilege related in some way to education, not whiteness as a historical discussion or literary critique. This resulted in 23 resources for further inspection.

In summary, two formal sources of information are used for this review, electronic databases as discussed above and books identified from the Pennsylvania Keystone Library Network Catalog. In addition, Dissertation Abstracts is incorporated to identify potential unpublished resources in both adult education and higher education from 1.4 million doctoral
dissertations and selected masters theses from over 1,000 North American and European universities. It is also important to mention that additional resources are also included that have been more informally identified through means such as reference lists of others, coursework, conference attendance, and professional practice. Research efforts in both adult education (and closely related social sciences) and higher education are targeted because they relate most directly to the purpose of this study. In addition, Manglitz (2003) presents a critical review of the literature, which identifies research literature related to adult education, the social sciences, and higher education that deals with whiteness and white privilege. Manglitz’s critical review of the literature is mentioned only to suggest that it provides support for the literature examined in this review and that this literature does represent what is available for consideration with regard to empirical research.

**Adult education and closely related social sciences.** In general, adult education’s efforts to address whiteness and white privilege are limited. This is supported by this review of research efforts as well as in another published review of the relevant literature (Manglitz, 2003). Nevertheless there are examples identified in adult education research that suggest racial issues and whiteness are considered. As Manglitz (2003) notes, the field of adult education both in general and in its discussion of whiteness, tends to draw on the social sciences, particularly in its analysis of psychological and socio-cultural influences on learning, and generally relies heavily on social science disciplines. Research efforts are illustrated in the adult education work of Johnson-Bailey and Cervero (1998), Tisdell (1993, 2003), Welp (2002), Barlas (1997), Barlas et al. (2000), and Yorks and Kasl (2002), and the wider education and social science work of Frankenberg (1993), Sleeter (1996), and Ndura (2004). Being that there are so few, each work is discussed individually to determine what might be of importance for this study.
The research related to whiteness and white privilege in adult education looks primarily at the learner and the learning environment. An example rests in the work of Johnson-Bailey and Cervero (1998) who conduct interviews with students in each other’s classes, and interview each other as faculty of different racial groups. (Cervero is a white male, whereas Johnson-Bailey is a black female). Their purpose is to examine how existing power relations used in wider social contexts function in adult education classrooms. They compare two graduate courses and uncover the complex ways power relations based on race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation interact with theories of mastery, authority, voice, and positionality. The research reveals that the positionality of both learners and teachers influenced how learners evaluated the class and the teachers’ performance in the class. The research further indicates that whiteness also played a role by influencing how learners evaluated the class and the teachers’ performance. Johnson-Bailey and Cervero (1998) suggest that the positionality of the teacher, specifically their race, is the most influential factor with regard to classroom dynamics. They further suggest that more work is necessary to continue to explore how power relations impact teaching and learning and how these relations can be negotiated to enhance the adult learning environment.

Tisdell (1993) also examines positionality and power relations. She observes classes taught by a male and a female professor, conducts interviews, and analyzes documents to specifically examine how positionality based on gender, but also including race, ethnicity, age, and class, is represented in adult learning classes. Tisdell (1993) reports that according to their peers the most influential students in the class were those that appeared to benefit from interrelated systems of structural privilege, including whiteness, rather than those that appeared not to possess these benefits. She also finds that both male and female participants tended to place greater emphasis on the male experience.
In future research, Tisdell (2003) uses semi-structured interviews with a multicultural group of thirty-one adult educators to examine how spirituality influences motivations and practices in adult education. She suggests that study participants regarded their spirituality and social justice work as integrated in their lives and had a strong sense of challenging systems of oppression represented by the various forms of positionality found in their adult education practices. The findings of the study indicate that while all the participants of color discussed directly the important role of spirituality in re-claiming their cultural identity and the white participants discussed their culture in relation to their spirituality, only one participant directly discussed understanding her whiteness and white privilege as a spiritual process. Although the study is limited, it highlights an aspect of the human character, spirituality, which may be important to remember when working with participants in this study as they examine their own positionality related to whiteness and white privilege.

Sleeter (1996) also considers the learner by examining data taken from a two-year ethnographic study of thirty teachers who voluntarily participated in a multicultural staff development program. Twenty-six of the teachers are white, three are black, and one is Mexican. Twenty-four are women and six are men. Sleeter finds that regardless of how much experience with racial diversity teachers have, they enter the classroom with great knowledge of social stratification, social mobility, and human differences based on their life experiences. She further reports that the teachers believed they were attending to diversity in the classroom when they really were minimizing or neutralizing it. Ultimately, Sleeter finds that the staff development program provided teachers with teaching strategies, but few if any of the teachers actually restructured their perspective about racial inequality, white privilege, or classroom teaching. Therefore, Sleeter suggests that teacher educators need to confront teachers’ political
perspectives in ways that account for rather than disregard the experiential basis of those perspectives.

In further research, Ndura (2004) conducts a qualitative study that investigates in-service teachers’ awareness of and characterization of their culture. Thirty-two out of thirty-four participants are white and data are collected from their individual position papers, which discussed the extent participant’s culture influenced their relationship with culturally diverse students as well as their classroom practices. Eight themes associated with the participants’ characterization of their cultural identity are identified from the findings. Ndura suggests that the absence of cultural diversity is rarely noticed, and when it is uncovered, it is presented as a given, unquestioned condition. Ndura points out that her goal is to help in-service teachers connect their cultures and worldviews along with their characters and beliefs.

Welp (2002) is also interested in the learner. In this case, he conducts interviews with eight white men to determine how white men who are diversity advocates evolved in their diversity learning. He suggests that the ultimate privilege is that white men never have to leave their culture thus rarely think about diversity. The negative impact to them for this privilege is low self-awareness. Welp reports that to address this impact white men must educate each other within differences in order to more effectively connect across difference or with others different from themselves. Welp notes that white men’s talk about whiteness emphasized rationality over emotions.

In addition to the research related to whiteness and white privilege in adult education that looks primarily at the learner and the learning environment, three studies that relate to unlearning white privilege are considered. Barlas (1997), Yorks and Kasl (2002), and Barlas et al. (2000)
outline processes of group learning that highlight changes among participants as to their awareness about their white privilege.

Barlas (1997) uses a qualitative case study that involved thirteen white people for six months in a process, called synergic inquiry, to change participant’s consciousness about white privilege. The study results in providing understanding as to one process for expanding capacities for continued transformative learning that Barlas calls a systematic inquiry process. This process engages people in examining their own and other people’s consciousness at three different, interrelated levels of consciousness, which work at individual, group, organizational, and societal levels. Barlas suggests that this process is one approach that incorporates difference, such as race, as a catalyst for transformative learning.

Yorks and Kasl (2002) also discuss the synergic inquiry process in their work. They chose this process because it provides systematic procedures for assisting people to learn from experience about themselves as well as others. Yorks and Kasl describe a synergic inquiry about race and racial identity. Two teams are used. One included only white people and the other team included only black people. The teams worked independently over several months to identify their own self-knowing to present to the other group. Yorks and Kasl are primarily concerned with ways of knowing and found that participants engaged in both one’s own knowing and the knowing of others to further understand what it means to learn from experience. Yorks and Kasl argue that there is a direct relationship between the degree of diversity among learners and the need to create learning strategies that fully engage learners affectively through an experience-based way of knowing. Therefore, in relation to my study, whiteness is explored with both black and white adult learners to attempt to unveil a picture of whiteness that is not simply one-dimensional or white focused. The sharing of personal experiences by all learners is
important to illustrate how whiteness and white privilege provide influence whether knowingly or unknowingly.

In another study, cooperative inquiry as a self-directed learning strategy is used with white people to learn to unlearn white privilege (Barlas et al., 2000). Barlas et al. (2000) use white volunteers in a cultural consciousness project sponsored by the California Institute of Integral Studies to describe how people with the power and privilege of whiteness used cooperative inquiry to change their thinking and behavior. Four separate cooperative inquiry groups met over the course of an academic year to pursue the topic, “the meaning and impact of white supremacist consciousness in my life” (p. 26). Barlas et al. believe that cooperative inquiry as a self-directed learning strategy is a successful approach to unlearn white privilege among their study participants and recommend it to adult educators as a liberatory practice for consideration.

Although the focus of the research efforts by Barlas (1997), Yorks and Kasl (2002), and Barlas et al. (2000) are mainly on examining the process, they do suggest examples about how addressing whiteness and white privilege with white people can assist them in creating an understanding of their own whiteness and their role in perpetuating racism. In addition, Frankenberg’s (1993) work is considered not so much because it relates to teaching and learning, but because it is so often cited in adult education literature related to the topic of whiteness and white privilege. It is considered an important work to be aware of in speaking about the concept of whiteness.

Frankenberg (1993) interviews thirty white women to examine her argument that race shapes white women’s lives. She suggests that race, racial domination, and whiteness are complex, lived experiences that are historically situated rather than abstract, timeless categories
in their meanings and effects. Frankenberg identifies three ways the white women she interviewed tended to think about race: essentialist racism, color and power evasion, and race cognizance. The first position views race as a determinant and explanation of human behavior; the second position recognizes race, but in an appeal to abstract moral principles, dismisses it as an indicator of how people are treated. The third position recognizes the complexities of context, the ways in which race can interact with socio-economic status to predetermine the meanings of one’s identity and experience. Lastly, Frankenberg suggests that the process of altering present and future meanings of whiteness is connected to altering the meaning of other to form co-constructed racial and cultural identities and therefore requires a collective, not individual approach.

In addition, Dissertation Abstracts is incorporated to identify potential unpublished resources. Combining the subject fields of adult/continuing education and sociology/ethnic/racial studies yields 246 studies. A search of these 246 dissertations combined with the keywords whiteness, white privilege, or diversity results in twenty dissertation abstracts for inspection. Three dissertations are identified that have merit for discussion here (Hammel, 2000; Logan, 2002; Manglitz, 2002). Hammel (2000), as a white female educator, felt compelled to know the white supremacist in herself so she conducts a heuristic inquiry that focuses on a five-year process of self-exploration. Although this is an extremely limited investigation, Hammel identifies four false myths, which are important to note. They are that white people are superior, that people of color are inferior, that reality can be controlled, and that people exist separate from one another.

Logan (2002) incorporates semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis to understand how adult learners experience white privilege in higher
education classrooms. Twelve racially diverse adult learners and two instructors participate in the study. Logan concludes that race, class, and gender affect how learners experienced white privilege in the classroom. According to Logan, manifestations of white privilege include assumptions about race that privileges whiteness, white domination of classroom discourse and subject content, white domination of classroom instructional resources, and white domination of the physical space of the classroom. Logan’s findings are similar to the conclusions of Johnson-Bailey and Cervero (1998).

Manglitz (2002) uses interviews, documents, and participant observations to understand how white anti-racist adult educators challenge racism. Twelve educators are included in the study that suggests four major conclusions from the findings. First, racism continues to impact U.S. society and the lives of all concerned, although this is in different ways and with differing results. Second, there are white educators who are struggling with their own whiteness and white privilege in a continued effort to challenge racism. Third, the positionality of white adult educators both fosters and constrains their ability to challenge racism and lastly, the recognition that commitment, hope, and the educational process for challenging racism significantly impacts everyone.

Research provided by Johnson-Bailey and Cervero (1998), Tisdell (1993, 2003), Barlas (1997), Yorks and Kasl (2002), Barlas et al. (2000), and Frankenberg, (1993), represent research conducted in the field of adult education along with the three unpublished dissertations identified. As stated earlier, there are not many research efforts to consider. Those studies identified focus mainly on the learner, learning environment, and processes that can be used with participants. They are all qualitative studies incorporating methods such as case study, semi-structured interviews, observation, and heuristic inquiry. There are no studies that involve
incorporating action research to understand whiteness, which would contribute to understanding the ongoing process of change as people come to understand their whiteness and its associated white privilege. Since my interests also relate to higher education, further discussion follows with regard to research in the field of higher education related to the concepts of whiteness and white privilege.

*Higher education.* There are several studies represented in the literature that demonstrate efforts in higher education to address the concepts of whiteness and white privilege (Maher & Tetrault, 1997; McIntyre, 1997). They are presented here along with several unpublished dissertations to illustrate that efforts are being made in the field of higher education and that the concepts are in fact considered.

First, Maher and Tetrault (1997) incorporate interview and classroom observation data to re-analysis the data they present in their book *The Feminist Classroom* to investigate how learners’ constructions of gender, class, race, and ethnicity are informed by unacknowledged assumptions of whiteness. They study classroom practices in higher education to determine whether assumptions associated with white privilege are present in an institution’s ideological frameworks, in present intellectual superiority, and in generating classroom learning. They find that in classrooms where whiteness and white privilege are included as part of discussions related to race, learners are better able to understand these concepts and be able to apply them to learn more about themselves and others. It can help learners to see themselves and each other differently. “Not as individuals, whose relations to racism must be either innocent or guilty, but as participants in social and ideological networks” (p. 345). Maher and Tetrault suggest that assumptions about whiteness work with constructions such as class, gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity to shape classroom knowledge.
Next, McIntyre (1997) uses participatory action research to explore whiteness with white student teachers. She looks at white racial identity and the meaning of whiteness as a social activity that is constantly being created and recreated in situations of ‘rupture and tension’ and can produce what she terms ‘white talk’. McIntyre explores the concept of white racial identity with white teachers in an attempt to create dialogue to assist the teachers in understanding their whiteness and its associated privilege in relationship to others. She finds that participants’ discourse both documents the participants’ paradoxical language and illustrates the complexities involved when white people examine racial issues. “When we are creating spaces for groups of white people to attend to race relations, and to our own white racial identities, we need to be aware of how easily we can fabricate white talk – a kind of talk that doesn’t just obliterate the lives of people of color. It also anesthetizes the white psyche, and serves to minimize white culpability for the existence of individual, institutional, and societal racism” (p. 78).

In addition, Dissertation Abstracts is incorporated to identify potential unpublished resources. Combining the subject fields of higher education and sociology/ethnic/racial studies yields 938 studies. A search of these 938 dissertations combined with the keywords whiteness, white privilege, or diversity results in fourteen dissertation abstracts for inspection. Six dissertations are identified that have merit for discussion here (Bush, 2002; Christensen, M.C., 1997; Hornak, 2003; Mueller, 1999; Willey, 2002; Woodward-Nakata, 1999). Two studies focus on students and white identity development in the classroom (Bush, 2002; Hornak, 2003). The other four studies speak more to how whiteness can be addressed outside the classroom. Some of this unpublished work is particularly relevant to this study and is included to offer insight to others’ attempts to address whiteness and its associated white privilege.
First, Bush (2002) uses research conducted on a large urban public university to examine student perceptions and beliefs about issues of identity, privilege, democracy, and inter-group relations. This dissertation examines why most white people in the United States believe that racial equality has been achieved when economic and social indicators suggest otherwise. Basically, Bush believes this is done to support the status quo. She further believes that understanding the ways in which whiteness functions to support the status quo contributes to understanding the dynamics of power and subordination in United States society.

Hornak (2003) also explores white racial identity. She uses participant observation of a diversity course, analysis of written assignments, and individual interviews with class participants. Hornak finds that racial identity development is a complex social construct whose process develops on an individual level and is based on exposure and experience. She further concludes that participation in classes that intentionally addresses whiteness and white privilege increases students’ awareness of their own racial identity and multicultural education must be embedded in an understanding of one’s own culture and how it relates to others’ cultures.

Next, the four dissertation studies that relate to higher education and whiteness are discussed to not only show that there is relevant research to consider, but also to examine how whiteness might be addressed outside the classroom. M.C. Christensen (1997) examines critical incidents and fifteen interviews of white students in higher education, who scored highest on a scale that measures attitudes related to white racial identity. Christensen indicates that learning about race, race relations, and the participant’s own whiteness took place in five contexts. These contexts include curricular experiences, formal co-curricular experiences, informal co-curricular experiences, experiences unrelated to university attendance, and learning related to campus climate.
The next three dissertations relate specifically to those individuals that are most often responsible for the formal co-curricular experiences and informal co-curricular experiences, as mentioned by M.C. Christensen (1997) on college campuses. These are the student affairs professionals. Mueller (1999) collects data on 534 white student affairs professionals from sixty United States colleges and universities and employs a correlational design to examine the relationship between multicultural competence and white racial consciousness. He believes his work lays the foundation for further research of the concept of multicultural competence for student affairs professionals and suggests that opportunities are needed for these professionals to explore their racial identity and related attitudes.

Woodward-Nakata (1999) also looks at what student affairs professionals understand about diversity. She spends a week with each of five senior student affairs officers and collects data by way of observations of day-to-day routines, in-depth interviews, and supplementary documentation. Woodward-Nakata finds that some of her data is specific to the individual institutions she considered, but she also concludes that the goal, regardless of the university, should be the creation of a welcoming and empowering educational environment, not only by including representative numbers of minorities.

Willey (2002) offers the most relevant example of unpublished research to consider. She uses participatory research with six white college administrators from two public universities to engage in reflective dialogue to identify their awareness concerning whiteness, racism, and white racial identity. The participants are all new student affairs professionals and possess graduate degrees. Willey concludes that these participants questioned how they fit into a racially diverse society as white people. Student affairs professionals in this study had trouble identifying what it means to be white since whiteness is perceived as invisible and regarded as only a checkbox on
forms. However, Willey also finds that white means lacking a heritage and culture as well as representing power and privilege. Participants articulate how racism and whiteness function to ensure the status quo on college campuses and although they work to increase their diversity awareness, they do little toward exploring whiteness and white privilege on their respective campuses.

In summary, although research examples exist in the field of higher education that relate to white racial identity development and uncovering white privilege, they are few in numbers and relate primarily to unpublished dissertations. Additionally, there are no examples related to how white student affairs professionals uncover their whiteness and white privilege in an ongoing process afforded by action research. Although research efforts in both adult education and higher education are generally lacking with regard to whiteness and white privilege as the examples here attest, the concepts are indeed addressed and provide valuable information to consider with regard to this study.

Finally, it is the intent of this section on whiteness, its history, definition, approaches, and research, to illustrate what whiteness is about and why it might be important to further investigate. The fact that data-based research is additionally lacking with regard first to sheer number of efforts and secondly with regard to depth and breadth of exploration, left the door wide open to consider another methodology or process of investigation, action research, with a specific, perhaps underrepresented population, student affairs professionals in higher education. Additional consideration, therefore, is also necessary as to the theoretical framework that is used to further guide this current process of investigation and is considered in the next section of this review of the literature.
Anti-Racist Education

In this second section of the literature review, anti-racist education is considered in relationship to critical theory, critical pedagogy, engaged pedagogy, and an engaged pedagogy of whiteness to provide a theoretical framework for the research. The previous section on whiteness attempts to illuminate the historical associations of whiteness particularly its relationship to power and privilege along with a current definition that also associates the concept with privilege, power relations, and structural advantage. For these reasons, a theoretical framework that considers power relations in society and specifically in education is necessary.

In this discussion I use the term anti-racist education since it is more easily discernable than pedagogy for those not immediately associated with educational theory since the term is used with study participants. Anti-racist education or anti-racist pedagogy incorporates the ideas suggested by critical theory and the three perspectives on pedagogy examined in this discussion. Specifically, the work of Thompson (1997), who views anti-racist education as a necessary focus of education in a democracy, is used to present an understanding of what is meant as anti-racist education that supports this research.

An anti-racist education must understand racism as something more than just prejudice according to Thompson (1997). What makes the concept of anti-racist education stand apart is its specific focus on being anti-racist not merely anti-biased. The framework Thompson (1997) proposes regards racism as institutional and structural as well as embodied and cultural. Thompson explains that racism creates the category of race as an organizing principle with social meaning that normalizes power relations so that the oppressed appear inherently inferior, undeserving, or suspect. “Racism is not an aberration or tragic flaw but a systematic way of
organizing social relations that privileges whites and then naturalizes that privilege” (p. 13). Therefore, anti-racism refers to an active resistance to the ways in which knowledge, status, value, and competence are framed to privilege white racial interests in the United States.

Thompson (1997) emphasizes that in a racist society to be democratic, education must be specifically anti-racist. It includes teaching students to examine their actual experiences “in terms that press against the boundaries of convention and of immediate perception” (p. 17). That is to suggest that an anti-racist education must equip learners with the ability to pursue an understanding of racial issues beyond what appears needed or relevant from the learner’s own perspective. Anti-racist education can serve as one of the ways for thinking and rethinking what it means to be a democracy.

Although, the concept of anti-racist education presents a general foundation to consider with regard to this research, it is a larger category of education that can be applied to many racial associations, such as black, Asian, Latino, etc. In this case it is considered specifically with regard to whiteness. So, how can the concept of whiteness be addressed pedagogically? Critical theory is considered first to address this question because it too focuses on the power relations associated with the production of knowledge and can inform how to teach about whiteness and its associated white privilege.

*Critical Theory*

For this study, critical theory is associated with social thought not literary criticism. Critical theory views knowledge as power and the production of knowledge as socially and historically determined. Knowledge is not neutral according to this perspective, which reflects the human interests and the social and power relationships within society. Critical theory is most readily identified with the sociological analysis and ideological critique of the Frankfurt School.
Critical theory originates at the Institute for Social Research, the home of the Frankfurt School that was created in Frankfurt, Germany in February of 1923 (DePoy, Hartman, & Haslett, 1999; Giroux, 2001). The institute moves to Columbia University in New York City in 1934 as the Nazis gained power in Germany, but is re-established in 1953 in Frankfurt. The focus of the Frankfurt School’s research places a lesser role on the economy and instead centers on issues related to how subjectivity is formed and how everyday life represents ‘a new terrain of domination’ (Giroux, 2001). Critical theorists of the time aim at both revealing and breaking with existing structures of domination. Critical theory further develops in response to positivism, with its focus on a scientific basis for studying culture. According to the Frankfurt School, positivism represents a threat to subjectivity and critical thinking (Giroux, 2001).

Critical theory is heavily influenced by the Industrial Revolution in Europe with the development of commodity-based societies that foster the development of capitalism in many countries (Kanpol, 1999). Capitalism is seen as a contributor to creating systems of inequality among race, class, and gender. The Industrial Revolution is also believed to have had a similar impact on the United States (Kanpol, 1999). The impact of capitalism and the resultant systems of inequality also extend to the educational system in the United States (Kanpol, 1999).

Giroux (2001) believes it must be stressed that, while a single, universal critical theory cannot be identified there was a common attempt to assess the newly emerging forms of capitalism including the changing forms of domination that came with them. With this in mind, a definition of critical theory suggested by Giroux is adopted and serves as a foundation for further consideration of critical theory in this research. “The concept of critical theory refers to the nature of self-conscious critique and the need to develop discourse of social transformation and emancipation that does not cling dogmatically to its own doctrinal assumptions” (p. 8). In
other words, it is both a school of thought and process of critique. The Frankfurt School provides a discourse that illuminates the social, political, and cultural totality of everyday life, a life that extends to the development of education among many other things.

In summary, critical theory regards knowledge as power and the production of knowledge as both socially and historically determined. Further, critical theory tends to focus more on class than on race or anti-racism. However, its emphasis on social structures and systems of oppression provide useful insight that can be applied to anti-racist education. Although critical theory is discussed here briefly, it sets a foundation to discuss what is meant by critical pedagogy.

Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy extends the ideas of critical theory particularly those ideas associated with structural power and class, and relates them directly to education. Critical pedagogy is also heavily influenced by the work of Paulo Freire (1971), who also acknowledges class, structural power relations, and systems of oppression. It is further suggested that critical theory draws from Freire in its emphasis on emancipation and empowerment (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Freire’s pedagogy is inextricably linked to the generation of socialist consciousness and revolutionary praxis (McLaren, 2000). His work in Brazil with literacy programs is also directly tied to the struggle for human liberation. Freire calls his perspective the pedagogy of the oppressed to reflect his belief in liberation through education.

Freire (1971) maintains that education can be used to promote radical social change. He suggests that those who are oppressed are unable to recognize their oppression and therefore are unable to confront and change it. Freire believes that true learning can only occur through a praxis that focuses on interest, reflection, problem posing, and dialogue. Dialogue is a
particularly important part of the praxis since it is through the dialogue process that people can name, take action upon, and ultimately transform their worlds. Once learners become aware of their oppression and how it controls their lives they then can become empowered and their empowerment, according to Freire, is what leads to action and change.

However, the role of the teacher as the leader or the central facilitator in the process is important to note because it reflects a positionality that sets it above students in the learning process. It also reflects a more male, rationally (vs. affectively) privileged perspective. In addition, Freire’s (1971) work focuses on those being oppressed not the oppressors (or in this study the white majority perspective). However, Freire’s ideas are important because they serve as the foundation for several critical pedagogues that are central to the discussion of critical pedagogy used to inform my theoretical perspective.

McLaren is one of these pedagogues. McLaren (1997, 2000, 2003) believes it is necessary to extend critical pedagogy into what he calls pedagogy for revolution. He suggests that Freire’s (1971) work enables us to engage in pedagogy with the abolition of human suffering as the goal of education. According to McLaren (2000), pedagogy must be more than critical as in the work of Freire, but revolutionary in order to terminate human suffering since the abolition of capitalist society is required. “Revolutionary pedagogy attempts to produce an excess of consciousness over and above our conditional or naturalized consciousness, to create, as it were, an overflow that outruns the historical conditions that enframe it and that seek to anchor it, so that we might free our thought and, by extension, our everyday social practices from its rootedness in the very material conditions that enable thinking and social activity to occur in the first place” (McLaren in Sardoc, 2001, p. 424).
McLaren (1997) clearly states that the common condition that confronts us is global capitalism. He stresses that the influence of capitalism is so great that it affords many invisible connections to life and education in the twentieth century. He is interested in the role that education can play in society by dismantling capital’s law of value as a central form of mediation between people (Sardoc, 2001).

One major area of invisibility McLaren (1997) exposes is whiteness. Whiteness, according to McLaren, “constitutes unmarked (Euro-American male) practices that have negative effects on and consequences for those who do not participate in them” (p. 268). Or as McLaren puts it marginalized groups are forced to ‘act white’ in order to be successful. Whiteness is hidden and insidious and taken for granted. However, McLaren is clear that it is class not race that is most influential in our everyday lives. In an interview he states, “I think that recovering class struggle is essential in creating wider political solidarities necessary in the current movement against global capitalism” (Sardoc, 2001, p. 416). He goes on to point out that classism is not privileged over racism or sexism or homophobia, but he feels that capitalist social formations often organize and reify these other forms of oppression. It is a more central form of oppression suggests McLaren (Sardoc, 2001). “I do not want to subordinate race, gender, or sexuality to that of social class; rather I want to emphasize that without overcoming capitalism, anti-racist, anti-sexist, and anti-homophobic struggles will have little chance at succeeding” (McLaren in Sardoc, 2001, p.420).

Giroux is another important pedagogue to consider and worked with McLaren to create the Center for Education and Cultural Studies at Miami University of Ohio in 1985 (Sardoc, 2001). Giroux (1991) discusses critical pedagogy related to racism and its relationship to an anti-racist pedagogy. He argues for a postmodern discourse of resistance in order to develop
cultural politics and anti-racist pedagogy as part of the greater theory of difference and democratic struggle. Giroux addresses the failings of modernist discourse mainly by stating that it fails to include race and ethnicity generally reducing this discourse to that of other. In addition, modernist discourse rarely examines the white privilege permitted the majority. Questions of representation and inclusion are believed to suppress any attempts to call into question the norm of whiteness as an ethnic category, which further secures its dominance by appearing to be invisible.

What is clearly missing, suggests Giroux (1991), is any attempt to critique European and American culture with regard to the dominance of whites or to restructure racial and ethnic discourse to highlight equality, justice, and liberty as part of an ongoing struggle for democracy. Giroux believes that modernism and multicultural education have failed to address cultural differences in relation to the social and historical construction of whiteness. He calls for critical educators to reveal political interests that treat difference as a technical category rather than a political one, challenge educational discourses that do not address social, political, or racial tensions, and employ new theories of multicultural education.

Giroux (1991) also suggests that origins of anti-racist pedagogy should be considered with regard to discourses of critical postmodernism since critical postmodernism questions both meaning and representation and argues for the plurality of voices and narratives. “Postmodernism redraws and retheorizes the objects and experiences of politics by extending the reach of power and meaning to the spheres of the everyday” (Giroux, 1991, p. 245). Postmodernism provides an opportunity to challenge white supremacy according to Giroux. In addition, Giroux (1991) puts forward the notion of border pedagogy, which provides educators with the opportunity “to rethink the relations between the centers and the margins of power” (p.
What border pedagogy makes undeniable, according to Giroux, is the relational nature of one’s own political and personal beliefs. In summary, Giroux calls for a critical postmodern pedagogy of resistance that challenges the oppressive boundaries of racism and the barriers that undermine the building of a truly democratic society.

Additionally, Shor (1996) is mentioned here briefly because he also discusses critical pedagogy and is an important pedagogue to consider. In his book, *When Students Have Power: Negotiating Authority in a Critical Pedagogy*, Shor uses an example of one of the courses he taught to highlight the processes he and his students incorporated to both co-develop the course syllabus and to create a group that met outside of class in order to develop a greater sense of efficacy and to allow for personal growth. Shor’s pedagogy is about disrupting the traditional classroom by sharing power with his students. His style is based on listening to his students and posing questions, rather than on lecturing. Shor also does not prescribe how power is to be shared, but demonstrates flexibility in working with his students to outline how power sharing will occur. He also feels students should question conventional wisdom and he opposes the unilateral use of authority in society. Since Shor examines but one class in higher education, it is important to recognize the limitations of his work. However, his notions of power and authority are important to acknowledge in this discussion of critical pedagogy.

In summary, critical pedagogy provides a perspective for educators to better examine and interact with the politics of education (Leistyna, Woodrum, & Sherblom, 1996). Politics, in this case, are the power relations that structure the world in which we live. Examples include how we make meaning of commonplace events, the purpose and goals of education, how schools are structured, type of preparation required for teachers, the way students are perceived, and so forth. Critical pedagogy challenges us to recognize, engage, and critique any existing practices and
institutional structures that maintain inequalities and oppressive social relations (Leistyna et al., 1996). Critical pedagogy is primarily concerned with the types of educational theories that encourage educators and students to develop an interconnecting relationship between ideology, power, and culture.

As a microcosm of the larger U.S. society, schools also maintain dominant beliefs, values, and interests, which can be seen in their educational practices and curricula (Leistyna et al., 1996). Therefore, critical pedagogy reveals that knowledge and pedagogical practices are always produced within particular social and historical conditions and as a result must be accompanied by an exploration into their relation with power and ideology as well as the inherently subjective (constructed by independent choices and intentions of the individual) perspectives of the researcher. In order to understand the sociopolitical, economic, and historical realities that shape their lives, educators and students must work to uncover new meaning and develop cultural practices that are critical, transformative, and liberatory (Leistyna et al., 1996).

Nevertheless, the perspectives discussed here share the same shortcomings as suggested in relationship to Freire’s ideas about pedagogy. The role of the teacher is a more privileged position, even with regard to Shor (1996) who still presents traditional letter grades to his students, rather than share the power with them as to how class performance will be determined. These perspectives also reflect a more male, rationally (vs. affectively) privileged perspective. Therefore, in addition to discussing the influence of critical pedagogy on my theoretical lens, a very brief examination of engaged pedagogy is presented to suggest how other ways of knowing and positionality can contribute to a greater understanding of a pedagogy that can address whiteness and its associated white privilege.
Engaged Pedagogy

Engaged pedagogy is another example of pedagogy that must be considered here since it can be regarded as a combining of critical and feminist pedagogies. Central to the theme of critical pedagogy is that for true learning to take place, those that are oppressed due to class, race, gender, or sexual orientation must be fully engaged in the learning process. Feminist pedagogy is similar to critical pedagogy in that it also focuses on giving voice to those traditionally silenced and also because it too recognizes the importance of reflection and action. Furthermore, feminist pedagogy brings the affective dimension to dealing with power relations rather than an exclusive focus on the rational (Tisdell, 1998). Whereas, some models of feminist pedagogy focus on the socialization of women as nurturers and on emancipation in the personal psychological sense, others focus more on socio-cultural issues and positionality of both teachers and students and how it affects learning and classroom dynamics, according to Tisdell (1998). Like critical theory, most versions of feminist pedagogy also draw from Freire (1971) in their emphasis on emancipation and empowerment (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999).

The goal of feminist pedagogy is to challenge social structures in an effort to change the world. What makes this perspective distinct is its focus on the intersections of race, gender, and class as multiple systems of oppression and privilege (Tisdell & Taylor, 1999). This pedagogy’s view of difference is thus represented in its attention to positionality or where one is ‘positioned’ relative to the intersections of race, gender, and class compared to the majority culture. Feminist pedagogy foregrounds issues of gender and focuses mainly on women’s learning although there are authors that account for other differences such as race, class, and sexual orientation among women (Tisdell, 1998).
The work of hooks (1994) combines the ideas of feminist pedagogy and critical pedagogy and calls for what she terms ‘engaged pedagogy.’ This form of pedagogy emphasizes well-being and accounts for people’s emotions in addition to critical thinking in learning about and working for social change. This means the role of the teacher is one that involves self-actualization in order to teach in a manner that empowers learners. hooks clearly suggests that “to educate as the practice of freedom is a way of teaching that anyone can learn” (p. 13). This form of pedagogy requires a manner of teaching that respects and cares for students if learning is to take place.

hooks (1994, 2003) mentions Freire as an inspiration in her efforts to address the ‘banking system’ of education. (The banking system of education refers to the approach to learning that involves the teacher imparting information to students who memorize or consume it.) hook’s pedagogy does not focus on the passive consumer type learner, but on active learner participation and personal success intimately linked with self-actualization and the need to account for the mind/body split that is often seen as a given. It emphasizes well-being of learners and provides a connection between what is learned by students and their overall life experiences and ultimately allows learners to be responsible for their choices. Engaged pedagogy, however, does not seek to empower only students according to hooks. This form of pedagogy also employs a holistic model of learning that empowers teachers through its process. According to hooks (2003), the classroom should be a place that is life-sustaining and mind expanding and where teacher and student work together as partners. This form of recognition of teachers is in part what sets engaged pedagogy apart from critical pedagogy and makes it important to consider here.

In summary, engaged pedagogy with its associations to both critical pedagogy and feminist pedagogy is presented in relationship to the theoretical lens in this study because it does
two specific things. First, engaged pedagogy does more to incorporate the teacher as an equal to students than does critical pedagogy and thus provides valuable insight related to how white people can uncover their whiteness and white privilege in the on-going process afforded by action research. Second, engaged pedagogy with its links to feminist pedagogy brings some of that perspective’s ideas into view. Feminist pedagogy calls attention to the affective dimension and to the issue of positionality of the teacher and highlights how the teacher’s positionality affects teaching and learning. This cannot be said for critical pedagogy with its privileging of the instructor role and male, rational influence. Additionally, like Freire’s (1971) pedagogy of the oppressed, hooks (1994) also approaches pedagogy from a minority perspective, that of blackness and the black female experience. Since this study relates to the majority perspective afforded whiteness and white privilege in the United States, a pedagogy that can address whiteness is needed. In other words, a pedagogy that can uncover the norms of whiteness and white privilege to allow for new ways to approach the challenges of positionality associated with racial diversity.

Engaged Pedagogy and Whiteness

One of the realities that shapes people’s lives is certainly race as suggested earlier in the discussion related to the historical associations of whiteness particularly its relationship to power and privilege. Due to the nature of critical pedagogy it is not surprising that whiteness, the focus of this research, is already linked to a broadened understanding of critical pedagogy in the literature (Kincheloe, 1999; Kincheloe et al., 1998; Leonardo, 2002) that is really the engaged pedagogy that hooks (1994) refers to in her work. An engaged pedagogy of whiteness provides a theoretical framework of teaching that emphasizes student engagement in the exploration of the
social, political, and psychological aspects of being a member of a racial group including the influence of power relations and white privilege (Kincheloe, 1999).

A pedagogical analysis of whiteness yields several aspects for consideration and inclusion according to Kincheloe (1999). His pedagogy of whiteness attempts to connect an understanding of the construction of whiteness to both political and socio-economic issues. Therefore, educators must examine previously ignored concepts such as invisible power relations and the ways such social forces shaped human awareness (Kincheloe, 1999).

Kincheloe (1999) suggests that a critical or engaged pedagogy of whiteness is characterized by specific moments. These moments involve exposing the invisibility of white social power and privilege; an awareness of how whiteness as an ideological construction is distinct; a recognition of how whiteness produces both white and non-white subjectivity/consciousness; an understanding of the power of whiteness to be seen as a norm by which others are measured; a knowledge of how white privilege has manifested itself in the United States; and an appreciation of the need to reconstruct a progressive anti-racist understanding of whiteness and white identity. Kincheloe emphasizes that these aspects are included in teaching whiteness and are not to be viewed as linear, but seen as included in the overall process. Lastly, a critical or engaged pedagogy of whiteness must reveal the dynamics associated with whiteness to whites and non-whites alike in an attempt to illustrate how both groups are hurt by a lack of self-knowledge regarding the impact of whiteness and white privilege (Kincheloe, 1999).

Building on the work of Kincheloe et al. (1998) and Kincheloe (1999), Leonardo (2002) associates the issue of globalization with whiteness as a component of a critical pedagogy that attempts to understand the oppressive structures that distort knowledge. The effect of
globalization on education is represented in education’s struggle to present the world in the most real way possible (Leonardo, 2002). Therefore, Leonardo suggests that a critical or engaged pedagogy of whiteness must cut across national borders in order to provide a pedagogy for students with a discourse that emphasizes a global understanding of whiteness. This benefits students by incorporating an understanding of the interrelationship of the global implications as well as the more local implications of whiteness.

Both Kincheloe (1999) and Leonardo (2002) agree that a critical or engaged pedagogy of whiteness must also incorporate ways for whiteness to be viewed in a positive light. Otherwise, the assumption that whiteness is only bad or that whites must be either ally or enemy of students of color could prevail (Leonardo, 2002). A critical pedagogy of whiteness must not demonize white people if it is to address the social, political, and economic structures that perpetuate the cycle of racism (Kincheloe, 1999).

In summary, anti-racist education is considered in relationship to critical theory, critical pedagogy, engaged pedagogy, and specifically an engaged pedagogy of whiteness to provide a theoretical framework for this research. The first section of the literature review on whiteness attempts to illuminate the historical associations of whiteness particularly its relationship to power and privilege along with a current definition that also associates the concept with privilege, power relations, and structural advantage. For these reasons, a theoretical framework that considers power relations in society and ultimately in education is necessary. Therefore, the ideas put forward with regard to critical theory, critical pedagogy, engaged pedagogy, and most directly an engaged pedagogy of whiteness are essential perspectives that are incorporated as the theoretical lens that informs how to address whiteness as an important component of anti-racist education for student affairs professionals in this research.
Student Affairs Professionals

In this third and final section of the literature review chapter, literature related to the role of student affairs professionals in addressing diversity and the significance of student diversity in higher education is presented. Relevant literature is examined in order to consider the issue of student diversity and whiteness in United States higher education and to understand the nature of the concepts relative to the role of student affairs professionals specifically.

Role of Student Affairs Professionals

The role of student affairs professionals is considered crucial in assisting higher education to effectively address diversity (Dixon, 2001). Therefore, the role of the student affairs professional warrants further examination. Student affairs professionals are described with regard to common areas of responsibility and concerns that are present regardless of specific job descriptions since specific tasks vary with institutional size, type, culture, and structure. These areas are: student learning and development, community development, reflective practice, and research and assessment (Whitt, 1997).

Most often student affairs professionals are regarded as administrators on college campuses and work in a variety of functions. They might work in the area of financial aid, assisting students with their finances to secure an education. They might also work in career services where they help students identify career options and prepare for the world of work. Additionally, student affairs professionals might work with student activities, admissions, Greek life, multicultural affairs, new student orientation, or residence life. This by no means represents an inclusive list of all the varied roles student affairs professionals fill on their respective campuses, but more to illustrate the typical kinds of positions these professionals occupy on college and university campuses in the United States.
Student affairs professionals play an important part in helping institutions provide a comprehensive, quality education. This education includes not only the academic, curricular, but the co-curricular or out-of-classroom learning opportunities as well. M.C. Christensen (1997) indicates that white students learn about race, race relations, and their own whiteness in five contexts. These contexts include curricular experiences, formal co-curricular experiences, informal co-curricular experiences, experiences unrelated to university attendance, and learning related to campus climate. Those individuals that are most often responsible for the formal co-curricular experiences and informal co-curricular experiences on college campuses, as mentioned by Christensen, are the student affairs professionals.

Asher (1994) suggests that student affairs professionals are “the valued architects of campus life, personal development, and involvement of students since the birth of the profession” (p. 3). Dixon (2001) further suggests that student affairs professionals as campus leaders, managers, and educators play a significant role in meeting student needs to acquire the necessary experiences, knowledge, and skills to function effectively in the workplace. Student affairs professionals are also reported to possess a much greater intuitive sense of college peer groups (Hurtado, 1999).

Although student affairs professionals might be well informed about the changing demographics of their college campuses, they still may not have consciously thought about the varied needs of the diverse students they represent and serve on their respective campuses (Wilkinson & Rund, 2000). Thus, student affairs professionals must be more reflective about personal and career needs of the diverse student population present in higher education today (Dixon, 2001).
Student affairs professionals, like all people, bring to their work a worldview that is constructed within unequal racial relationships that are often unconscious and unrecognized. White people and people of color are located differently in the racial structure (Sleeter, 1994). Most white people live and operate in mostly or all white neighborhoods, families, social groups, and churches, and utilize predominantly white media. They spend little or no time in non-white worlds although they may incorporate a few people of color in their lives (Sleeter, 1994). What does it mean to be white? It would be safe to suggest that most white people, including most white student affairs professionals, have never considered this question.

Mueller (1999) supports this contention in his dissertation calling for multicultural competence for student affairs professionals and suggests that opportunities are needed for these professionals to explore their racial identity and related attitudes. Further, Willey (2002) concludes that the student affairs professionals in her research questioned how they fit into a racially diverse society as white people. Student affairs professionals had trouble identifying what it means to be white since whiteness is perceived as invisible and regarded as only a checkbox on forms. Willey also finds that white means lacking a heritage and culture as well as representing power and privilege. However, regardless of the university, the creation of a welcoming and empowering educational environment, not only by including representative numbers of minorities must be a primary concern (Woodward-Nakata, 1999).

Although there is little literature identified with specific regard to student affairs professionals and the concepts of whiteness and its associated white privilege, it is fairly safe to suggest that most white student affairs professionals do not consider their whiteness. While student affairs professionals may be viewed as well informed about changing demographics on their respective campuses, the literature strongly suggests that diversity is an area needing further
consideration in relationship to the student affairs profession. Theodore K. Miller, one of the most prominent figures in the field of college student affairs, suggests that the whole area of diversity is a difficult issue that must be addressed and ways discovered to manage, work with, and value it by student affairs professionals (as cited in Cooper & Dean, 1998). Further, Howard-Hamilton et al. (1998) suggest that there is a compelling need for educational programs to address diversity issues and prepare culturally sensitive and skilled student affairs professionals.

Next, a brief history of the issue of student diversity and whiteness in higher education is presented not only to understand its history but also to underscore its prominence as an issue requiring attention in higher education that can benefit from the practice of student affairs professionals.

Student Diversity

Higher education has seen many changes in the composition of its study body since its inception in the United States. Higher education begins with Harvard in 1643 and exists exclusively for the education of white males for almost 200 years. Finally in 1837, Oberlin College in Ohio inaugurates coeducational higher education when it enrolls four female freshmen and around the same time, in 1828, two black men graduate from Bowdoin and Ohio University (Rudolph, 1962). However, it is not until over 100 years later in the 1960s that black students are regularly seen in the mainstream of United States higher education.

Today, higher education is significantly more diverse. College enrollment figures from 1996 indicate that students of color represent 26 percent of college students and women outnumber men, representing 56 percent of all students (Wilkinson & Rund, 2000). Over the past decade, the number of black and Hispanic undergraduates enrolled in colleges and
universities nationwide has increased by 32 percent and 98 percent, respectively, whereas the number of white undergraduates has declined by one percent (Perna, 2000).

The current group of students on U.S. campuses are often referred to as the Millennials, which represents students born between 1982 and 2000 and are predicted to be the first 100 million person generation in United States history (Howe & Strauss, 2000). The Millennials are described as an ethnically diverse generation and intent on achieving a race-blind society (Young & Stick, 2003). Student demographic changes have occurred over time in U.S. higher education and present a reality today, based primarily on the numbers that make diversity an area worthy of further consideration.

Since this study takes place at one of Pennsylvania’s public universities, a more specific consideration of demographics of this state is also discussed. During the 2001-02 academic year, statistics that demonstrate representation according to race of high school graduates indicate that 102 graduates are American Indian/Alaska Native; 2,696 are Asian/Pacific Islander graduates; 11,655 are black; 3,093 are Hispanic; and lastly, whites represent 97,397 of the graduates (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 2003). However by 2009-10, the number projections present a different picture for consideration with 151 American Indian/Alaska Native graduates; 3,378 Asian/Pacific Islander graduates; 15,800 black graduates; 5,356 Hispanic graduates; and lastly, 97,082 white graduates (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 2003). Pennsylvania demographic information, much like U.S. student demographics, calls attention to the notion that sheer numbers alone make the study of addressing issues related to student diversity worth further consideration.

In addition to a brief history of student diversity in United States higher education, relevant research literature is also briefly highlighted. In 1998 the American Council of
Education (as cited in Wilkinson & Rund, 2000) reports that many educators and administrators in colleges and universities share a common belief that diversity in their student body is important to fulfill their primary mission of providing a quality education. Several recent studies examine perspectives from faculty, students, and the general public, which suggest that student diversity is important and valued in higher education (Anonymous, 2000; Gose, 2000; Manzo, 2000; Yates, 2000).

While some significant legislative actions and laws might underscore the importance of student diversity for colleges and universities (Allen & Hunt, 1997; Baez, 2000; Howard-Hamilton et al., 1998; Schmidt, 2003; Thompson & Tobias, 2000), with examples including civil rights codes, the First Amendment, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the recent University of Michigan Supreme Court decision, there is still continuing evidence that indicates higher education is not “conducive, growth enhancing, or healthy environments for many students” (Howard-Hamilton, et al., 1998, p. 58). According to Howard-Hamilton et al., minority groups voice specific concerns about quality of life issues, such as unwelcoming campus environments and personal safety. Altbach, Lomotey, and Kyle (1999) also believe that increased numbers of underrepresented students in higher education contributes to increases in campus tensions, which also contributes to impeding the education process whether these tensions occur inside or outside of the classroom.

Although some literature suggests that the current climate on many campuses may not reflect an appreciation for diversity in practice, there is also literature that speaks to the value diversity brings to higher education. For example, Baez (2000) suggests that diversity presumes social differences, which can lead to experiences that promote particular kinds of knowledge, perspectives, and values that promote racial understanding and enable individuals to consider
multiple perspectives. Therefore, advocates of diversity “seek through higher education to expose and to know, and so to appreciate and celebrate, the experiences of individuals and groups of different cultures, ethnicities, and races” (p. 47).

In addition, research studies indicate that student interactions among diverse peers are associated with a broad range of educational outcomes, such as involvement in social issues, civic or political engagement, knowledge acquisition, and self-awareness to name just a few (Hurtado, 1999). Freshmen norms for 2003, which are based on responses from 276,449 students at 413 U.S. colleges and universities, indicate that only 22.4 percent of all entering students believe racial discrimination is no longer a major problem in the United States. For freshmen at all black colleges the percentage falls to 13.9 (Sax, Astin, Lindholm, Korn, Saenz, & Mahoney, 2003).

Ethnic diversity is considered a valuable commodity on U.S. college campuses and has not lowered student quality, according to reports by the American Council on Education and American Association of University Professors (St. John, 2000). Both the current situation on many campuses coupled with the rewards diversity can bring again make this an area of higher education worth further consideration and one way to do this is to examine the role student affairs professionals play in addressing diversity issues on campus as suggested previously.

Summary

In summary, the literature uncovered presents mainly conceptual information related to diversity and the student affairs profession. Little empirical research based literature is discovered. In light of this discussion, it seems clear that additional research that can assist student affairs professionals to be more effective contributors in addressing diversity issues on campus is worth examination. One way to do this is an action research project to address the
issue of student diversity and whiteness via the student affairs profession. In addition, this action research project is not only an attempt to address a lack of data-based research that deals with diversity and the student affairs profession, but also to examine the missing discussion about how student affairs professionals deal with whiteness and white privilege in their varied roles on campus. This research study’s methodology is discussed further in Chapter Three.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to develop a program aimed at increasing an understanding of whiteness among student affairs professionals, and to examine the process of how they attempt to understand whiteness and white privilege while participating in the program and while dealing with diversity issues on campus. This is a qualitative action research study intended: (1) to develop and implement a professional development program for student affairs professionals to understand whiteness as an important component of anti-racist education; and (2) to examine their process of coming to understand whiteness during the program itself and their own perceptions of the process shortly after the program is over. Being that student affairs professionals bring to their work a worldview that is constructed within unequal racial relationships that are often unconscious and unrecognized and given the process-oriented nature of action research, the following research questions are set up in light of the phases of the research project:

PHASE I: IN PREPARATION FOR DESIGNING THE PROGRAM

1. How do student affairs professionals understand whiteness?

2. What is it that student affairs professionals want to learn about anti-racist education, and how and why is it important to them?

PHASE II: INVOLVEMENT IN THE PROGRAM

3. What are key moments in the lives of the participants, either during the program itself and/or in their life experience, when they had some sense of racism in society and/or a sense of their own whiteness?
PHASE III: FOLLOWING THE CONCLUSION OF THE PROGRAM

4. What do program participants feel are significant aspects of their learning and how are they implementing what they learned in their practice?

In this chapter, an overview of the qualitative paradigm is presented along with a discussion regarding action research including what it means, how it is described, and the relationship it has to this study. A critical research perspective is also examined along with the action research design. In addition, data collection methods, data analysis, and issues important to qualitative research, such as dependability, are examined in consideration of this study. The limitations and assumptions related to this research are addressed as part of this chapter as well.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research addresses how people make meaning of situations, in other words, their viewpoints, meanings, nuances, perceptions, stories, and relationships. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) offer a generic definition of qualitative research. “Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world” (p. 3). According to Marshall and Rossman (1999), qualitative research is “pragmatic, interpretive, and grounded in the lived experiences of people” (p. 2). Morse (1994) sums it up well remarking that, “the laboratory of the qualitative researcher is everyday life and cannot be contained in a test tube, started, stopped, manipulated, or washed down the sink” (p. 1).

Qualitative research can also be understood in terms of its characteristics. First, it is usually naturalistic and involves inductive thinking and analysis. Qualitative researchers are intrigued with complex social interactions experienced in daily life and the meanings people attribute to these interactions, which is what takes qualitative researchers into natural settings...
Second, qualitative research is interpretive and incorporates a holistic perspective. Qualitative research also asserts that there are multiple realities (Swanson & Holton, 1997). Third, qualitative research findings cannot be generalized; however, themes or patterns can emerge within a study. Sample size is comparably small and purposeful in qualitative research. A purposeful sample is valuable since it is a sample that contains individuals for whom the situation studied is most likely to occur, thus increasing the likelihood of collecting meaningful data.Fourth, context is important and involves personal contact and insight from the researcher.

To state it simply, qualitative approaches to research are incorporated when the purpose of the study is to derive meaning about a particular subject, issue, or concern. Qualitative strategies are appropriate “where the administration of standardized instruments, assigning people to comparison groups and/or the collection of quantitative data would affect program operations by being overly intrusive” (Patton, 2002, p. 191). Qualitative research is useful in personal inquiry or just wanting to understand something (Patton, 2002). Since qualitative research concerns itself with viewpoints, meanings, and perceptions particularly dealing with issues that can arise in daily life, it seems the most appropriate to incorporate to investigate the concept of whiteness with student affairs professionals in higher education. Given the fact that whiteness is so pervasive that it is both subtle and unconscious, even among those who have attempted to understand it, this study lends itself not only to the qualitative paradigm, but most particularly to a vein of qualitative research called action research.

Action research can be used to solve specific social problems, such as a need for a greater understanding of diversity, that are found in our environment (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). Action research formally originated in the 1960s with roots in solving social problems and
anthropological research methods (DePoy et al., 1999). Several basic assumptions are associated with action research (DePoy et al., 1999; Kember, 1998; Merriam & Simpson, 2000). Action research upholds the belief that those who experience a phenomenon are those most able to investigate it. Its purpose is to generate knowledge to inform practice especially where results are intended for immediate application. Action research is based on four main values: democracy, equity, liberation, and life enhancement (DePoy et al., 1999). The researcher serves as a facilitator for problem solving and actual design is formulated during the action research process. Action research tends to be qualitative, reflective, cyclic, and participative. Finally, most action research occurs in a natural setting and incorporates interpretative strategies.

The action research cycle is one of analyzing, gathering facts, identifying the problem, planning, and taking action on the problem, then repeating this process as new information is presented (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). Action research is not just a staff development strategy, but also a means to uncover the beliefs of practitioners in the settings in which they work. It is for this reason that action research is utilized to investigate the process of how student affairs professionals attempt to understand whiteness and white privilege particularly in relationship to their higher education work setting. For the purpose of this study, action research is also considered in relationship to critical or engaged pedagogy (as discussed in Chapter Two) and discourse that deals with power relations.

Critical Action Research

According to Noffke and Stevenson (1995), action research is a process that embraces basic democratic beliefs and promotes a “radically restructured role for practitioners as actors in a larger emancipatory project” (p. vii). Action research from this perspective is termed critical. The word ‘critical’ represents a process of questioning and problematizing all aspects of
educational practices and relations in an effort to create better ways of living in the world (DePoy et al., 1999; Martusewicz & Reynolds, 1994). Critical action research, therefore, is distinguished by its intentional and continuous engagement in ethical and political discourse that is represented in critical and engaged pedagogy and is essentially why it is discussed in relationship to this study, which examines whiteness as a social construction that represents power, structural advantage, race privilege, and unnamed cultural practices.

As discussed in the last chapter, critical theory originated at the Institute for Social Research, the home of the Frankfurt School that was created in Frankfurt, Germany in February of 1923 (DePoy et al., 1999; Giroux, 2001). The institute moved to Columbia University in New York City in 1934 as the Nazis gained power in Germany, but was re-established in 1953 in Frankfurt. Critical theory further developed in response to positivism in the United States and demonstrates philosophical roots, inspired by diverse schools of thought informed by Marx, Hegel, Kant, Foucault, Derrida, and Kristeva. However, more contemporary critical theorists are influenced by the work of Habermas (1989), who suggests that people are unnecessarily oppressed by implicit cultural ideologies. Critical theory views knowledge as power and the production of knowledge as socially and historically determined. In this study, the term ‘critical pedagogy’ is used to emphasize the focus on a much broader definition of critical theory than that represented by just the Frankfurt School.

Critical pedagogy as well as a confluence of critical and feminist pedagogy that is referred to in the last chapter as ‘engaged pedagogy’ (hooks, 1994) is a worldview that suggests both an epistemology and a purpose for conducting research. It is “a complex set of strategies that are united by the commonality of sociopolitical purpose” (DePoy et al., 1999, p. 561). Critical pedagogy and engaged pedagogy value pluralism or multiple ways of knowing about
phenomena and refer to both a school of thought and a process of critique. Critical pedagogy refers to the “nature of self-conscious critique and to the need to develop a social transformation and emancipation that does not cling dogmatically to its own doctrinal assumptions” (Giroux, 2001, p. 8). Researchers grounded in critical pedagogy seek to understand human experience in an effort to change the world. “Knowing is dynamic, changing, and influenced by the sociopolitical context of the times” (DePoy et al., p. 561). The aim of critical pedagogy research is to unveil unconscious belief systems so individuals can produce alternatives through self-reflection and social action (Herbert & Beardsley, 2001).

Researchers who approach their work through critical or engaged pedagogy seek to know about human experience in order to promote social change. Critical researchers who draw on critical pedagogy and engaged pedagogy assume “an oppositional stance in four distinct ways – epistemologically, cognitively, culturally, and politically” (Merriam & Simpson, 2000, p. 132). Critical/engaged pedagogy and action research are not mutually exclusive (DePoy et al., 1999). Their philosophical underpinnings are complementary and both value a grassroots approach to identify and solve social problems. To varying degrees, both attend to the power imbalance of positivism and the elitist generation of knowledge. Carr and Kemmis (1986) offer a critical definition of action research as “simply a form of self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understanding of these practices, and the situations in which the practices are carried out” (p. 162). Critical action research, therefore, is distinguished by its intentional and continuous engagement in ethical and political discourse.

In this study, critical pedagogy and engaged pedagogy are considered in conjunction with action research because the aim is not only to unveil study participants’ meaning of an often
unconscious and subtle issue like whiteness, but also to incorporate a process of research that will allow these student affairs professionals to get directly involved in an effort that could positively influence their practice, thus changing the world. Since this study investigates the process of how student affairs professionals attempt to understand whiteness and white privilege while dealing with diversity issues on campus, it is critical action research that represents an appropriate research design for utilization. It is a critical action research study intended to develop and implement a professional development program for student affairs professionals to understand whiteness as an important component of anti-racist education.

Design Overview

An overview of the study’s design is presented in this section beginning with a discussion of my role as researcher and facilitator, followed by a discussion about the study participants. The reminder of this section focuses on the design of the study and is discussed in conjunction with the four-step action research cycle supported by Carr and Kemmis (1986). The ‘plan-act-observe-reflect’ action research cycle is employed to address the research questions presented in this study. Both the research questions and the four-phase action research cycle frame this discussion and present a basis for data collection. However, it should be noted that the actual methods of data collection are discussed in the following major section on data collection methods.

My Positionality as Researcher

My understanding of my own whiteness certainly influenced my role in this study and was addressed as part of the initial planning stage. As the researcher, my role was to serve as a facilitator of discussion during the focus group and as the interviewer during the two individual interviews. I also served as the primary facilitator of the program sessions. As the facilitator, it
was impossible for me to not allow my own beliefs to present themselves at times. It was not my intention in any way to be a main contributor to discussions, but certainly it would have seemed uncomfortable to me and I would assume to the participants as well if I were not to disclose my own ideas and feelings at times. I also strongly believed that my involvement in this research process and in discussion with study participants influenced my current thinking about my own whiteness and white privilege. It would almost have had to since I have had little opportunity to truly explore the concept with others in general and specifically with those in my profession.

My interest in this study stemmed not only from a desire to improve my practice as a student affairs professional and the practice of other student affairs professionals, but from an exploration of the concepts of whiteness and white privilege, which began in coursework required to complete my adult education doctoral program. This was a significant aspect for me because I believe that the examination of whiteness and white privilege could suggest answers to questions related to student affairs professional practice. Since I have undertaken this vein of study, the way I view myself as a white woman and part of a larger world has changed and causes me to think and do things differently. It made me take action not only in regard to this study, but to new program development and staff hiring decisions in my workplace as well. This made me wonder if other white student affairs professionals who learned about whiteness and white privilege would also in some way take action or change the way they think. I regard myself as an educated woman who is generally aware of the world, yet these ideas about whiteness and white privilege were new concepts to me and perhaps they would be new concepts to other student affairs professionals as well. This leads to a consideration of who the participants were in this study.
Study Participants

Purposeful sampling strategies were utilized to identify study participants in order to collect data for this study. The main criteria for participant selection were employment in a professional staff position in a student affairs role on campus (examples include career counselors, residential life staff, admissions officers, financial aid personnel, etc.) and a genuine interest in learning more about whiteness and white privilege in an effort to improve the climate for both students and employees at our institution. In addition, a commitment to program attendance and completion of program assignments (session evaluations and reflective writings) and a willingness to sign and abide by the Agreement of Confidentiality and Respect (see Appendix A) were necessary criteria as well. My employing institution, which is one of Pennsylvania’s public universities, was selected as the research site because diversity is considered a priority since the Vice President for Student Affairs made it a goal for all directors (I am one of these directors) in the division.

Potential participants first made their interest known to me following an announcement about my study by the Vice President of Student Affairs at a directors staff meeting. Interest in study participation and learning more about whiteness and white privilege was further assessed through individual meetings with potential study participants, which included using the Script for Recruitment (see Appendix B) and answering any questions raised by participants. All those who expressed interest met the selection criteria and were included in the study. There were four males and four females in the study. Three were persons of color and five were white. Even though the purpose of this study was related more to examining whiteness and white privilege with white people, student affairs professionals of color were also part of the study group. Inclusion of student affairs professionals of color was important not only to include diverse
perspectives but also to guard against what McIntyre (1997) terms ‘white talk.’ Study participants represented the following areas of student affairs professional practice: admissions, athletics, career services, financial aid, student activities, and student union. The role of the participants will become clearer in light of the action research cycle of plan, act, observe, and reflect.

**Plan.** How do student affairs professionals understand whiteness? What is it that student affairs professionals want to learn about anti-racist education, and how and why is it important to them? An attempt to answer these questions provided focus for the planning phase of the action research cycle. Individual semi-structured interviews with study participants were used in an attempt to unveil further depth to the meaning student affairs professionals associated with the concept of whiteness. These same participants provided input not only about what they thought about studying whiteness, but also what they wished to study as part of an anti-racist education program specifically and diversity more generally. The use of interviews allowed for an atmosphere that was more intimate (one-on-one) for sharing personal feelings and ideas related to what might be viewed as a sensitive subject by some people. In short, the planning stage provided the necessary information from participants, through semi-structured interviews, to develop and format an anti-racist education program that was meaningful and beneficial for this study’s participants while simultaneously exposing them to the concept of whiteness and its associated white privilege.

**Act.** In the second stage of this research, a plan was developed and program constructed that lasted six weeks and included discussions and scenarios designed to elicit further understanding about whiteness as an important component of anti-racist education. What was actually included in the program is outlined in Appendix C. The student affairs study
participants had approval to meet during working hours and complete necessary tasks as part of their current job responsibilities. Generally the format of the program resembled small group discussions and activities with both a video series and assignments/reflective writings completed outside of the discussion group used to facilitate the process.

Roughly the six-week program entailed two-hour weekly sessions that included activities that stimulated discussion related to diversity issues specifically those that related to whiteness and its associated white privilege. At the first program session it was important for the group of student affairs professionals to get to know each other on a more intimate level. After an initial icebreaker type activity related to uncovering basic information, such as name, job title, role on campus, etc., more in-depth activities were included. An activity I’ll call ‘Common Ground’ was intended to uncover what group members have in common and was included along with the group resume to highlight the abilities and experience of the group. This way all group members had a better understanding of not only who the group members were, but also what group members brought to the group in terms of experience and background.

In subsequent program sessions activities were included that focused on diversity issues and the concepts of whiteness and white privilege. Specifically, exercises were used from Katz’s (2003) book, *White Awareness: Handbook for Anti-Racism Training*. In addition, the video series *Race: The Power of an Illusion* (California Newsreel (Producer), 2003) was incorporated along with materials from study participants as appropriate. Participant evaluations and reflective writing were used at the end of each program session to aid in planning future sessions and to generate additional data to consider with regard to what was being learned and the effectiveness of the learning strategies employed.
Observe. In the third stage of this study, participants were asked to consider their daily practice and interactions with students and other campus constituents in an effort to gather additional information that could shed light on our conversations about whiteness and its associated white privilege and to provide concrete examples for further discussion and exploration of the topic. Participants identified how they gathered their own information about whiteness and white privilege from their own practice and what they learned from their investigations.

Observations about what participants learned through their own participation in the anti-racist education program coupled with considerations of their own practice attempted to answer two questions. What are key moments in the lives of the participants, either during the program itself and/or in their life experience, when they had some sense of racism in society and/or a sense of their own whiteness? What do program participants feel are significant aspects of their learning and how are they implementing what they learned in their practice? The answers to these questions will assist in determining what future anti-racist programs include and how they are structured not only for student affairs professionals, but for others who are interested as well. A focus group was utilized to facilitate discussion central to the observation phase of the action research cycle.

Reflect. Finally, as the last stage of the research individual semi-structured interviews were used with the eight study participants to identify what was ultimately learned about whiteness and white privilege after the formal program ended and what this suggested for future educational programs related to diversity. Within a month of the program’s conclusion, what did program participants feel were significant moments in their learning and how were they implementing what they learned in their practice? Again, this was the research question
addressed in this stage of the action research cycle, which related to the reflections of study participants as well as the researcher. Information gathered in both the observe and reflect stages is essential for future iterations of the action research cycle and was used in this study to provide suggestions for improvement for future anti-racist programs for student affairs professionals in higher education.

Action research was appropriate for this study because it is a research method that is designed to solve problems in applied settings. In this study, the problem might be viewed simply as a need for a greater understanding of diversity. More specifically, this study lent itself to critical action research since whiteness is a social construct, which is considered so pervasive that it is both subtle and unconscious and requires a methodology that allows meanings to develop in addition to formulating plans for a program that included understanding whiteness as an important component of anti-racist education.

Data Collection

Data were collected in the iterative, spiral fashion inherent in action research. Typically, modes of data collection in qualitative research include interviews (both one-on-one interviews and focus group interviews), observations, and the use of documents (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). In this study all of these modes were employed. Individual semi-structured interviews and a focus group were the main data collection methods used in this study. In addition, program session recordings and field notes were made to support the data obtained through the main data collection methods and also to record the overall process of the research. Additionally, documents, including handouts, written materials created by participants during group activities, etc. served as additional sources of data. Each type of data collection incorporated in this study is discussed further below.
Individual Interviews

Interviews are an example of a qualitative research method that allows for the examination of issues such as whiteness through an open method, which seeks direct input from participants about their perceptions, opinions, and beliefs. Basically, an interview can be described as an encounter where the researcher gathers information from a participant through a series of questions and prompts, which can vary in degree of structure based on the nature of the study. The interviewer should strive for quality in the interview. Quality is discussed in relationship to the skills needed in an interview such as reflective summaries and clarifications and human traits such as respect and sensitivity (Schamberger, 1997). An advantage of using an interview is its effectiveness in gaining in-depth information (Merriam & Simpson, 2000).

Interviews in this study were face-to-face, in-depth, semi-structured interviews lasting anywhere from one to two hours and centering on the participant’s meaning and understanding of whiteness and its associated privilege. Interviews were tape recorded and semi-structured focusing on identifying key moments in the lives of the participants when they had some sense of racism in society and/or a sense of their own race as well as key issues that arose for participants as they began to examine whiteness and white privilege. As per their intended purpose, interviews were used to gain a greater depth of understanding about what whiteness and white privilege mean to student affairs professionals. Two interviews were conducted with each study participant. One interview took place before the first session of the program where the concepts of whiteness and white privilege were initially introduced and explored. The second interview occurred at least one month after the program’s conclusion and attempted to uncover what participants felt were significant moments in their learning and how they were implementing what they learned in their practice.
Focus Group

A focus group is comprised of a small group of participants that have as their objective the discovery of information based on their perceptions, values, traditions, and beliefs (Calderon, Baker, & Wolf, 2000). What characterizes a focus group from other data collection methods is that participant interaction is an integral aspect of the process (Babbie, 2001; Calderon et al., 2000; Morgan, 1998). The end product of a focus group is a transcription of the information flow among participants, which later can be analyzed. Focus groups can lead to understanding attitudes, behaviors, and contexts from many points of view (Patton, 2002). A focus group is ideal for research where little is known, not just because they allow for the generation of ideas, but because they provide a forum for the researcher to get a sense of how strongly particular beliefs are held, rationalized, and defended. Since this method permitted information to be gathered on the perceptions, beliefs, and values of a group’s participants it was particularly well suited to addressing the research questions in this study related to whiteness as an important component of anti-racist education for student affairs professionals.

The focus group in this study was appropriately small and included discussion prompting questions and statements to facilitate discussion among study participants. The focus group was tape-recorded and open-ended questions concerning the concept of whiteness and other related issues were used to facilitate discussion during the session. A focus group was utilized to facilitate discussion central to the observation phase of the action research cycle, where observations about what participants learned through their own participation in the anti-racist education program coupled with considerations of their own practice were shared. Examples of questions posed to study participants during the focus group included: How did you gather your own information about whiteness and white privilege from your practice as a student affairs
professional? What did you learn from your investigations? Consider your daily practice and interactions with students and other campus constituents, what additional information have you gathered that could shed light on our conversations about whiteness and its associated white privilege?

*Program Session Recordings and Field Notes*

In addition to the main data collection methods of in-depth, semi-structured interviews and a focus group, two other methods of data collection were employed in this study. First, each program session was tape-recorded during the act phase of the action research cycle. The program lasted six weeks and included discussions and scenarios designed to elicit further understanding about whiteness as an important component of anti-racist education. The general program design was explained in the last section where the Acting portion of the Research Design phase of the study was explained and in detail in Appendix C. Second, it is important to point out that field notes were kept in order to record my observations and those of study participants in addition to details related to participants, setting, and program process. Both program session recordings and field notes were used to support the data obtained through the main data collection methods of individual interviews and a focus group and also to record the overall process of the research.

Individual interviews were the initial method of data collection analyzed to form an understanding of program components and format in addition to participants’ understanding of whiteness and white privilege in order to develop an anti-racist education program for student affairs professionals in higher education. The focus group and second interviews provided additional data for consideration with regard to the program and participants. Program session recordings and field notes were also considered in the analysis, mainly to support the data
obtained through the primary data collection methods of interviews and focus group and to 
record the overall process of the research including both my own and participant observations 
about the process. Documents also served to help document the process.

Documents

In this study documents provided yet another source of data for consideration. 
Documents included all materials related to the program designed for the study participants. The 
course outline, descriptions of resources used such as the video series, activities, and handouts, 
were examples. Also written materials provided by participants, such as evaluations and 
reflective writings used at the end of each program session along with emailed response to 
questions, were included as part of the documents available for consideration in relationship to 
this study and provided additional data to examine during analysis.

Data Analysis

Once data were collected, the process of analysis began. The constant comparative 
method is one analytical approach to considering data in qualitative research. It was the method 
which influenced the analysis of the data collected through interviews, a focus group, program 
session recordings, field notes, and documents in this action research study. The constant 
comparative method developed by Glaser and Strauss in 1967 (as cited in Babbie, 2001; Denzin 
& Lincoln, 2000; Merriam & Simpson, 2000) is still widely used and referenced in the literature. 
This method consists of four stages that are generally applied to the data collected in this study. 
I use the phrase ‘generally applied’ since the purpose of this research was not necessarily to 
generate hypotheses or develop theory, which is considered the aim of the constant comparative 
method. Data are first compared to generate possible categories and then coded with as many 
possible categories that are appropriate. Second, categories are examined with relationship to the
data in order to better understand categories and their properties. Third, categories are reduced, hypotheses are generated, and data are again considered relative to the overall framework, which is developing through the data analysis. This process ends when saturation is achieved with the data. Finally, in the fourth stage themes begin to be generated from the coded data that can respond to the five research questions posed in this study.

This mode of data analysis was used to analyze the individual interviews and focus group. First, the initial individual interviews were analyzed to discover emergent ideas related to understanding the concepts of whiteness and white privilege and specifically about studying whiteness as part of an anti-racist education program by the student affairs professionals in higher education. Second, data uncovered from the program sessions were considered to shed light on what strategies used in the program itself seemed to facilitate ongoing learning and which strategies were less helpful in the process. Third, a focus group utilized to facilitate discussion central to the observation phase of the action research cycle, where observations about what participants learned through their own participation in the anti-racist education program coupled with considerations of their own practice were shared. This focus group was also analyzed to uncover emergent themes.

Lastly, after completion of the six-week program designed as a result of the planning stage of the action research cycle, second individual interviews were employed and data collected. These data were analyzed to discover emergent themes related to what an anti-racist education program includes for continuing education of student affairs professionals and what was learned about the concepts of whiteness and white privilege by the student affairs professionals who participated in the program. Due to the seemingly short time span of one month between the end of the program sessions and the second participant interviews, a brief
follow-up with participants was also conducted via email six months after the program sessions ended.

Also considered in the analysis were program session recordings from the program constructed based on the data collected during the planning phase of the action research cycle, documents, and field notes made to record my observations and those of study participants in addition to details related to participants, setting, and program process. This was done primarily to support the data obtained through the main data collection methods of interviews and focus group and also to consider the overall process of the research including both my own and participant observations about the process. Finally, data collected during all phases of the action research cycle were analyzed both within data collection method and across data collection methods.

Dependability

Several issues of qualitative research are examined in relation to this study to consider whether as a qualitative research study it can be termed trustworthy or good research. These issues are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. In addition triangulation is also discussed. According to Marshall and Rossman (1999) “although qualitative research has an accepted place in formal research arenas, dissertation committees, and reviewers for funding agencies need to see proposals that are well developed, sound, rigorous, and ethical” (p. 8). Morse (1994) further explains that, “without some common criteria to evaluate qualitative methods, only highly idiosyncratic or particularistic and vague research outcomes can be found in qualitative-related studies” (p. 105). Patton (2002) agrees suggesting, “It all depends on criteria. Judging quality requires criteria” (p. 542). The discussion that follows attempts to
illuminate several issues central to qualitative methodology that, are important to consider in regard to this study.

Patton (2002) views quality and credibility as connected “in that judgments of quality constitute the foundation for perceptions of credibility” (p. 542). More simply stated, credibility refers to the ‘truth’ or ‘believability’ of the findings (Morse, 1994). Credibility is also discussed in terms of the researcher. “Judgments about the significance of findings are thus inevitably connected to the researcher’s credibility, competence, thoroughness, and integrity” (Patton, 2002, p. 64). Credibility is evident when the researcher attempts to make clear anything that may affect the study in a positive or negative way. Other aspects of researcher credibility, as outlined by Patton, are researcher change, competence and skill, biases, interaction with participants, and sensitivity, all of which should be addressed by the researcher. In this study, every attempt was made to make clear both positive and negative effects. In addition, I did my best to be thorough and clear in presenting the study’s findings, but also in addressing issues related to me as the researcher, such as competence as well as my biases and assumptions. It was my aim to present the information necessary so anyone reading this research was able to clearly understand where it comes from and what limitations it brings with it.

In addition to credibility, transferability is another issue in qualitative research that can be examined in relationship to this study. Transferability is a concept that can be used to look at findings in qualitative research since findings in this research are not generalizable (Morse, 1994; Patton, 2002). Malterud (2001) proposes that no study can produce findings that are universally transferable. She suggests that “the study design should show a thorough consideration of what an adequate degree of transferability would be, in view of the assumptions of the research question, and present a relevant sampling strategy” (p.485). The researcher must supply data
that makes transferability judgments possible for those examining and wanting to apply the data. It is the responsibility of future researchers to determine if transferability is possible (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Morse, 1994). In order for future researchers to do this, however, I must provide the details to make it possible.

In order to make transferability judgments possible the researcher must provide detailed accounts of the research conducted and narrative that reveals thick, rich descriptions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thick, rich description “takes the reader into the setting being described” (Patton, 2002, p. 437). As Denzin and Lincoln (2000) acknowledge, “the thicker the description that can be produced, the subtler the interpretations that can be made” (p. 711). Denzin and Lincoln further suggest that, “thick description makes thick interpretation possible” (p. 391). Marshall and Rossman (1999) also mention the contribution of thick descriptions to valuable findings. Every attempt was made in this study to provide the thick description necessary to make transferability possible for future consumers of this research including a presentation of contextual background material, such as demographics and study setting, which were necessary “if the reader is to be able to ascertain for which situations the findings might provide valid information” (Malterud, 2001, p. 486). Given that this was an action research study, I also provided an in-depth outline of what the program actually entailed in Appendix C, so that others might try to duplicate it in relevant settings.

Dependability is another issue that is central to qualitative methodology that can be considered in regard to this study. This aspect is concerned with the fairness and dependability of the process used to examine data, interpretations, and recommendations. It addresses the question: Can the findings be trusted? It requires the use of sufficient methods and techniques to ensure that the study’s findings can be trusted. Dependability can be demonstrated in a variety
of ways and the researcher must determine which ways are best given the study. One way to attain dependability is to use an auditor external to the research being conducted. Dependability also requires credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, considering that it is dissertation research, my primary dissertation advisor, and dissertation committee to a lesser degree, served as external auditors in the process of reviewing both the study and its findings in an attempt to demonstrate that the study is in fact dependable research. I also ensured dependability by using multiple data sources as discussed with data triangulation, by using member checks, and by going back to participants for confirmation.

Confirmability can also be discussed in relationship to qualitative research and relates to whether findings can be confirmed. Confirmability “refers to the repeated direct participatory and documented evidence observed or obtained from primary informant sources. Confirmability means obtaining direct and often repeated affirmations of what the researcher has heard, seen, or experienced with respect to the phenomena under study” (Morse, 1994, p. 105). An audit trail is often employed to verify the rigor of fieldwork and confirmability of the data collected (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002). In addition to an audit trail, reflective journaling, feedback from participants, the reporting of negative cases and/or field notes can strengthen confirmability. In this study, an audit trail, field notes, and documents were used to address confirmability by providing additional data sources to examine to confirm findings.

Confirmability also considers whether the evidence or data is sufficient for others examining the data to see the same thing. Triangulation of the data plays an important role in confirmability. The issues of confirmability, as well as credibility, transferability, and dependability, can be further explored by examining triangulation. Triangulation refers to the use of multiple sources of data to check the same information and strengthens a study. “In
triangulation, a researcher deploys ‘different methods’ – such as interviews, census data, and documents – to ‘validate’ findings” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 934). Triangulation considers negative cases, alternative experiences, and differing explanations. It provides confidence that the findings can be regarded as ‘the truth’ about the phenomena under investigation. The use of triangulation “reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000 p. 5). In addition, triangulation increases validity since the strengths of one approach can compensate for the weaknesses of another (Patton, 2002).

There are two specific types of triangulation to be considered in relationship to this study. First, methodological triangulation refers to data collected by one method being compared to data collected by another method. It was used in this study by way of comparing data collected from interviews, a focus group, program session recordings, and field notes. Second, data triangulation was employed, which requires the use of a variety of data sources in a study, such as the data obtained in this study from several white student affairs professionals and several student affairs professionals of color.

In summary, all of the issues or criteria discussed in relationship to this study, credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and triangulation, are congruent with the philosophic purposes and goals of the qualitative paradigm and support the notion of good research. If these criteria are met, confidence is generated in the findings, thus suggesting that the findings presented can be considered trustworthy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Limitations and Assumptions

While this research addressed a need for a greater understanding of diversity by student affairs professionals in higher education, there were some limitations to the study. First, action research as a methodology has been identified as having its own limitations. It lacks both
external and internal controls according to Merriam and Simpson (2000), which means the
generalizability of results are limited. This study was conducted within one division of one
institution of higher education. While I hope and expect that the findings will have value and
can be applied in similar contexts for other institutions, divisions of student affairs, and
ultimately student affairs professionals, it was beyond the intent of this study to determine that
with any degree of certainty.

Next, due to the scope of this study only one iteration of the action research cycle was
completed. Additional iterations of the ‘plan-act-observe-reflect’ action research cycle (Carr and
Kemmis, 1986) would add breadth and depth to this study’s findings. It would also allow me to
hone my competence as both the researcher and facilitator, which would add additional
credibility to the findings. Finally, I was the sole researcher and primary facilitator of the
program sessions conducted with the student affairs professionals. The data that was collected
could be influenced by the relationship I have with the study’s participants since we all work in
the same division at the same institution of higher education. Triangulation of data and methods
were my attempts to counterbalance this limitation.

Along with some initial limitations to consider in light of this study, there were also
important assumptions that must be acknowledged as well. A primary assumption I made with
regard to this research was that I believed other white student affairs professionals would take
positive action in their practice once they examined their whiteness and white privilege and
participated in the anti-racist education program designed as part of this study. Thus, study
participants would change the world, or at least their worlds, for the better. An additional
assumption that I hoped was not made in relationship to this research was that in no way was it
my contention that separate anti-racist education programs should be developed or encouraged
for white student affairs professionals and student affairs professionals of color, even though this study focused more heavily on white student affairs professionals. I assume that all student affairs professionals could benefit from new approaches to addressing diversity in higher education, such as the inclusion of whiteness as an important component of anti-racist education.

Summary

The action research methodology selected for this study served as a valid framework for its purpose: to develop a program aimed at increasing an understanding of whiteness among student affairs professionals, and to examine the process of how they attempt to understand whiteness and white privilege while participating in the program and while dealing with diversity issues on campus. This was a qualitative action research study intended: (1) to develop and implement a professional development program for student affairs professionals to understand whiteness as an important component of anti-racist education; and (2) to examine their process of coming to understand whiteness during the program itself and their own perceptions of the process shortly after the program was over. Individual semi-structured interviews, a focus group, program session recordings, and field notes contributed to the triangulation of data, which both increased confirmability and supported the study’s findings. Limitations and assumptions were included related to this research in order to provide the perspective necessary to consider the study’s findings in detail.
CHAPTER FOUR: ACTION RESEARCH FINDINGS I

A basic assumption of this study was that most white people, including white student affairs professionals, have little understanding of what it means to be white. With that as an assumption, the purpose of this study was to develop a program aimed at increasing an understanding of whiteness among student affairs professionals, particularly but not exclusively those who are white, and to examine the process of how they attempted to understand whiteness and white privilege while participating in the program and while dealing with diversity issues on campus. Additionally, since it is also assumed that people learn and understand more about their racial identity in the face of those of a different racial identity, there were white participants and people of color in the study. This was most specifically an attempt to avoid what McIntyre (1997) terms ‘white talk.’ “When we are creating spaces for groups of white people to attend to race relations, and to our own white racial identities, we need to be aware of how easily we can fabricate white talk – a kind of talk that doesn’t just obliterate the lives of people of color. It also anesthetizes the white psyche, and serves to minimize white culpability for the existence of individual, institutional, and societal racism” (p. 78).

Action research was most appropriate for this study because it is a research method that is designed to solve problems in applied settings. In addition this study lends itself most particularly to action research since whiteness is considered so pervasive that it is both subtle and unconscious and requires a methodology that allows meanings to develop in addition to formulating plans for a program that includes understanding whiteness as an important component of anti-racist education for student affairs professionals in higher education.

Action research is a cyclic process that involves a four-step cyclic process of plan, act, observe, and reflect that is repeated throughout the research process (Carr & Kemmis, 1986).
Action research upholds the belief that those who experience a phenomenon are those most able to investigate it. Its purpose is to generate knowledge to inform practice especially where results are intended for immediate application. In action research the researcher serves as a facilitator for problem solving and actual design is formulated during the action research process. In this study, purposeful sampling strategies were utilized to identify student affairs professionals for study participants. The first section of this chapter provides greater detail about the study participants.

In addition to participant descriptions, this chapter attempts to consider the findings by way of which they occurred in order to show the unfolding nature of learning for the participants. It also considers the findings in light of the four-step action research model utilized in this study. The findings of this action research study are presented in conjunction with the four-step action research cycle (plan, act, observe, and reflect) supported by Carr and Kemmis (1986) in order to illustrate and support the action research process. Data collected during each step are considered along with the findings it suggests for the study. To do this each session of the program model is discussed individually. However, before this can occur a better understanding of the study participants is necessary.

Study Participants

Before the findings are discussed it is important to briefly introduce the study participants. There were eight study participants. Four are women and four are men ranging in age from the late twenties to late fifties. Three are considered persons of color and five are white. Members of the group have anywhere from approximately five to thirty years experience working as student affairs professionals. They are from a variety of race, ethnic, religious, and class/environmental backgrounds.
The descriptions that follow attempt to provide basic information so readers have a sense of the participants without revealing too much information that would make it easy to uncover their identity. All study participants are employed at the same Pennsylvania public university. These study participants represent the following areas of student affairs professional practice: admissions, athletics, career services, financial aid, student activities, and student union. Each participant is described hereafter in terms of his or her self-reported background and perceptions of race and cultural background. Given that many participants talked about social class and religion as significant parts of their identity, in many cases these descriptions are also included.

Table 1 on the following page provides a summary of the study participants relative to their race, ethnicity, religious background, class and environment in which they were raised, approximate age, and approximate years of experience working in the student affairs profession.

*Adam*

Adam is a white male in his mid-thirties who describes his background as Catholic and of mixed European ancestry. He comes from a large middle suburban class family from eastern Pennsylvania. Adam reports that although his general neighborhood was somewhat integrated, the family’s focus on Catholicism and activities that centered on the local Catholic school, parish, and Catholic youth organization was racially homogenous. His earliest recognition of race was in grade school. Adam is unaware of how his race has benefited him personally although he believes that there are societal and institutional benefits of being white. Adam has approximately ten years experience working as a student affairs professional.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Religious Background</th>
<th>Class/Environment</th>
<th>Age (approx.)</th>
<th>Years Exp. (approx.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>white, mixed European ancestry</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>middle class/suburban mainly white</td>
<td>mid-30’s</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>mixed, Slovak &amp; Mexican</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>working class/working class town mainly white</td>
<td>late 50’s</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judi</td>
<td>white, German, Norwegian &amp; unknown</td>
<td>Southern Baptist</td>
<td>lower middle class/small segregated southern town</td>
<td>early 40’s</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>white, Scandinavian</td>
<td>Methodist/Presbyterian when married</td>
<td>middle class/large suburban mainly white</td>
<td>late-40’s</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca</td>
<td>black, African-American</td>
<td>Methodist</td>
<td>middle class/small rural town mainly white</td>
<td>mid-40’s</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>white, Italian &amp; Irish</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>middle class/suburban mainly white</td>
<td>late 20’s</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steph</td>
<td>mixed, black &amp; white (German first language)</td>
<td>Protestant/Jewish</td>
<td>lower middle class/urban racially diverse</td>
<td>mid-50’s</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>white, Scottish &amp; German</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>working class/urban racially diverse</td>
<td>early 40’s</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Joe**

Joe is a Hispanic male in his late fifties of both Slovak and Mexican ancestry. He is from a working class family from a northeastern Pennsylvania town. The town he grew up in was predominately German and white. He lived with his family and relatives on the “Mexican street” in town. Joe doesn’t recall encountering racism until first or second grade when he was called a “Spic.” Joe also reports that in his life he feels his ability to blend with a non-Mexican surname and be part of the majority has allowed him to avoid many of the disadvantages associated with
being of a minority ethnic group. Joe has approximately thirty years experience working as a student affairs professional.

Judi

Judi is a white female in her early forties from Louisiana who describes her background as Southern Baptist and lower middle class. Judi says “I consider myself to be Southern and I consider that as being more of a cultural identity to me. I’ve got a grandmother that’s Norwegian, a grandfather that’s German, and my mother’s adopted and so half of my ethnicity is unknown.” She grew up in a small southern town that was basically segregated. She also reports that schools in her community were segregated until she was in third grade. Judi cannot identify any specific advantages to her race, but thinks there may be many; however, she is unaware of the specifics. Judi has approximately five years experience working as a student affairs professional.

Mark

Mark is a white male in his late forties of Scandinavian heritage. He reports that his family is Methodist, but he changed to Presbyterian when he married. Mark grew up in a large suburban area in northwestern Pennsylvania. The area was predominantly white. He remembers the names of the only two black children in his elementary school. Mark cannot identify any advantages of being white even though he is sure he has had some advantages. However, he believes he was passed over for a job because he is white (a person of color was hired) even though he was told he was the top candidate. Mark has approximately twenty years experience working as a student affairs professional.
Rebecca

Rebecca is a black female in her mid-forties from a small rural town in northern Pennsylvania. She recognizes that as an African American woman she can be discriminated against because of her race and her gender. There were few black families where she grew up. Most of Rebecca’s friends growing up including her best friend were white. Rebecca thinks that “a lot of people don’t believe or they’re not even aware that they may have certain privileges because of the color of their skin.” She further states that, “minorities are quite aware of the privileges that they don’t have because of their skin color.” Rebecca has approximately twenty years experience working as a student affairs professional.

Sarah

Sarah is a white female in her late twenties from a western city in Pennsylvania. She reports her background as predominantly Italian and Irish, but also some German and Cherokee Indian. She was raised as a Catholic and always encouraged to take an active part in her religion. Sarah grew up in the suburbs and was completely surrounded by white people until she went to college. Sarah believes she has benefited by being white, but is not sure exactly how. She also believes she was disadvantaged by growing up in an all white area because she had no culturally diverse experiences. Sarah has approximately five years experience working as a student affairs professional.

Steph

Steph is a female in her mid-fifties of mixed race, half black and half white, who was born and raised in Germany until the age of nine. She has both a Protestant and Jewish religious background. Steph was raised in a community that she describes as culturally diverse and of several races. Her earliest images of oppression relate to her inability to speak English as a child.
and being treated differently by schoolmates and teachers. With regard to her race, Steph reports that she was not accepted as black by the black community or recognized as white by the white community because of her mixed racial background and identity. Since Steph experienced oppression from both her race and her language of origin, she believes this caused her to develop an inner strength to persist. Steph has approximately twenty-five years experience working as a student affairs professional.

*Tom*

Tom is a white male in his early forties from a lower middle class, Catholic background. He is from a large city in eastern Pennsylvania. Tom reports that his earliest image of race was in seventh grade when he was transferred to public school. Although he doesn’t identify any specifics, he believes he is advantaged as a white male, but also he believes he experienced disadvantages because he is from a working class family that he reports was considered poor. Tom has approximately fifteen years experience working as a student affairs professional.

**Planning: Initial Participant Assessment**

Now that the participants have been introduced, the findings for the first three phases of the study will be discussed, and are outlined on the data display on the following page. The planning stage provided the necessary information to develop and format an anti-racist education program that was meaningful and beneficial for this study’s participants. How do student affairs professionals understand whiteness? What is it that student affairs professionals want to learn about anti-racist education, and how and why is it important to them? An attempt to answer these questions provided focus for the planning phase of the action research cycle. Individual in-depth, semi-structured interviews with study participants were used in an attempt to unveil
DATA DISPLAY: The Participants and First Three Phases of the Study

A. Study Participants
   1. Adam
   2. Joe
   3. Judi
   4. Mark
   5. Rebecca
   6. Sarah
   7. Steph
   8. Tom

B. Planning: Initial Participant Assessment
   1. Significant Moments in Understanding Race Differences
      a. Racism experiences in school/community locations
      b. People of color primarily as recipients of racism/colorism
      c. Understanding one’s own race in the face of difference
   2. Limited Understanding of Whiteness and White Privilege
   3. Multiple Motivation to Learn
      a. Improving interactions with others
      b. Serving as role models
      c. Increasing knowledge for self
   4. Summary of Initial Researcher Assessment and Personal Reflections

C. Acting: Participant Engagement
   1. Session One: Getting Acquainted
   2. Session Two: Race and Lack of Genetic Connection
   3. Session Three: The History of Race and Racism
   4. Session Four: Institutional Racism
   5. Session Five: A Closer Look at Whiteness
   6. Session Six: Relationship to Practice

D. Focus Group Observations: Participant Response
   1. Increased Consciousness of Race and Whiteness in Professional Practice
   2. Increasing the Interest and Audience for Others
further depth to the meaning student affairs professionals associate with the concept of whiteness and its associated white privilege along with what participants hoped to learn and how they hoped to benefit by participating in the study. Individual interviews took place between December 10, 2004 and January 11, 2005.

Participant assessment for the plan step in the action research process relied on the individual interviews conducted with each study participant at the beginning of the study. All participants completed an initial individual interview with me prior to the start of the program sessions. An interview guide (see Appendix D) with basic questions was used to facilitate the interview process. These questions were used to collect the data. The data from these initial interviews were then analyzed according to the constant comparative method (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Merriam & Simpson, 2000), which resulted in three categories that provided insight to where participants were in relation to understanding race and whiteness, and what they hoped to learn: significant moments in understanding race differences, limited understanding of whiteness and white privilege, and multiple motivations to learn.

**Significant Moments in Understanding Race Differences**

All the participants were able to share a significant moment when they had an understanding of race differences. Their responses seemed to center around three distinct areas or categories. These are: racism experiences in school/community locations, people of color primarily as recipients of racism/colorism, and understanding one’s own race in the face of difference. These categories are discussed here in the order they were listed.

*Racism experiences in school/community locations.* All the study participants easily recalled a memory of a key moment in their lives when they had some sense of racism in society, and for most of them, these moments related to their experiences in school. Judi and Joe, who
both clearly remembered a key moment early in their schooling, provided the earliest memories. For Joe it was a classmate in second grade who called him a “dirty Spic” and for Judi it was the integration of her school in the third grade. She explained that:

First grade and second grade for me which would have been like 1969-70 schools were not yet integrated, at least not in our area. There was a black teacher in the elementary school where I attended and her son was allowed to go to school with us. He was the one black child in a school of hundreds of white kids. And then, of course, in third grade the schools became integrated so, I guess the black kids had all gone to this one school, which would have been K-12. That school became the middle school so the white elementary school became, instead of first through fifth, it now was first through third and then everyone went out to what we termed “the colored school” for fourth and fifth grade, maybe sixth, and then everybody came back into town to the white, what had been junior high.

While Judi was problematizing the term “colored school” and used the term to indicate what the school was called back then, it is indicative that the community she grew up in was probably propagating racism to some degree, which is how children often learn about racism.

Tom provided an example of observing racism when he recalled a memory from middle school or the seventh grade:

I went to Catholic elementary school for six years and it was basically a totally white school. When I was in seventh grade I transferred to a public school and that was during big time segregation in Philadelphia. So there was a lot of racism, especially in my neighborhood being in a totally white neighborhood and having black kids bused into our school basically, because that’s how it was. We had low-income housing in our
neighborhood so it was, you know, definitely a white/black ... or basically a white and everybody else issue.

Sarah indicated that a key moment for her was in high school because they had only one African American male in her class and that it was “just this huge issue and everything was always about it.”

*People of color primarily as recipients of racism/colorism.* Not only did most of the participants’ awareness of race differences and racism come from their school experiences, the participants conceptualized that people of color were recipients of racism and/or colorism that is reflective of the racism of the larger culture and to some degree internalized by all members of society. Steph shared a memory from grade school that illustrated a key moment in her life when she had some sense of racism and colorism in society. Steph reported:

> Oh my gosh it was as a little girl, as a child. I don’t recall how old I was, maybe about 10 or 11 when a group of probably black kids maybe Hispanic, I don’t even remember and they might even have been white, although I don’t think so. I was picked on just because I was fair skinned and they didn’t like that. And in the black culture there is racism within, depending upon the color of your skin. So when they saw that my mother was white and my father was black, which was not unknown to the kids. I mean the family comes and goes. I believe that that was the basis of starting a fight because in their minds they probably believed I thought I was better than anyone.

What Steph seemed to be pointing out is that often times lighter skin among the African American community is viewed as more desirable resulting in a perception of “better than anyone” as expressed by Steph. This was a good illustration of just how deeply rooted and
invisible white privilege can be which can also lead to internalized racism, often times even to those on the receiving end of its disservice.

The other participants also described key moments in their lives relative to having a sense of racism in society albeit from different racial perspectives. Examples provided by the participants of color demonstrated how they, as people of color, have been receivers of racism. Joe’s experience of being called a “dirty Spic” in school noted above is another example. The remaining participant of color, Rebecca, also cited an example from an experience in high school. She said:

I grew up in a small rural area where there were few African American families. Most of my friends, in fact, my best friend in high school, was of the majority group, Caucasian. And we always played together and did everything together but I do remember being at an overnight party. It was a party and it was a co-ed party but just the girls could stay overnight. But I felt a little uncomfortable because, as teenagers, we were talking about kissing games, just innocent kissing games. And it crossed my mind that no one would probably want to kiss me or pick me because I was the only black person at the party. And I remember I expressed that to my friend, who basically, you know, expressed that she only sees me as everyone else does, as Rebecca, and they really didn’t see me as a black person. But, in my mind, you know, that’s how I felt.

The white participants included in the study also described key moments in their lives when they began to see racism in society. However, the difference in their examples is one of perspective. Rather than being the receivers of racism, these participants suggested that they were the observers of racism. These observations also come from the participants’ formal educational experiences.
Adam shared an experience of observing prejudice that he referred to as racism that he had in college while attending a campus guest speaker on the Nation of Islam. He reported that:

His name was Abdul Mohammed. I think, actually, he was shot two years ago. But basically he was there and he was the most blatant racist person that, you know, I had ever encountered. He was basically inflaming the crowd, attacking white people, using all the stereotypical language and basically inciting hate against white people and Jewish people in general. And it really was my first kind of tense experience where I thought the situation was going to erupt into some type of riot.

Although, Adam did not specifically say the speaker was black you can infer it from his comments. Therefore, technically that person would be considered prejudiced not racist. He may not be aware of this distinction or perhaps he was just confusing the terms. Adam went on further to say, “It was very scary and it was very hard to believe that people out there in a public forum would be inciting that kind of hatred. It opened my eyes a little bit about the situation of racism in general.”

Mark was the only participant who shared a key moment he recalled that was not related to his formal educational experiences. In addition, Mark also provided the only example that could be considered to illustrate white people as perpetrators of racism. He recalled a memory from one of his first professional jobs when he used the term ‘boys’ to discuss a situation involving African American students with the director of the multicultural center. Mark said he didn’t mean anything by it but was instantly identified as having racist tendencies and this really upset him. He has since come to understand why using this term could be offensive and refers to students as students or by gender using the terms male and female. Mark’s example, although his words were not intentional, demonstrated how white people could perpetrate racism.
All participants had a memory to share that was easily recalled. The vast majority of the experiences recalled came from formal educational experiences. This is not particularly surprising since often times this is when children begin to be exposed to others beyond their family and neighborhood. What is probably more surprising to me is that not all examples came from earlier in participants’ lives. Only three out of eight were what I consider early examples.

*Understanding one’s own race in the face of difference.* Study participants also discussed their understanding of their own race. The participants were asked to describe a key moment in their lives when they had some sense of their own whiteness (or blackness, etc.). Judi felt that a key moment for her was her honeymoon when she traveled to Jamaica. She was the one who was different and a Jamaican girl hissed at her as they were passing by in their car. Judi felt the message was clear that she was not liked because she was white. She says, “I thought, who are you to judge me and I’m certain that’s the way that other people feel.” Judi added, “There are a lot of people that go through that kind of stuff all the time. I’ve got my one stupid example of that, you know.” Adam and Mark found the question difficult to answer.

Joe thought he had a very different perspective to share because he feels it is hard to distinguish that he is Latino. He stated:

> When I’m with my Jewish friends, I look very Jewish; when I’m with my Italian buddies in Philadelphia, I can fit it so I have a way of blending in. It’s very interesting as I see when people leave their guard down and they think that you are one of them, and you catch little things. I’ve even heard this on campus with faculty in some instances where it’s not anything that would be posted on a bulletin board or put up in lights, hey look what this person said, you know, but just little subtle inferences toward folks of color or folks of a different ethnicity.
In general, it seemed easier for the study participants to identify a key moment in their lives that related to racism rather than a key moment that was directly related to their own race, especially for the white study participants.

Based on the information collected from the study participants, it seemed clear that they all had a sense of racism in society even though their experiences varied and for some were limited to only a few ‘stand out’ experiences from childhood. In order to further consider participants’ understanding of race differences and racism, the concepts of whiteness and white privilege were explored by considering participants’ knowledge of these concepts.

*Limited Understanding of Whiteness and White Privilege*

Some participants knew more than others about the concepts of whiteness and white privilege, but none of the participants could provide an in-depth understanding. Steph who is biracial indicated the greatest initial understanding. For example, she noted that for her it means, “if you’re white you’re right and if you’re black you are wrong.” Tom stated that, “my concept of whiteness is, you’re afforded much more in our society because of the color of your skin but also at times, things are taken away from you.” Mark also indicated that he understands that being a white person in our society has afforded him opportunities, but could say little more. Rebecca said directly, “I have to admit that I really don’t know very much. I mean, I’m not sure actually.”

Even though some study participants referenced white privilege in discussing whiteness, they were also asked specifically what they knew about this concept. In general, the participants, particularly the white participants, had increased difficulty discussing white privilege. Joe, Mark, and Sarah all clearly indicated that they did not know much if anything about the concept of white privilege. Adam, Judi, and Rebecca were uncertain, but felt they could make some
assumptions about what was meant by the concept of white privilege. For example, Adam described white privilege by saying:

I can try to infer that it refers to the fact that there are probably some advantages to being white. You know, mostly covert advantages. That you have less obstacles or less issues to face because you are in the majority culture and since you are in the majority culture, you don’t recognize some of the problems that minority cultures have to deal with.

Rebecca, who is African American, put it more simply. She responded, “Well, what I assume it to mean is that, you know, if a person is white that they have privileges and opportunities that a non-white person wouldn’t have.”

Steph believed white privilege was prevalent throughout our society. She described an experience that happened to her that underlies what the concept of white privilege meant to her, based on her experience as a bi-racial woman. She recalled:

I think the most prominent experience was when I came here and dealt with another department on campus and I had to have both the academic credentials, the experience, and a number of other credentials in order to get the position and I had a colleague who was white, high school grad, who was just handed the promotion into a management position. And I said, I have to work for it and others are just handed? You know, it’s a little hard to take.

Other than Steph, the study participants did not seem to have a lot to say regarding what they knew about the concept of white privilege.

It was not surprising based on the limited understanding that participants had about whiteness and white privilege that they also did not have much to say regarding ideas about what the six two-hour weekly program sessions should include. Most of the study participants were
expecting to gain more information about whiteness and white privilege, which seemed obvious being that the participants were aware of the nature of the study. However, they could say little more about specifics. Some participants also indicated that they hoped to increase their self-understanding. For example, Tom stated that, “The most powerful thing is the more you learn about yourself the more you understand.” Steph had similar feelings. She said:

I think one of the most important components is the ability to look at one’s self to begin to learn how to not be defensive about looking at yourself because if you don’t begin to deal with yourself first, you can’t effectively deal with others around you or be an example as a mentor so that we can continue to grow and develop as a society and as a people that will have a healthy respect for one another regardless of the color of the skin.

The basic idea that white people and people of color are located differently in the racial structure (Sleeter, 1994) seemed clear to the study participants. However, some were much more able to articulate their understanding than others. What seemed to be missing was a more in-depth understanding of the concepts of whiteness and white privilege and these concepts’ relationship to racism.

In their comments, most of the participants, except for Steph, tended not to refer to their own race or themselves overall, which could suggest a sort of distancing from the topic. It could also suggest a lack of understanding about or feeling uncomfortable with the topic. One cannot know or discuss what one is unaware of in the first place. My asking participants about these concepts that most knew very little about could have made some feel uncomfortable adding to the distancing in some of their responses. Even though the study participants did not have a great understanding of whiteness and white privilege, they were motivated to learn more about the concepts.
Multiple Motivations to Learn

The participants were asked specifically how knowing about whiteness and white privilege could be important to them. Additionally, they were asked how they believed they would benefit by taking part in the study. The participants’ responses illustrated multiple motivations to learn which focused on three areas: improving interactions with others, serving as role models, and increasing knowledge for self. These three areas are discussed next, in order.

Improving interactions with others. Adam, Joe, Judi, Mark, Rebecca, Sarah, and Tom all shared thoughts related to a better understanding of others in order to work more effectively with them. For example, Adam said, “I think it will allow you to have a better perspective of things in a culture or society that allows you to make more equitable decisions and be more understanding.” Tom thought that “the more I understand it and know about it, its impact on society, allows me to change how I view the non-privileged and then how I treat them effectively.” Rebecca felt that “Well, I think that if I have an understanding of it, it may help me break down the barriers that a person of color, a majority person, or a minority person may have to deal with, with someone who feels because of their whiteness they should have certain privileges or do have privileges.”

Steph was the only participant that discussed something other than improving her ability to interact with others although she still talked about self-improvement. She said, “Like it or not, it is a reality and it may not always be fair but I think part of what you have to do is to learn from adversity so that you can be stronger and you can continue to go on. You can continue to be confident and you can continue to not carry a chip on your shoulder and so on.” Although the participants were able to identify how knowing about whiteness and white privilege could be
important to them personally, there was a general lack of ownership for one’s own race in their responses.

*Serving as role models.* The study participants also believed knowing about whiteness and white privilege could be important to others with whom they work, and their responses were related to the same ideas as when they were asked how they believed knowing about whiteness and white privilege could be important to themselves personally. However, when they were asked to consider the importance of knowing about these concepts for student affairs professionals in higher education the study participants had much more to say that indicated it related to their work as role models. For example, Rebecca said:

> We’re in the role to educate and to shape the future of students and I think that the more informed, the more open minded, and the more information that we have that we can impart on our students, you know, the better educators we will be. And, you know, that really, we have to take a look at ourselves and understand, you know, where we’re coming from. You know, there may be things that we say or do that our students are looking at and they look to us as role models. So I think it’s important for anyone on a campus, faculty, student affairs person to deal with the subject and this issue regardless of where they work. But most importantly, on campuses where, you know, they have diverse groups of students.

Steph also provided an example of student affairs professionals serving as role models. Steph said:

> The nature and scope of the work we do, under the umbrella of Student Affairs, it is important that we have the sense of being able to deal with all students, faculty, and staff from a solid perspective because I think we need to set the pace, the example for those
that are coming to do the jobs that they’re going to be doing in the future and if we don’t begin to take steps to look at how we, ourselves, train students and be role models for those future leaders, then I think we’re doing a disservice to the Division, to the state of higher of education, and to society.

Additionally, Tom stated that:

It’s an area where white people have not .... it’s never been pointed in this direction for white people. White people pretty much go on through society in this country with this is the way it is. Nobody has ever looked at them and said, “You know what, this is the way it is but this is why it’s this way. Because you permeate this year in and year out.” So I think as people in the student affairs arena to understand whiteness, white privilege then they can gear their educational programs .... what else do I want to say .... I guess student programming, those kinds of things towards helping people understand this phenomenon.

All participants agreed that the concepts of whiteness and white privilege are important components of anti-racist education for student affairs professionals in higher education. They seemed to further suggest that student affairs professionals serve as role models in this capacity.

*Increasing knowledge for self.* Study participants were also asked how they hoped to benefit by taking part in the study. Three of the participants indicated that they hoped to benefit by increasing their self-knowledge about the topics of whiteness and white privilege. For example, Rebecca stated that:

I think it will be helpful to me to learn about a subject that actually I haven’t studied, white privilege that I haven’t really thought that much about. Certainly, I’ve thought about situations that I’ve been in where I’ve felt that if I was of a different color that
maybe I would have had different opportunities. But it’s going be an interesting, you
know, educational learning experience for me.

Five of the study participants indicated another central idea about why they hoped to benefit by
taking part in this study.

These five participants all hoped to learn more about themselves by being a part of the
study. For example, Adam indicated that:

I think just to grow in general about my understanding of people that are different from
myself and learn a little bit about myself as well so I can basically know the areas where I
need improvement or need correction or adjustment because I have my own biases and
stereotypes of people too and they need to be challenged every once in a while. This type
of experience, I think would help point out some of those things. I know there’s going to
be difficult conversations in studies such as this. Anything related to race is kind of an
explosive sensitive issue but I would say it would improve my own awareness of
understanding people.

Joe put it simply by saying, “You end up being a better person for it. Judi said, “I just hope to be
a better employer, a better colleague, and a better person. I think we can all work in that
direction.”

Summary of Initial Researcher Assessment and Personal Reflections

In general, all the study participants seemed eager to participate in the study although
most of them struggled to address what they wanted to learn with regard to anti-racist education.
The participants indicated personal and professional reasons for being interested in the study and
some participants indicated that their reasons were both personal and professional. All of the
participants easily recalled a key moment in their lives when they had some sense of racism in
society. They were able to describe their memories in great detail, recalling names and specific circumstances with no difficulty whatsoever. However, when asked to describe a key moment when they had some sense of their own race, the participants had much more difficulty responding, particularly the white study participants. It was also striking to me that the participants of color used personal examples, but the white participants mainly spoke about others and really did not acknowledge their own race. Judi was the only white participant who spoke about her race when she talked about her trip to Jamaica.

Overall there seemed to be a general distancing from the topic by most of the study participants. This to me underscores the lack of understanding about the concepts of whiteness and white privilege among the study participants in general. It will be interesting to see if this changes for the participants after taking part in the program sessions. In reflecting about my own behavior or likely responses to questions posed to the study participants, I almost always clarify my perspective as that of one white woman or acknowledge my perspective as a white female one. I did not do this at all prior to learning about the concepts of whiteness and white privilege.

On the whole, the participants knew very little about the concepts of whiteness and white privilege, but hoped to learn more about these ideas by being part of the study. All of the participants except for Steph felt that learning about whiteness and white privilege would help them improve their ability to interact with others. Although, Steph was the only participant that discussed something other than improving her ability to interact with others, she still talked about self-improvement. Finally, participants indicated that they hoped to benefit by taking part in the study in one of two ways: first by learning more about whiteness and white privilege, and second by learning more about themselves as individuals in relation to their own skin color.
These initial interviews provided the necessary background to continue to plan the study and were the first step in the action research model. The interviews provided the necessary information to develop and format an anti-racist education program that was meaningful and beneficial for this study’s participants. There were two guiding research questions posed during this step. How do student affairs professionals understand whiteness? What is it that student affairs professionals want to learn about anti-racist education, and how and why is it important to them? These questions were clearly answered by the study participants during their individual interviews and discussed here in light of three categories (significant moments in seeing racism, limited understanding of whiteness and white privilege, and multiple motivations to learn), which denotes the planning step in this study.

In summary, as the researcher the study participants were in an ideal position to begin the program or the formal aspect of the act step of the action research model. The participants all had memories of racism, all wanted to learn more about whiteness and white privilege, and all believed they would benefit by taking part in the study. Lastly, all the participants were open to following my lead regarding the format and information to be included in the program sessions and were aware that they could speak to me or use their session evaluations to communicate any desired changes. Participants were also aware that the study was about whiteness and white privilege and they expected to learn more about these concepts during the program sessions.

The acting step of the action research model, which included the program sessions, is discussed next. It is important to note that although the four-step action research model is used to discuss this study in a linear fashion, each of the respective steps (plan, act, observe, reflect) occurred in a continuous process throughout each of the distinctly noted sections marked by
planning, acting, observing, and reflecting, but also within each of these steps as well. This is most easily seen in the discussion of the program sessions included in the next section.

Acting: Participant Engagement

During the acting step of this research, a plan was developed and program constructed that lasted six weeks and included discussions and scenarios designed to elicit further understanding about whiteness as an important component of anti-racist education. In addition to the program sessions, participant evaluations, reflective writing assignments, and field notes were also considered with regard to what was being learned and the effectiveness of the learning strategies employed as well as to further illuminate the participants’ understanding of whiteness and white privilege. What was actually included in the program is outlined in Appendix C. Generally the format of the program included small group discussions and activities with both a video series and assignments/reflective writings completed outside of the discussion group used to facilitate the process. The program model consisted of six two-hour sessions that were held on a weekly basis from January 13 to February 17, 2005.

Each program session is discussed here individually in an attempt to illustrate a critical or engaged pedagogy of whiteness as described by Kincheloe (1999). This form of pedagogy is characterized by specific moments involved in exposing the invisibility of white social power and privilege; an awareness of how whiteness as an ideological construction is distinct; a recognition of how whiteness produces both white and non-white subjectivity/consciousness; an understanding of the power of whiteness to be seen as a norm by which others are measured; a knowledge of how white privilege has manifested itself in the United States; and an appreciation of the need to reconstruct a progressive anti-racist understanding of whiteness and white identity.
Program Session One: Getting Acquainted

At the first program session it was important to review expectations of participation in the program as well as for the group of participants to get to know each other on a more intimate level. After an initial icebreaker type activity related to uncovering basic information, such as name, job title, role on campus, etc., more in-depth activities were conducted. An activity I called ‘Common Ground’ was intended to uncover what group members had in common and was included along with the group resume to highlight the abilities and experience of the group. This way all group members had a better understanding of not only who the group members were, but also what group members brought to the group in terms of experience and background. The idea of action research was discussed and the first activity related to whiteness and white privilege was completed.

All planned areas of the program model outlined in the Appendix for the first session were covered with the participants. I also participated in the group activities as well as the discussion. The initial activities seemed a bit awkward to me since everyone mostly knew each other, but everyone participated fully. After these activities the handout “Ten Things Everyone Should Know about Race” (California Newsreel, 2003, p. 4) was distributed for consideration and discussion. A vigorous discussion followed lead mostly by Joe and Steph and could have continued long after the program session ended. The discussion centered on the handout and included comments related to stereotypes, acting white by non-whites, and how white people view themselves. As persons of color Joe and Steph seemed to have the most to say because they had examples of life experiences to share that the other participants seemed to find interesting. These experiences related mostly to recruiting students to the university and financial aid packages and all the perceptions and misperceptions about these things. All the
participants contributed comments at one point or another, but mostly let Steph and Joe lead the discussion. I’m not exactly sure why this was, but perhaps Joe and Steph were seen as more of authorities on the subject by the other participants because they are persons of color. Perhaps Joe and Steph were serving as educators for the other participants. However, Rebecca, also a person of color, commented but did not dominate the conversation. This could be because in general she is less outspoken than both Joe and Steph.

After the first program session, study participants indicated that they learned about things they (the participants) had in common, “that everyone has similar views on race but can interpret race in many different ways,” “how others not of the same race as me feel about race,” and several participants mentioned the handout as a source of new learning. (Examples of participant responses are anonymous throughout the discussion of the program model sessions since names were not requested on assignments and evaluations and voices were often indiscernible on program session recordings.)

Overall, the first program session went well and accomplished what it intended to achieve, which was participants having a greater understanding of each other as well as an introductory discussion of race. Even though the discussion was lead mostly by Joe and Steph the others did not seem to mind. As I indicated previously, this may be because they did not feel they had a good understanding or much experience with the subject matter. After all one of the aspects of white privilege for white people is the ability to not have to acknowledge your race. As such, there may be a tendency for white people to rely on people of color to educate them about these things. In any event, the intention of the first program session was to set the tone for “exposing the invisibility of white social power and privilege” (Kincheloe, 1999, p. 182), which was begun in the next program session.
The group dynamic during program session one was very positive. The participants all enthusiastically participated in the introductory activities and the atmosphere in the room was one that was upbeat. Several participants even joked good-naturedly with each other as they completed the exercises and shared their information. On a scale of one to five, with one being least valuable in terms of its helpfulness in learning about whiteness and white privilege and five being most valuable in terms of its helpfulness in learning about whiteness and white privilege, the mean evaluative score for this session was 4.0 (out of 5).

In this first session the participants demonstrated a greater awareness for each other. Five out of seven participants present specifically mentioned on the evaluation at the end of the session that they learned more about each other. This was important since this was the intention of the first session to get acquainted and set the foundation for the next session. Although the concept of whiteness was not specifically included in this first introductory session, participants did indicate that they were beginning to think about race. In discussing others in the group, for example, one participant reported on their evaluation that they learned “how others that are not the same race as me feel about issues related to race.” Another participant, in referring to the others, indicated that they learned “how others may/may not have been touched by race.”

Program Session Two: Race and Lack of Genetic Connection

At the second program session the group began to view the three-part video series Race: The Power of an Illusion (California Newsreel (Producer), 2003). The first episode of this video series was titled “The Difference Between Us.” This episode showed how scientific studies including genetics upset the assumption that humans were members of distinct groups or races. This episode was mainly dedicated to understanding why this is the case. Myths and
misconceptions about racial differences being biologically determined were also explored. Group discussion followed the viewing of episode one.

The first episode of the three-part video series was well received. Participants felt that they learned “there are more common traits among people than differences regardless of a person’s race,” “there is no specific basis for human differences,” and the “biology of race.” Most session two evaluations indicated that participants learned that they are more alike than different regardless of their race. Participant discussion included all the participants, although Sarah did not have very much to say throughout. I was not sure what to make of this so I noted it to see if this would also be the case at the next session. The discussion mainly centered on what participants learned or things that surprised them in the first episode of the video. Several participants discussed the influence of U.S. scholars on Hitler and Nazi Germany. Jewish dominance in basketball in the U.S. in the 1920’s was surprising to many participants. In addition, the group discussed the idea that as a species we all originated from Africa.

Due to vigorous participant discussion, several questions were omitted from the outline for session two. Not only were the questions unnecessary to keep discussion going, but they also would have interrupted the participants’ flow of discussion. I was initially a little concerned because I set out to have all questions addressed but after thinking about it decided that it was more important for the participants to discuss what they found important than for me to worry about asking all my questions. This group was certainly one that needed no help in getting discussion going and sustaining it. Since mostly all the participants were actively involved I took it to indicate that this topic and the material presented in session one was important and had value to them. Understanding that race is a social construct and that there is no biological
association with race was important learning for the participants as they began to further explore race in session three.

Unlike session one, the participants could not be described as upbeat at this second session. The mood of the group was definitely a more serious one. After watching the first part of the video series there was a noticeable pause that seemed it could indicate that the participants were struck by what they heard and taking a moment to absorb it all. Discussion started off a little slowly, but picked up quickly and then never stopped. Whereas at the last session the participants reported learning about how others felt about race, at this session they showed that they began to understand that there is no genetic connection to race and that people are infinitely more alike than they are different biologically speaking. One participant stated it simply by indicating that there is a “lack of real differences.” On the one to five scale in terms of its helpfulness in learning about whiteness and white privilege, the mean evaluative score for this session was 4.0 (out of 5). Again, whiteness was not the specific focus of this session, however the participants gained important awareness about race as a social construct, not a biological or genetic one, which was further developed in the next session that traces the history of this social construct known as race.

*Program Session Three: The History of Race and Racism*

The third program session continued the three-part video series *Race: The Power of an Illusion* (California Newsreel (Producer), 2003) started in program session two. The second episode of this video series was titled “The Story We Tell.” This episode traced the concept of race to the European conquest of the Americas, including the development of the first labor system where all slaves shared the physical attribute of dark skin. By the mid-nineteenth century, race was the focus to explain everything from individual behavior to the fate of
societies. This episode showed how social inequalities came to be regarded as natural characteristics.

Evaluations for program session three indicated that participants learned the following during that session: history of racism in the U.S., “to question what I was taught,” the impact of racism, and Native Americans’ role as recipients of racism in the overall history of racism. Participants discussed stereotypes and where they originated. They responded as follows: “They come from actions and observations of a few that get unfairly applied to an entire population.” “I think they come from fear and the need to justify why some races do what they do or why they might be better in some events than whites.” Participants also indicated that they did not feel that people today should be held accountable for past discrimination. All participants indicated that they thought not because: “We must learn from the past and move forward through understanding and knowledge based on facts.” “We ought to acknowledge past injustices, study them, but as a society we must move on.” “The best thing one can do is to help understand the past and look to the future.” It would have been interesting to know who made each comment, however this was often impossible to determine from the tape recording.

Group discussion followed the viewing of episode two and focused mostly on the history of race and racism in the United States. Again, at about mid-point the discussion was flowing without any need for further questions or prompts. The session ended up going an extra fifteen minutes until everyone was ready to end. The participants all indicated their enthusiasm to view the final episode of the video series at the next program session. On the one to five scale in terms of its helpfulness in learning about whiteness and white privilege, the mean evaluative score for this session was 4.2 (out of 5). Both the evaluation responses and the group discussion at this session seemed to suggest that the participants were increasing their awareness of race and
racism by learning its history as a social construction. This could be viewed as an important foundation for the participants to begin to specifically examine whiteness.

Three participants, Judi, Mark and Rebecca, were absent from the third program session although all three wanted to get together and did at another arranged time to view part two of the video before the next session. Due to limited schedule availability these three participants did not have an opportunity to discuss the second episode of the video. Even though there were three participants absent the discussion still really flowed. The only participant that still did not seem as engaged as the others was Sarah. I spoke to her later in the week to find out why she was not as involved in the discussion as others. She assured me that she was enjoying her participation in the program sessions and preferred to listen more then talk. I think she may have felt slightly intimidated as the youngest person in the room and as a white person she never really considered many of the ideas presented in the video and by other participants before now. It was very encouraging to me that all the participants seemed very committed to the study. If this were not the case the three absenteees would not have insisted on viewing the second episode of the video prior to the next session and Sarah, I hope, would not have said what she did about her participation.

*Program Session Four: Institutional Racism*

The fourth program session concluded the three-part video series *Race: The Power of an Illusion* (California Newsreel (Producer), 2003) started in program session two. The third and final episode of this video series was titled “The House We Live In.” This episode showed how institutions give race its meaning and power by privileging white people. The episode contended that today the typical white family has eight times the wealth of the average black family. Forty
years after the Civil Rights Movement, inequalities still exist and ‘colorblind’ policies only reinforce these inequalities according to the information presented in this final episode.

Program session four evaluations reported the following in terms of what participants learned during the session: the government’s involvement in oppression and racism, housing discrimination and what it means (white flight), and how these things have contributed to the increasing economic gap between whites and others. For me, what the participants reported learning in this session underscored the importance of considering critical pedagogy in relation to this study. Since critical pedagogy challenges us to recognize, engage, and critique any existing practices and institutional structures that maintain inequalities and oppressive social relations (Leistyna et al., 1996). Group discussion followed the viewing of the final episode. Again, I did not use all the questions to get a good discussion going among all participants.

Several participants lingered after the session ended and continued talking. As the participants were leaving, Steph shared her story about getting her job here and how her own staff questioned her abilities due to her skin color and the president had an independent audit conducted to check her out. Joe, Judi, and myself were present to hear Steph’s story. Steph explained that the audit found nothing wrong. This was a very powerful moment for me to hear from someone I know who has experienced racism. It also made me wonder if Steph just thought of her example as others already left or if she was not comfortable sharing it in front of all participants. Regardless, it was an important example to hear.

This was a very powerful session for me mainly because of the conversation with Steph at the end. I have always had a high opinion of her knowing the magnitude of her responsibilities and that she does her job well. I was shocked to learn that others thought differently just because of her race. I guess it was such a personal example for me because I
have known Steph for years and never knew about this situation that occurred. It also made feel like I was making a difference because she choose to share this information with me and a few others in order to help us further understand the impact of racism. I could not determine at the onset how the program sessions would work out and how participants would react to them. However, the overall participant commitment to the sessions and their discussions thus far made me feel the sessions were valuable to the participants and certainly they have been valuable to me.

The participants all spoke at one point or another during this session, but Steph and Joe again played a major role in the discussions by providing examples from their childhoods about the neighborhoods they grew up in and some of the experiences they remembered. As mentioned before, Joe and Steph seemed to be assisting the others to learn by providing more personal examples to consider. In this case, they were also the only study participants old enough to remember or have lived through the early times discussed in the video (post-WWII). Joe and Steph represent the Baby Boomer generation. Participants began to acquire an initial understanding of the idea of institutional racism and how whiteness works to keep this in place in the United States. Even though they discussed issues of housing and mortgages, the participants still did not fully engage in the notion of institutional racism.

On the one to five scale in terms of its helpfulness in learning about whiteness and white privilege, the mean evaluative score for this session was 4.75 (out of 5). Seven out of eight participants indicated on their evaluations that they learned about the U.S. government’s role in propagating racism. One participant even indicated that they learned “the extent of white privilege.”
Program Session Five: A Closer Look at Whiteness

At the fifth program session small group exercises taken from Katz’s (2003) book, *White Awareness: Handbook for Anti-Racism Training* were incorporated to further explore the concepts of whiteness and white privilege. The first exercise called “What is White Culture?” was designed to help participants see the aspects of white culture that may be invisible to them as well as help them understand how culture affects us and underlies everything we say and do. The first group activity took longer than anticipated. The participants all indicated that it was a challenging activity and took time to consider examples. The discussion that followed seemed too important to the group to terminate it, so the second activity, titled “Connecting with White Culture,” was eliminated and the third activity was shortened. The third activity was called “The Costs and Benefits of Dealing with Racism” and was intended to help participants explore their motives for dealing with racism.

During the first exercise two teams of participants explored white culture. In response to the question, what did you learn about white culture? One participant team responded, “Power, control, money. That is what defines white culture. And we sort of said, none of this belongs to white culture. It belongs to all cultures and, you know, even within the white culture there are some people that value some of these things and some people that don’t.” According to the study participants white people value education, family, social interactions, social status, money, quality of life, and a satisfying career. One white participant indicated that, “our ideal of beauty is blonde and blue eyed.” I do not think the participants meant to suggest that other races or cultures don’t have similar values or could value these things as well, but they thought it was representative of what they think of as representing whiteness to them.
One participant pointed out that she felt uncomfortable with the discussion. She said, “I didn’t like it because we were dealing with absolutes and stereotypes.” When asked how it felt to consider white culture. Another said:

It’s all stereotypes. If we’re talking about America, I think that when you look at white culture, African-American culture, Hispanic, whatever it’s going to be, I think that all of our cultures have these different levels already ingrained in them. Because one of the things I noted when we were talking about the episode of the video we watched when they brought the Africans over to enslave them, how the white population who used to do that (referring to indentured servants who sometimes became overseers of slaves) were all of a sudden elevated in status but yet they were still low in status compared to other whites as well.

Another participant felt it was important to mention her feelings about having to assimilate.

Steph mentioned her name so her comments are clearly identified rather than presented anonymously.

Steph pointed out to the group her belief that people of color often have to assimilate. She said that:

You do what you have to do to survive and I think often that’s why blacks will call certain other blacks Uncle Toms because they needed to do what they had to do in order to survive. But, you could have substituted, what do black people value? What defines status as a black culture? You could say the same thing about Italian people, Irish. You could answer the same because it boils down to what the perceptions and or stereotypes that we’ve learned to look at, to make value judgments about. And it’s very difficult because you could talk about any culture and ask these same questions. You’d have the
same attributes across the many cultures about status, how they are making money, how they may view the arts. Some people may be very cultured, others may not be. What does that matter? It’s pretty much the same regardless of what culture you look at, you can ask the same questions, respond the same way, and from that perspective, this was a little bit difficult because you have to force yourself to think about what are the perceptions, what are the stereotypes.

Steph’s comments underscored an aspect of whiteness discussed by McLaren (1997). He suggests that whiteness “constitutes unmarked (Euro-American male) practices that have negative effects on and consequences for those who do not participate in them” (p. 268). Or as McLaren puts it marginalized groups are forced to ‘act white’ in order to be successful.

Another participant responded to Steph by saying, “So, we’ve got to be careful in understanding the differences between cultures as well as understanding the differences between races. Sometimes they are not always mutually inclusive nor are they mutually exclusive of each other. We’ve got to understand the difference.”

Evaluations from program session five showed that participants believed they learned that “dealing in absolute terms and stereotypes is a difficult exercise,” “white perceptions, stereotypes of whites,” and one participant said specifically, “I learned to look at whiteness differently due to the group exercises.” Yet another said, “I learned some things I had no clue about, I think that just the history of America has, you know, it’s been dictated to be that way from the foundation of so-called whiteness.”

Participants also indicated how they believed they could make this a more equitable environment. For example, participants indicated the following: “By attempting to treat all people in a fair manner.” “I look to hire a diversified staff to meet the needs of all our students
and their backgrounds.” “Through training sessions related to multiculturalism, diversity, and adherence to principles of good customer service for all stakeholders.” “We have made efforts to reach out to underrepresented groups by offering special programming, we have added student staff that is more reflective of the student body, and we have participated in multicultural programs and encouraged staff participation at those programs.”

This session really went quickly and I was a little disappointed that we could not complete all the activities although the participants did not seem to mind. On the one to five scale in terms of its helpfulness in learning about whiteness and white privilege, the mean evaluative score for this session was 4.25 (out of 5). I would consider two options in the future for the first activity. I would either keep all participants together or have two participants to a team rather than four so it would go a bit more quickly yet not lose its importance. I continued to be encouraged by the participants’ discussion and examples from their lives and practice. It suggested to me that the participants found these sessions of some importance and value to them.

The participants were all very involved in completing the activities. When the two teams were working on the first exercise the noise level in the room was probably the highest volume in the room thus far during any of the sessions. There was some good-spirited humor among a few of the participants, but all were ultimately serious about and involved with the exercises. The participants’ awareness of whiteness and white privilege was becoming more firmly established as indicated above in their responses to both the exercises and session evaluation.

*Program Session Six: Relationship to Practice*

During the final program session participants were asked to consider their daily practice and interactions with students and other campus constituents in an effort to gather additional information that could shed light on our conversations about whiteness and its associated white
privilege and to provide concrete examples for further discussion and exploration of the topic. Participants identified how they gathered their own information about whiteness and white privilege from their own practice and what they learned from their investigations. A focus group was utilized to facilitate discussion as a closing activity of the six program sessions.

According to my field notes all participants attended the final program session, which included the focus group. The focus group portion of the session was tape-recorded. The focus group followed lunch, which was provided as a way to thank participants for taking part in the study. We talked over lunch about the McIntosh (1989) article and assignment from the previous session. The majority of the time during the sixth and final session was devoted to the focus group.

It was challenging to keep the participants focused on the questions during the focus group. There seemed to be more interest in steering the discussion to address questions about ‘now what’ and ‘how to’ issues rather than trying to summarize what was learned and how participants were using what they learned in their practice. This was not necessarily a bad thing, because it could suggest a desire to improve their current practice. It may just have been too soon for the participants to be able to consider these questions given the one-week span between the fifth and sixth sessions, although, the participants were all quite sure that the information shared during the program sessions along with the discussion that followed should be provided to others, student affairs professionals and others on the campus as well. On the one to five scale in terms of its helpfulness in learning about whiteness and white privilege, the mean evaluative score for this session was 4.75 (out of 5).

Participants’ responses during the final program session are further considered in the next section that specifically addresses the formal observing step of the action research model that is
presented to further illustrate that the steps of the action research model were fully addressed in the study. It should also be noted again that although the four-step action research model is used to discuss this study in a linear fashion, each of the respective steps (plan, act, observe, reflect) occurred in a continuous process throughout each of the distinctly noted sections marked by planning, acting, observing, and reflecting, but also within each of these steps as well particularly during the program model sessions.

Focus Group Observations: Participant Response

As part of the third stage of this study or the larger observing stage of the sessions as a whole, participants in the focus group were asked to consider their daily practice and interactions with students and other campus constituents in an effort to gather additional information that could shed light on our conversations about whiteness and its associated white privilege and to provide concrete examples for further discussion and exploration of the topic. Observations about what participants learned through their own participation in the anti-racist education program coupled with considerations of their own practice attempted to answer two questions. What are key moments in the lives of the participants, either during the program itself and/or in their life experience, when they had some sense of racism in society and/or a sense of their own whiteness? What do program participants feel are significant moments in their learning and how are they implementing what they learned in their practice? The answers to these questions will assist in determining what future anti-racist education programs include and how they are structured for student affairs professionals in the higher education workplace. While some of the findings from the focus group overlap with the findings from the final interviews, those findings that specifically came up in the focus group are briefly discussed here.
Increased Consciousness of Race and Whiteness in Professional Practice

Focus group findings suggested that the participants increased their awareness of race and whiteness in their practice as student affairs professionals. Even though the participants all said they really did not gather any additional information since the last time we met which was only one week prior, they all thought they would probably gather more information as time goes on through their own reading, by participating in programs on campus or at professional conferences, and/or by doing training sessions with their own staffs. Participants did, however, consider their daily practice and interactions with students and other campus constituents, and were able to provide examples for further discussion and exploration of the topic of whiteness and white privilege.

All contributed to the discussion and the following examples were shared. Mark spoke about housing sign-ups and how white students seem to display an attitude of entitlement whereas the black students seem more interested in what they can do to make it happen. Mark reported that it was the first time he thought of these behaviors this way. Steph talked about her own hiring here and the dean’s file with information from some of her staff, which resulted in a presidential requested audit to check her out. The audit found nothing and Steph very much believed it was motivated by racism.

Rebecca provided two examples for the group. The first example related to how after she conducted an information session related to admissions a white family walked past her in the office to seek the same information from a white secretary. The second example Rebecca suggested is not as clear to her as racism, but more funny in the grand scheme of things. She reported that whenever she visits the local small town post office and wants to buy stamps she is always given the ones depicting African-Americans. Adam shared an example of a past
employee in his office using the “race card” related to the attendance policy, but was ultimately terminated.

There was unanimous agreement by participants about whether they thought including the concepts of whiteness and white privilege are important components of an anti-racist education for student affairs professionals in higher education. Everyone said yes, these are important components and then briefly discussed their reasons. For example, Sarah said, “What we do for a living depends on understanding all perspectives and this information would have been helpful to learn during grad school.” Tom remarked that, “It’s always helpful to learn more about yourself so you can relate better to others.” Adam commented that it’s more important than ever for new student affairs professionals to know about diversity because “it’s a job requirement now.”

Participants were asked what questions they still had about whiteness and white privilege and if there was anything else they feel should be included in the program sessions. Mark spoke up first and said, “I think that these last six weeks have been very eye opening to me. So, I really don’t.” Tom commented next and said, “I think it’s been a great program along those lines.” Mark spoke again and stated that, “I never even really thought about white privilege until I heard one of my coordinators say it at a presentation. It’s the first time I ever heard the term white privilege and I’m thinking this is one of my coordinators that’s on top of this situation, you know, and where am I right now with this and understanding this stuff?” The remaining participants agreed that they could not think of anything else to include in the program at this time. None of the participants mentioned any questions they still had about whiteness and white privilege.
Increasing the Interest and Audience for Others

Finally, as the focus group was ending participants discussed their ideas in terms of the program model that could be improved for other student affairs professionals. The ideas provided by the participants suggested that increasing interest in the topic and audience size would be important for others. Joe was the first to speak and he stated:

Well, I think this would be a great topic, this shouldn’t be something relegated to a group like this. Maybe not a large forum cause you couldn’t get into discussions in a big group like you can in a smaller group like this, but I think we need to have this in a bigger form maybe this is part of the division retreat or something over semester break as an invitational where we break out into smaller groups to discuss it.

Tom added to the discussion by saying that, “You need to have a presentation topic that a mass group of people would want and then when you get them hooked in tell them this is actually what the topic is. You put it out to us and we all said yes because we were interested in it. It’s easy for the people who are interested to bring them in and have a discussion, but find those people who are not open and try and change them.” The focus group ended with a final comment from Mark, “I enjoyed it very much. I can’t wait for you to do this program with my staff and see how they respond to some of these things. I know it was a real eye opener for me.”

Although the inclusion of a focus group during the sixth and final program session provided a formal way to acknowledge the observing step of the action research process, it did not provide much significant information to consider. I believe this was mainly due to the short one-week time span between the fifth and sixth sessions. In light of everything else in their lives participants simply did not have enough time to fully consider the information they learned during the program sessions. However, the observe step in the action research model leads
directly to the final step or reflect stage of the model where afforded the benefit of additional
time for consideration, participants were again asked to discuss the program sessions. Their
responses are considered fully in Chapter Five.

Summary

By incorporating an action research model, this chapter attempted to consider the
findings by way of which they occurred in order to illustrate the unfolding nature of learning for
the participants. It also presented descriptions of the participants involved in this study. The
planning, acting, and observing steps were discussed along with supporting data from
participants in order to better understand the participants’ thoughts and ideas from the pre-
program individual interviews throughout the program sessions including the final focus group.

During the planning phase, data from the initial interviews were analyzed, which resulted
in three categories that provided insight to where participants were in relation to understanding
race and whiteness, and what they hoped to learn. These categories were significant moments in
understanding race differences, limited understanding of whiteness and white privilege, and
multiple motivations to learn. The acting step included the six program sessions. Evaluations
were collected at each program session. In general the evaluations indicated that learning was
taking place about ideas related to racism and whiteness and white privilege. A rating for each
program was requested as the final item on each program session evaluation.

As noted throughout, the rating scale was given as one to five with one being least
valuable in terms of its helpfulness in learning about whiteness and white privilege and five
being most valuable in terms of its helpfulness in learning about whiteness and white privilege.
The overall average rating for all six of the program sessions together was 4.33. The ratings for
each program session are listed on the next page in Table 2.
TABLE 2: PROGRAM SESSION RATINGS

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<th>Session</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>4.75</td>
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<td>5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Throughout the program sessions, participants’ positive nature was not only felt toward the program but felt toward each other as well. There was no conflict among participants or really any disagreement to note during the program sessions. Although discussion was typically spirited all participants made space for each other’s perspective and encouraged participation from each other. Some participants spoke more than others, but all contributed to the discussions during the course of the program sessions. Overall, Joe and Steph, both persons of color, seemed to speak most often during the program sessions. Steph particularly contributed the most by way of examples from her own life and thus served as an educator of the other participants (and me as well) in many instances, such as the example she shared after program session four.

As part of the third stage of this study or the larger observing stage of the sessions as a whole, participants engaged in a focus group to consider their daily practice and interactions with students and other campus constituents in an effort to gather additional information that could shed light on our conversations about whiteness and white privilege. Two themes arose from the
participants’ responses during the focus group. They are increased consciousness of race and whiteness in professional practice and increasing the interest and audience for others.

In conclusion, this chapter attempted to discuss the findings in light of the first three overall steps of the action research model employed in this study, although the observe and reflect steps were also conducted on a smaller scale in light of what happened in each session. Following the final program session which included the focus group, all the participants were afforded a month or more of time before the final step of the action research model was employed to complete the first formal iteration of the action research cycle. This last step, the overall reflection phase, is discussed in the next chapter along with its findings.
CHAPTER FIVE: ACTION RESEARCH FINDINGS II

This study lends itself most particularly to action research since whiteness is considered so pervasive that it is both subtle and unconscious and requires a methodology that allows meanings to develop in addition to formulating plans for a program that includes understanding whiteness as an important component of anti-racist education for student affairs professionals in higher education. Again, action research is a cyclic process that involves four-steps: plan, act, observe, and reflect (Carr & Kemmis, 1986) and upholds the belief that those who experience a phenomenon are those most able to investigate it. Its purpose is to generate knowledge to inform practice especially where results are intended for immediate application. With this in mind, the fourth formal step of the action research model, reflecting, is considered in this chapter.

Reflection by the participants as well as the researcher was an important aspect of each step of the action research model incorporated in this study. Even though reflection was discussed in Chapter Four in relation to each of the six program sessions, in this chapter reflection represents the concluding thoughts and ideas of the study participants. Not only was reflection an integral aspect of the planning, acting, and observing steps of the study, it is discussed here as the final phase of the model to further illustrate its importance to the process in addition to discussing the data it generated to help address the study’s research questions. The reflecting step of the action research model incorporated individual interviews used with the eight study participants to identify what was ultimately learned about whiteness and white privilege after the formal program ended and what this suggests for future educational programs related to diversity.

All of the second interviews were tape-recorded and took place in the participants’ offices. A month after the program concluded, what did program participants feel were
significant aspects of their learning and how were they implementing what they learned in their practice? This was the research question addressed in this stage of the action research cycle, which related to the reflections of study participants as well as the researcher.

After completion of the six-week program, second individual interviews were employed at least one month after the program’s conclusion and data were collected. Due to the seemingly short time span of one month between the end of the program sessions and the second participant interviews, a brief follow-up with participants was also conducted via email six months after the program sessions ended. These data were analyzed to discover emergent themes related to what an anti-racist education program should include for continuing professional development of student affairs professionals and what the student affairs professionals who participated in the program learned about the concepts of whiteness and white privilege. Three main areas, significant learning, program value for student affairs practice, and program assessment and future suggestions, were identified in the data and are considered in greater detail by examining the themes that comprise them. A data display representing the final reflections and recommendations for the study appears on the following page. The next section explores the area of significant learning.

**Significant Learning**

What participants reported they learned by being a part of this study can be described by three themes that are labeled new information about racism, constructing new knowledge about whiteness and white privilege, and developing greater self-knowledge. It should not be surprising that participants reported learning about whiteness and white privilege since this was
DATA DISPLAY: Final Reflections and Results of the Study

A. Significant Learning
   1. New Information about Racism
      a. The history of racism
      b. Participants’ personal experiences of race and racism
   2. Constructing New Knowledge about Whiteness and White Privilege
      a. The invisible presence
      b. Limited ownership of white privilege
      c. Role of guilt
   3. Developing Greater Self-Knowledge

B. Program Value for Student Affairs Practice
   1. Building Relationships with Colleagues
   2. Developing a Race Conscious Philosophy that Informs Practice Over Time
      a. A month later: A race conscious philosophy
      b. Six months later: Toward an impact on practice

C. Program Assessment and Future Suggestions
   1. Positive Participant Assessment for Self and Others
      a. Value for self
      b. Value for others
   2. Participant Recommendations
      a. Keep the video
      b. Keep the group discussions
      c. Attend to group composition and time factors
   3. Researcher Assessment and Suggestions
      a. Understanding whiteness unfolds over time
      b. Absence of conflict as positive and negative
      c. Distance from whiteness
      d. Importance of people of color’s perspectives
the focus of the study and the participants themselves stated it as an expectation that they had of their own participation during the initial interviews. However, what was somewhat unexpected was the degree to which participants reported learning about the history of race and racism in the United States. This discussion is included in the theme new information about racism, which is considered first.

*New Information about Racism*

New information about racism represents information the study participants reported that they had not known prior to the study. It was information they gained about racism through study participation that they felt was important to them. It is briefly discussed here to demonstrate two things: first, that the participants did learn new information about racism by participating in the study; and second to provide an idea about what information they reported learning. This is an important discussion because it shows that the program sessions added new information to the participants’ knowledge base regarding racism rather than just reviewing information they already knew.

The new information about racism discussed by the participants seemed to focus on two distinct areas. One related to information about the history of racism that was shared during the program, particularly the video series *Race: The Power of an Illusion* (California Newsreel (Producer), 2003) and the second related to the group interaction by the study participants. The new information discussed by the participants also helped support an engaged or critical pedagogy of whiteness, which emphasizes a theoretical framework of teaching that stresses student engagement in the exploration of the social, political, and psychological aspects of being a member of a racial group including the influence of power relations and white privilege (Kincheloe, 1999).
The history of racism. During the second interviews the participants discussed what they learned from the program sessions and provided examples of what they thought was particularly significant for them. Several participants reported that they learned historical type information related to racism in the United States, which was included as part of the video series. For example, Mark simply said, “I think probably the one thing I took away from it the most was the history of racism and race.” When asked to explain why this was important learning for him, he said:

I think that the foundation ... some of the things that I picked up through this program, are going to help me give a little bit more attention, have a little bit better understanding.

There’s still a lot more I can take away from interactions with students and people from different races and just try to be more open-minded to what the possibilities are, the experiences they may have had that I don’t understand yet.

Steph provided another example about the importance of learning more about the history of race from the video series. Steph reported that:

What I learned that I just can’t seem to get out of my mind is the very systematic way in which this concept called race has really come about and is accepted as reality. … It’s hard, it’s difficult but yet, the irony is, that it really is a part of our reality and we really do have to work very hard to begin to get individuals to understand this whole history from a very systemic standpoint in order to address some of the issues.

Steph continued on to say more about her learning about racism and its history:

I just can’t view race the same way. I know what I believe but I have not seen this in such a comprehensive way and it’s amazing. It has given me such insight into the history, the systematic way in which it has come about.
Although the historical aspect of racism was the most discussed aspect of the new information participants learned, other new information that also related to the history of racism and its lack of connection to real science was also discussed. Judi, for example, specifically mentioned the first part of the video series that focused on race and the lack of a genetic connection. Judi stated that:

You know, the thing that comes to mind is when you talk about the biology. That just sort of blew my mind. That you and I could be so much more diverse than me a black man, me and a Chinese woman, me and a Hispanic person. It has nothing to do with what you look like, at all. I think that was the biggest shocker.

Not only does the new information learned by the participants demonstrate that the program sessions were effective at delivering information that the participants found important, but it also helped demonstrate something more significant. Even though all the study participants have earned a masters degree and surely completed numerous history courses throughout their educational experiences, it was still a “history lesson” that most participants acknowledged as the most significant thing that they learned. Although none of the participants specifically mentioned that the history lesson they reported learning during the program sessions was different from the one they learned during their formal educations, I think it can be implied from their comments. This lack of history regarding race and racism in the curriculum further illustrates how whiteness and white privilege can operate as an invisible social structure.

Participants’ personal experiences of race and racism. For Joe it was not the history lesson that was important to him, but the group discussion. He reported that, “The historical stuff, the preliminary stuff that probably you’d use in the actual discussions, that’s pretty much cut and dry. I think some of us knew those things. We had either studied them as part of courses
or whatever else, but it was the last part where we were talking about those things ... that’s what I was learning.” Joe felt that talking about the information presented in the program session helped him to better understand the information for himself as well as help others to understand it by providing personal examples for their consideration. Sarah reported that she found these examples helpful to her learning. She said:

People’s experiences, I thought was probably the most important for me. Their personal life, like things that happened to them or that they were aware of. Like people even if it wasn’t something that happened to them, they could tell stories that opened up stuff on that end. So that’s where I learned the most.

When Sarah was asked who’s experiences she found most helpful to her learning she indicated that it was Joe, Rebecca, and Steph, the participants of color, who most influenced her. She said the first thing that came to her mind when I asked her was a story Rebecca told about buying stamps.

Rebecca also mentioned the value of the group discussion to her. This I found particularly interesting since she is a black woman who is learning more to understand whiteness from the other participants. She said:

Well, I guess what I learned was that often times a person who is not a person of color really truly is not aware of some of the inherited benefits and advantages that they have, being of the dominant race. And it was enlightening, not only for a person of color, but even for the majority person or race to be made aware of different issues or situations that they’re able to be placed in because of their color. … It’s just interesting hearing about, you know, the different situations that people are placed in or their experiences.
Group discussion was mentioned by several of the study participants specifically as being an important source for learning new information and helped support the process of an engaged pedagogy as one that not only imparts new information, but also incorporates participants in the process of questioning and learning.

In summary, the study participants reported that their learning was in understanding the history of racism and its manifestations in the personal experiences of the participants. They also indicated that the new information about racism they learned changed previously held ideas particularly with regard to their understanding of United States history. Although, I too thought the historical information was important and created new learning for me as well, I was somewhat surprised that only Judi spoke about the lack of genetic connection to race. I thought this would be more significant to the participants than it seemed to be. The study participants had no difficulty discussing what they learned and were readily able to discuss their learning.

Other issues brought up by the participants in relation to the learning through the video series and group interactions and discussions in their second interviews centered around the concepts of whiteness and white privilege, therefore, a closer look at what participants learned about these concepts is discussed next.

Constructing New Knowledge about Whiteness and White Privilege

This study was about including the concepts of whiteness and white privilege as part of an anti-racist education program for student affairs professionals in higher education. So, with that in mind, it makes sense that participants reported learning information related to these two concepts. First, what the participants reported learning about the concept of whiteness is further examined.
The definition of whiteness was never shared with the study participants mainly because it was not included in the program sessions and the participants never requested it. In order to better understand what the participants reported learning about the concept, the definition of whiteness used in this study is presented here. It is as follows:

Whiteness is a social construction that represents power, structural advantage, race privilege, and cultural practices that are currently unnamed. Whiteness marginalizes those that are not white in an effort to ensure existing privileges for white people. No matter how dominant, whiteness is more often than not an invisible social category rarely questioned by white people. Whiteness is viewed as a social construct that can and will change over time.

The participants in this study seemed to focus on two specific aspects of whiteness: its invisible presence and its privilege.

The invisible presence. After completing the program sessions it seemed that the study participants, even though they were never provided a formal definition of whiteness, were able to articulate what the concept meant particularly with regard to its invisible nature of operation or presence. For example, Joe commented that he “never ever thought about it.” He continued on to say:

I think it all begins with whiteness. How can you begin to correct something if you’re not even aware of it? If you’re just that ignorant about something, you can’t even begin to correct it, so it’s not until these kinds of things come to the surface that you can begin to correct them.
Adam provided another example when he reported that he learned:

    Whiteness is something that really is not perceived or even articulated very well by white people and that in and of itself is an issue because they aren’t aware of their own privilege and how it benefits them in kind of a clandestine way. That other people see it and therefore have reactions to it and have problems with it. So again, it’s getting back to awareness and understanding of your place in society and how certain things have been beneficial to you. It’s not really perceived or openly acknowledged.

    Steph too mentioned the invisible presence of whiteness in her remarks. She said that, “It’s something that really does exist but it’s unspoken, it’s just known. It’s just taken for granted that you can move in circles that others simply can’t and others simply don’t even recognize what they have.” Mark provided the final example to consider. He suggested that:

    Well, once again, being white, you know, and having been involved in the discussions, having seen the video and things like that, I can understand how whiteness has benefited me as a person. I still look back on my life and I can’t really identify a number of .... any type of situations where I could see where being white made a difference, but I’m sure that there are. I just haven’t been able to really see them yet.

Four of the study participants provided examples to illustrate the invisible presence of whiteness.

*Limited ownership of white privilege.* Not only did the study participants point out the invisible nature of whiteness they also discussed its power and structural advantage or privilege even though they did not take much ownership for their privilege. White privilege could be considered an aspect or manifestation of whiteness. White privilege is manifested in the invisible role of whiteness as the norm, the standard by which everyone is measured. Simply put, white privilege is white people’s ability to ignore the ways white racial identity benefits
them (Alcoff, 1998). Mark provided an example to support this definition of white privilege. He stated that:

I definitely have a better understanding of whiteness in America and how we utilized that to establish a ...not the right term ... a better foot hold on our place in society by keeping other races down, you know, through laws and the courts and, you know ..... Well, what we saw on the videos, using science and things to justify why whiteness is better. You know, I can probably see that it’s benefited me in more ways than I really understood originally.

With the exception of Mark, most of the white study participants only own their white privilege in a limited way. However, those that do not benefit from white privilege, people of color, definitely understood what white privilege was all about. However, Joe said simply that, “I am the recipient of some white favor, if you will, white privilege. I just don’t think about it.” So, it appears that Joe identifies as white, but notice that he does not really want to own it. Perhaps this is because he only has “some white favor.” In this study, Rebecca and Steph demonstrated their understanding by discussing white privilege in greater detail.

Rebecca, for example, specifically mentioned white privilege when she discussed whiteness. She said:

Well, I guess when I hear whiteness, I’m automatically thinking white privilege. Because I’m thinking that if someone is of the white race, Caucasian, that there’s an inherent advantage that they have in life simply because of the color of their skin and not necessarily because of anything that they’re doing but simply because of the way they look. They’ve inherited, you know, an advantage over people that maybe look different from them.
Rebecca further reported her thoughts about white privilege from her perspective as a person of color. She said that:

I had never heard of the word white privilege and I really never thought of it from that standpoint. I mean, I guess, I’ve always thought that because I’m a person of color that there may be some prejudice towards me or some disadvantages, but I’ve never thought about the fact that my friends that are white .... it may not be anything they mean to do or they’re trying to do but when they walk into a store and the sales person comes up to them with a smile on their face, they’re not trying to have an advantage. It’s just that because they’re white, maybe that’s how they’re being treated. And often times, they’re probably not even aware of it until someone points it out to them.

Steph shared another perspective that spoke to the power and structural advantage of whiteness. She stated:

The closer you looked to the ‘norm’ or what is perceived to be the norm, or the standard, the better. … But if you’re black, you’re wrong; if you’re white, you’re right. You see?

So, people act on that.

What Steph was getting at is the concept of white privilege, which is closely associated and often used interchangeably with the term whiteness. Steph further reported that, “Others simply don’t even recognize what they have. That’s the power of it. That’s exactly it.” Again, an important aspect of white privilege as suggest by Alcoff (1998), is white people’s ability to ignore the ways white racial identity benefits them. This was clearly understood by the participants of color in the study.

Not only did the study participants of color report that learning about white privilege was important new information for them, the white participants did as well albeit from a different,
more distant perspective. Sometimes people are reluctant to own unearned privilege if they have it. Sarah provided an example of not having to think about her white privilege. She said:

Now I know much better what white privilege is but I think .... I know that to other people it’s more blaringly clear that I’m white sometimes than it is to me. And now I would definitely be more cognizant of that and that, to me, is a little bit of the other side of the white privilege that I didn’t get. Now I do. You know, how .... I think I told my mom, the story about how when Rebecca went to get stamps. You know, things like that. I had no idea on that end. Underlying things.

The sheer existence of the concept of white privilege was important knowledge for some participants. Adam provided an example in his remarks. He stated:

What do I know about the concept of white privilege? That it exists probably is the biggest thing. You know, for me, being a white male, I mean, I have some problems with it conceptually or theoretically, but I acknowledge that it exists. And that’s the biggest thing.

Judi got a little more personal with her response, but she still was not able to speak in specific terms about how white privilege has benefited her directly. Judi reported that:

I don’t like to think that I have my job sitting right here because I’m white or because I’m a woman. I would like to think it’s because I worked very hard and that I do a good job and that I am worthy and deserving. After having gone through this, I am willing to admit that it’s not always the case. And even if that is why I have my job, there might have been someone who was of a different gender because you need to have a male administrator and a female administrator, or of a different ethnic background or religion or national origin that might not have been equally if not way more qualified than me,
that’s something I’m never going to know.

Regardless of their racial backgrounds, the participants had a lot to say about what they learned about whiteness and white privilege through their participation in the study. Although the participants were able to fully discuss aspects of whiteness, which was a vast change from their initial pre-program interviews, none of the study participants discussed all the facets of whiteness. Some addressed its invisible operating nature or presence and some addressed its power and/or privilege albeit from different perspectives. Again, it was not surprising that participants reported that they learned about the concept of whiteness through their participation in the study. Since the concept of whiteness is so often linked with the concept of white privilege it is equally unsurprising that the study participants also reported learning more about this concept as well.

*Role of guilt.* The examples related to white privilege provided above from the white participants might suggest that guilt may be a reason people are reluctant to own unearned privilege if they have it. Kincheloe et al. (1998) caution that as white people become aware of their racial identities, they may feel guilty about their association with a group that has perpetrated racial oppression. Surprisingly only one participant discussed guilt, which is an aspect often associated with whiteness and white privilege in the literature (Alcoff, 1998; Kincheloe et al., 1998; Sue, 2003).

Adam provided for consideration the sole example that related to guilt in his comments. He said:

So I think even just talking about what it is to be white is important because it’s not bad. That’s what .... and the discussion sometimes you almost feel guilty about being white in these discussions. And there’s absolutely no reason. I’m proud that my parents were
immigrants and they were coal miners and they didn’t have squat. And that’s ..... I like that I can connect myself to that background and that history from my grandparents being immigrants. I mean, I’m proud of that. But some people won’t... that’s a negative thing. Perhaps only one participant mentioned guilt because the others did not experience it. At least no other participants said they did. This could suggest that the program approached whiteness through a two-sided analysis rather than an argument that focused on either the positive or negative aspects of whiteness as recommended by Alcoff (1998). It was certainly my intent to provide information in an unbiased fashion for the group to respond and react based on their own thoughts and ideas.

Developing Greater Self-Knowledge

While considering what the participants reported that they learned about racism and specifically whiteness and white privilege by taking part in the study, it became evident that the participants also revealed that they developed a greater knowledge of self that would benefit them on a personal level. They found a personal value in their participation in the program sessions through developing a greater self-knowledge. The following examples reflect what the study participants reported that illustrated this theme of developing greater self-knowledge.

For example, Adam’s comments illustrated how he believes he developed a greater self-knowledge and why this was important to him. He reported that:

I think it’s important because, again, it’s getting back to, you know, know thyself and if you don’t know yourself and where you’ve come from and the society or institution you’re working in, you’re all the better for understanding the bigger picture and then I think you’re a better person and you can make better decisions and have better relationships. To that extent, I think it’s beneficial. Less ignorant, more aware of the
bigger picture in other people, again, helps you relate better to people and empathize with other people.

Adam continued on to say:

Again, I keep going back to knowing yourself a little bit better and just challenging your own perceptions and just talking about things makes you better, more sensitive to the issues. And I think that’s how you grow as a person by exposure to certain things and interaction with whatever it is, the subject matter. And so I think just growing through discussion and interaction and learning about them. Things I might not have been in tune with before.

Sarah provided another personal example. She stated that:

Oh, I’m a lot more aware of things now than I was before. But I’m a lot more aware of things and touched by things I never would have thought of before. You know, even being in Dublin, Georgia which is like the smallest town in American, I thought about when I would see certain things or, you know, my grandfather would say certain things, you know, I was like, oh my God! You know, like I was .... you just don’t realize. It just made me think a lot more than I ever would have before.

Sarah went on to say:

I’m more aware. Yeah, I guess I do. I’m more aware that it’s still out there now. I think I was a little bit more naive to think that it didn’t happen as much as it does. Yeah, just even like I said, when I was in Georgia, like I noticed things I wouldn’t have noticed before probably or I would have scoffed at or not thought twice about. But now I think I notice things. I’m a little more aware of things. That it’s still really, really out there.

Sarah reported noticing a large African American book section in the “smallest, little tiniest Wal-
Mart in the world” and wondering why she has not seen such a book section, or really any books in our large Wal-Marts in eastern Pennsylvania. She indicated that she would never have noticed this prior to our program sessions.

Several participants reported how they developed a greater self-knowledge by participating in the study. Judi provided another example to consider. Judi stated that:

I’ve looked inside to see what my attitudes are as well and to see how my experiences have shaped me. And I know they have. Living in the South and living out of the South now, I’m much more sensitized to things that I wouldn’t have batted an eye at had I heard them when I was there. Now I’m like, did you really just say that?

Mark provided the final example. Mark suggested that, “It is just going to benefit me for the next 20 years in the field as well as my personal life.” He went on to explain how. He said:

I’ve found myself looking at situations differently as it relates to racism. I’ve become more comfortable. I had a student here yesterday that made an appointment specifically about a racial issue in her suite and I sat and talked with her and her building director. I think it’s just trying to be more conscious of how I communicate. How I think about a situation. I’m a person who reacts very quickly to things. I think this will help me slow down in situations where things can be perceived to be racial. I think this will help me to look at it a little differently, to go a little slower. So, I think that’s probably where I will benefit the most is if I can just learn to be a little bit more global in my approach to situations that appear, that might be a racial type incident and being open to the situation. And, hopefully some of the things I’ve picked up will come out in how I interact with people and make them go, hmmmm, and start thinking about things.
Several of the study participants provided information that suggested how they believed the program had helped them to develop a greater self-knowledge.

In the first or pre-program interviews five of the study participants indicated that they hoped to learn more about themselves by being a part of the study. For example, Adam spoke about gaining a greater awareness of understanding people and Judi simply said, “I just hope to be a better employer, a better colleague, and a better person.” In contrast, the participants were able to speak in much greater detail and more specific terms about their self-knowledge in the second interviews. Adam and Judi’s comments above provided two examples to consider in this regard.

In summary, what participants reported they learned was represented by three main themes that are labeled new information about racism, constructing new knowledge about whiteness and white privilege, and developing greater self-knowledge. The study participants were readily able to discuss aspects of the concepts of whiteness and white privilege. Many of them spoke to the illusiveness of the concepts. The white study participants were able to identify that they were not aware of their whiteness because they don’t have to be aware of it, which denotes the privilege aspect of it. This was new learning for the white participants as well as for the participants of color included in the study. What participants learned through their participation in the study from the perspective of the materials provided during the program, indicated that the participants gathered new information related to race and racism and specifically learned about whiteness and white privilege. The participants also reported that they learned a lot about themselves and each other.

Although it was not known exactly what participants would report learning through their involvement in the study, it was assumed that the concepts of whiteness and white privilege
would be included in the learning or new information gained. What was not expected was the significance of the learning identified by the participants regarding what they learned from each other and about themselves personally. They also believed that there was value to the program that related to their practice as student affairs professionals. Since this study was about developing a program for student affairs professionals, it is important to consider the value of the program to practice. The next section considers the program value for student affairs practice.

**Program Value for Student Affairs Practice**

What do program participants feel are significant aspects of their learning and how are they implementing what they learned in their practice? This was the research question addressed in this fourth stage of the action research cycle. The previous section considered the answer to the first part of the research question, this section addresses the second part of the research question related to how participants were implementing what they learned in their practice. This is important to consider since an engaged or critical pedagogy emphasizes not only incorporating new information that challenges current understanding, but also to demonstrate that the new learning has had an impact through changes in thinking, actions, or even viewing situations from a different perspective. To consider this second aspect of the question, study participants noted several areas that discussed the main area of program value for student affairs practice.

The information reported by participants not only addressed how their new found learning was influencing their practice, but also how it was influencing themselves personally. Study participants also considered how the information they gained could benefit those in the student affairs profession as well as others. What was unexpected was the degree to which the participants discussed building deeper relationships with their colleagues. Thus, two general themes emerged that explored the main area of program value for student affairs practice. These
themes are building relationships with colleagues and developing a race conscious philosophy that informs practice over time. The first theme, building relationships with colleagues, is considered first.

Building Relationships with Colleagues

Several of the participants specifically addressed what I refer to as building relationships with colleagues in their comments about what they learned through their participation in the study. It was mentioned so often that it stood out as an area that should be discussed on its own separate from the information participants reported about the value of the program session to their practice as student affairs professionals. What follows are examples of what the participants who mentioned it had to say about building relationships with their colleagues in the study.

Joe provided an example from his experience of the theme referred to as building relationships with colleagues. Joe reported:

Tom and I knew each other by virtue of, hi Tom, hi Joe. Probably never said more than that many words to each other. Since then, we’ve seen each other, not on a regular basis, but we’ve seen each other on other occasions and talked and we’ve commented about the program and it’s interesting to see how we have discussed what took place in the discussion sessions.

Joe went on to say why he thinks this is the case. He said:

So it was one of those things and so there’s some commonality and some common ground. And I think those kinds of sessions, when you put people in those situations where they’ve got to discuss an issue or issues that are not easy to discuss. Once you put them in those groups and it spawns discussion, then I think the participants in the group
have a kinship with each other that they didn’t have beforehand. And actually it forms a
better bond of communication. I think it forms a better bond and better relationship with
the people that are part of that group.

This was not the only example. Other participants referred to building relationships with
colleagues in their remarks as well.

Judi, for example, felt that “everybody that has been through this with me, I knew before.
But I didn’t know them the way I know them now.” She went on to say that:

It was just ..... it was a bonding experience I feel like. Instead of saying, hey so and so
and you saw them across ..... there’s more of a connection there. I think there’s a greater
understanding there. And not understanding of, I know your struggles, but of who you
are and maybe why you are that way and what we have in common because we found out
we have an awful lot in common. A lot more than we have different. So, from that
perspective it’s professionals in my division, but not people that I work with on a day-to-
day basis with the one exception. So it was an opportunity for me to get to really know
some people and make a connection that I never would have made because, you know,
your face is buried in the pile on your desk. So, it was a wonderful opportunity to make
those connections with those people. It’s just so cool to be walking across campus and
there’s Steph. And instead of just “Hey Steph,” we actually have more of a conversation.

Judi emphasized that, “The greatest thing I think that I took out of this was just the relationship
building process with everybody who was in there.”

Rebecca provided another example. She reported similar thoughts about building
relationships with the other study participants. Rebecca stated that:
Oh, I think one of the greatest benefits to me was having a different relationship with some of my colleagues. There’s a bond that was formed and I think I shared with you that now, when I see them on campus, there’s a different connection rather than just saying hello. There’s sort of like a spirit and understanding that we have that that the rest of the people there don’t have. So, that’s one of the greatest benefits to me.

Building relationships with colleagues seemed to be an important aspect of the study for the participants. It is important to note that the participants were not just spending time together; but they were talking about deep things that are not typically discussed in ‘polite’ conversation since these subjects often make people uncomfortable, particularly in mixed race settings.

Participants’ comments reflected their feelings about the importance of this theme to their learning and also to their life through enhanced relationships with their fellow study participants. Again, it is important to note that this group of participants was very supportive of each other during the program sessions and even though the subject matter could be viewed as controversial, the study participants did not take it that way. This could be because of the relationship building that took place or simply because the student affairs profession tends to attract supportive, counselor-type people. Regardless, the study participants indicated that building relationships with colleagues was important to them and to their learning.

_Developing a Race Conscious Philosophy that Informs Practice Over Time_

The study participants also reported that their participation in the study had value to their practice as student affairs professionals, though many of them talked more about their philosophy than their actual practice, particularly during the interviews a month after the program was over. In the e-mail responses six months following the program some participants were able to offer more specific examples from their practice, indicating that while they all
seemed to develop a race conscious philosophy, over time it appeared to affect their practice as well.

_A month later: A race conscious philosophy._ In the interviews a month following the end of the program, several of the participants indicated that they had developed somewhat of a race conscious philosophy, although they were not that specific about how it relates to their practice. Joe stated it most broadly by suggesting that, “This may be over trivializing it, it’s the right thing to do. It’s simply that. It’s just the right thing to do. He went on to explain that:

I think that you just gotta do it though, you just gotta sit down and talk about some of these things. It is risky. But you know what? You know what, though? Isn’t that what the college and university environment is supposed to be all about?

Tom also talked about the merit to his practice in a more general, philosophical way. He believed that the program had definite value, stating that:

Specifically student affairs because those people deal with every population on campus, you know, across the spectrum, whether it’s the health center or dean of students, athletics deals with multiple populations, student services obviously deals with multiple populations and I think it’s important. Again, the more you know about yourself, the more you’ll understand the affect that you have on other people. And what you bring to the relationship. And I think the more you understand the whiteness, the white privilege, the easier it is to move yourself to a place that you can get people to trust you because I think there’s a lack of trust inherently in that first step of the relationship.

Several participants spoke about developing a race conscious philosophy that informs their practice without providing any real connection to specific examples in their work environment.
Steph was another participant that provided a more general or philosophical response related to the value of the program sessions to the practice of student affairs. Steph suggested that:

We are responsible for the learning that occurs outside of the classroom and if we don’t begin to understand and recognize it in order to be effective student affairs professionals, then I don’t think we can totally and completely and effectively do our job. Because we have the responsibility for helping the next generation be the leadership for tomorrow. So, I think it has to be part of our understanding, our growth and development as professionals in this area.

Steph continued on to say:

I think that if we, as student affairs professionals, begin to understand some of these issues, then I think it can set a foundation for our own growth and development. This is about a condition that you need to be aware of because as students walk through these doors, you need to be aware of what triggers some of the attitudes and perceptions that they have about white privilege.

Steph also reported that she is thinking about how to use the information she learned with her own staff. She said that, “Part of what I want to do is, I would like, to develop a training piece that I can use to not only train staff but students as well.”

Sarah also reported how her participation in the study has benefited her practice as a student affairs professional in higher education. She provided two specific examples. First, Sarah explained that:

I probably would have been annoyed at one time that I had to change my mission to add in that diversity piece and now I want to do it just because ... my God, it’s just a simple
thing to do so why not do it. Because I don’t want to .... once again, to offend people is
never my intention and I’ve never been one to hurt people’s feelings.

Sarah provided a second example as well of the merit of the program to her professional practice.

Sarah said that:

Before this, maybe, for instance, we just did a brochure and I noted that we needed to
make it diverse. There’s just some things I never would have thought twice about, like, I
never really thought that meant anything. It was just something that, you know, is a
common annoyance that we had to always make sure, you know, things were diverse.

But now I understand. I understand a lot better now that it’s important to have three
different colored hands on that page than one. And actually, even the more detail
oriented part of it that you could offend people. I won’t think of it as being a pain in the
butt any more. I’ll think of it as just I don’t want to offend people.

Judi also discussed the benefits to her practice, particularly when conducting job searches. She
reported that now she feels “like I’m more conscious and I’m more educated certainly.”

*Six months later: Toward an impact on practice.* Initially, when I first reflected about
the participant responses to the second interviews I was pleased to see that there was a major
change in their understanding about racism and that they specifically learned about the concepts
of whiteness and white privilege during the program sessions. The participants’ understanding
of these concepts increased dramatically from the first interviews to the second. However, after
further reflection I was a little disappointed to note that there were not more specific examples of
using their learning in practice. After all, this would truly demonstrate that the program sessions
were critical and engaging and truly made a difference in addressing racism.
I wondered whether or not enough time had elapsed for participants to consider what they learned and possibly do something to reflect their learning in practice. Due to the seemingly short time span of one month between the end of the program sessions and the second participant interviews, a follow-up with participants was conducted six months after the program sessions ended. Participants were asked if they thought about the information they learned in the program and whether or not they have done anything differently because they now know this information. Five of the eight participants provided information for consideration.

As like prior participant responses, some participants provided specific examples and others talked more generally or philosophically about their information. Mark and Steph provided specific examples. Mark reported that he is developing a diversity training program for his office workers. He also had me show the video series used in the program sessions to his central staff of twenty members. I showed the video series and facilitated discussions over a three-week period in late spring. Mark added that, “I can only sum it up by saying I am better aware and more sensitive to persons of color. I feel that what I have learned has had a profound impact on my life and it is for the better.” Steph also had more specific information to share since the second interview. Steph reported that:

I have actually purchased the video, "Race - The Power of an Illusion," to support teaching efforts about white privilege and race. This past May I attended, for the first time, the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity in American Higher Education. I participated in two, one-day long sessions dealing with white privilege and have shared this information with key individuals on campus. I have also approached the Assistant to the President about doing a professional development program focusing on white
privilege as a start. I plan to keep this theme in the forefront of my thoughts as I think about professional growth and development for staff and students.

Steph continued on to say:

From a personal standpoint I have learned to recognize white privilege so much more clearly, that my task is to not become angry and frustrated. To learn to effectively deal with a system that does not embrace me as a person first therefore, deserving of an equal opportunity and access to succeed or fail on my own merits.

The other three participants who responded did not share specific examples of how they were putting what they learned about whiteness and white privilege into their practice now that six months had elapsed.

However, Joe indicated that recently, in relation to a diversity session held at the division leadership annual retreat, he had conversations related to what he learned in the program about whiteness and white privilege as well as the general history of racism in the United States. He relayed that there were other occasions when the topic came up, “but in a conversational mode.” Has he done anything differently in his practice since the program sessions? In response Joe said:

Can't say that I have at least not overtly. Just being aware of the issue does have an impact in the sense that you can identify and understand what white privilege is and how it may affect others, but to say that I have done something ... taken specific action.... no, I have not done anything differently.

So, Joe had conversations about the concepts, but had not done anything in his practice to incorporate the information that he at least thought was worthy to converse about with other colleagues. The remaining two participants that replied provided more general responses.
For example, when asked if she thought about the information she learned in the program and whether or not she had done anything differently because she now knows this information, Sarah replied:

Besides being in the back of my mind and giving me a more heightened awareness, I guess I can't really say that I have changed dramatically. Maybe I have and I am not aware, that is possible. But for sure I think I am more in tune with the injustices and other issues that surround this topic so that probably has changed me without me even being aware.

Adam provided a similar example of a general reply. He said:

Well, I think at a basic level my perspective has not changed much. In any culture the majority (or class, etc.) tend to receive privileges both overtly and covertly, consciously and subconsciously. Our culture is no exception. The difficulty is coming to agreement on the question of what to do about it and what policies are fair in making up for historical practices. On a personal level the only thing I feel empowered to do is try to be sincerely respectful of others and treat folks equally.

Even though not all of the examples included specific actions that demonstrated that the participants were incorporating what they learned about whiteness and white privilege in their practice, none of the participants indicated that the information was not valuable or important to them. Admittedly, it would have been nice to hear more examples like those provided by Steph and Mark. However, this may be expecting too much too soon for some of the participants as for many of them the program sessions just began to scratch the surface in their examination of long-held understandings or misunderstandings regarding racism in the United States.
In summary, some participants shared specific examples of direct impact to their practice and others spoke more generally or philosophically about developing a race conscious philosophy that informs the practice of student affairs professionals. Either way, the study participants clearly pointed out how they found value to their practice through their participation in the study. The participants also suggested that the program has value to others outside the student affairs profession as well. The next section looks closer at what the study participants had to say about the overall program as well as specific suggestions regarding improvements for future programs.

Program Assessment and Future Suggestions

This section discusses what the study participants reported about their thoughts regarding the value of the program and learning about the concepts of whiteness and white privilege overall. Their thoughts were mainly philosophical rather than concrete examples. However, the participants did provide specific suggestions for program improvements for future participants. Both areas are considered in this section along with the researcher assessment and suggestions presented last. First, participant assessment is considered.

Positive Participant Assessment for Self and Others

Overall the study participants’ assessment of the program sessions was very positive. In this section participant assessment is considered in relationship to self and others. The participants indicated through their comments that they believed there was a value in the program sessions for themselves as well as others. Value for self is examined first.

Value for self. Evaluations were collected at each session to assess several aspects of the program from the participants’ perspectives and are considered here to examine the value of the program to the participants. In general the evaluations indicated that learning was taking place
about ideas related to whiteness and white privilege as well as about each other. Specifics about what participants reported learning was discussed in detail above in the section on significant learning. Participant learning was included on the evaluation and is mentioned here to suggest that it also indicates a value of the program by way of increased knowledge for the study participants.

The program session evaluations also asked about how to improve. Two specific questions were asked on the evaluations. First, what information or materials were not provided that should be included to improve the session? Overwhelmingly, throughout the six program sessions, participants reported that they felt nothing could be improved with regard to the program sessions. Second, participants were asked to identify additional ways the session could be improved to better meet your needs and expectations? On the majority of the evaluations from the six program sessions, the participants indicated nothing. However, a few participants stated a desire for more discussion time and the elimination of the assignments referred to as “homework.” This information seemed to suggest that the participants found the format and content of the program valuable.

Lastly, a rating for each program was requested as the final item on each program session evaluation. The rating scale was given as one to five with one being least valuable in terms of its helpfulness in learning about whiteness and white privilege and five being most valuable in terms of its helpfulness in learning about whiteness and white privilege. The overall average rating for all six of the program sessions together was 4.33. The specific ratings for each program session are listed on Table 2 in Chapter Four. This overall rating for the program sessions seemed to be a very positive number for a first attempt at delivering the program model
used in this study and further indicated that the participants found value for themselves through their involvement.

*Value for others.* Several of the study participants reported how they believed the program they participated in would be of value overall or for others. For example, Tom said:

The more we educate, again, the more we educate our society so that everybody understands what their affect is upon other people .... because that’s one thing I try and understand about myself, how am I affecting this relationship with the person I’m just having a casual conversation with or those kind of things. It’s important for them to know so that they understand the impact that they’re having on an individual just stepping into a conversation or any kind of a relationship you would have as a worker, as a boss to an employee, or whatever. The more you understand where you’re at in the world I believe, the easier it is for you to create a better environment, for yourself and the people around you.

Steph provided another example. She suggested:

I think by knowing the concept of white privilege, hopefully that will be something that will begin to open their eyes to understanding of themselves and the advantage, so that we can begin to change that kind of mind set. So, I do think it’s important because I do think it’s the key to looking and understanding beyond what you’ve been able to take for granted for so long.

Rebecca simply said “I just think it’s important because it helps people maybe better understand their motivations and actions. I just think it’s a good thing for people to be aware of.” Mark too had something to contribute. He said:
Because of the amount of people I interact with, I would like to believe that how I act now, how I conduct myself in some situations that may occur with the people that work with me or work for me, will rub off on them or benefit them or make them go, hmmm.... you know, didn’t think of it that way or you wonder why he took that approach and they feel comfortable enough to ask.

Judi concluded by remarking about the program value to others. She said that, “I would be shocked that people wouldn’t see some value in it.”

In summary, the study participants can see value in what they learned overall and for others to learn as well. They stated this by providing general thoughts or their own philosophy about the benefits of the program. Their comments related to others could also be considered a further illustration of how they themselves believe they benefited by taking part in the program sessions. It seemed clear at least philosophically that the program was considered valuable overall and was believed to be beneficial for many types of people including student affairs professionals. The participants did discuss more specific suggestions in terms of how the program can be most beneficial for participants in the future. Program recommendations are considered next.

Participant Recommendations

The participants made several recommendations about the program that was incorporated in this study. Their ideas touched on three specific areas that are further discussed below. The main recommendations focused on the video, group discussions, and group composition and time factors. The importance of the video is discussed first.

Keep the video. Several of the study participants mentioned ways they believed the program could be enhanced for future participants. First, the video series was again mentioned
by several of the participants as a must for future programs. For example, Joe said “.... some of the stuff that you had with the film stuff was good. Was excellent.” Tom stated that he believed, “The DVD I thought did a great job.” Rebecca also reported that, “I thought the videos were excellent. They were excellent. Being able to have the movies to lead certain discussion topics.” Steph agreed as well saying, “I thought one of the most important pieces for a foundation was the video. You’re kind of getting everyone started on the same ground. What I liked was the fact that we were able to just talk among each other and share experiences and learn.” Finally, Judi reported that, “I really loved the video series. That was really eye opening.”Clearly, the video series was an integral aspect of the program sessions for the study participants. It was mentioned at several different points throughout the second interviews, which only underscored its importance to the participants and to future programs.

*Keep the group discussions.* The study participants again discussed the importance of the group discussions. Most study participants felt the discussions that occurred as part of the program sessions were a valuable aspect of the program and should be continued for future programs and participants. For example, Joe felt that:

I just think first and foremost, is the open session where you can have these conversations, where you can go back and forth ..... You have to provide a vehicle, you have to provide the forum where people will come together and talk about these things in an open and non-confrontational manner just as we did. I think they really enjoyed it because it was very cathartic and you walked away saying, wow, that was good. It felt good the discussion. The discussion was good. There was just a lot to think about.

Judi also reported that, “The communication and the discussion was also very, very good.” Sarah too shared similar feelings. She said, “I really did like the discussions and sometimes, in
the beginning, I started to get annoyed with people who get really off track because then it takes a while to get back on track, but towards the end I liked that part the best.”

Attend to group composition and time factors. Other ideas were also discussed. Some of the participants thought the composition of future groups in terms of the participants was important to consider. For example, Mark thought that:

It would be nice to have the variety of white male and white female and African American male and African American female, because I think even both genders bring a different look toward things like that, that the mix of the people that would sit around that table and do some of the things that you put us through, would help everybody to hear.

Along the same lines, Judi stated that:

I think it was great to have a mixed group that way so that you had a chance to see somebody that you don’t normally see and you had a chance to get to know someone that you really don’t get much of a chance to sit down and talk with. They’re not in your staff meetings. They’re not at your games. They’re not at ninety-nine percent of the things that you do and you’re not at their stuff either. So, it was an opportunity to get to learn more about each other.

Group composition was mentioned as well as time, which was another factor the study participants discussed that was of importance to them with regard to the program.

Judi said, “I think people would be more willing and more interested if it were less of a time commitment. Having said that, we could have gone on and on and on.” Rebecca suggested:

You know what’s interesting? Our sessions could have gone on for four hours and I think it .... I almost feel just when we were really getting into the heart and meat of things
and conversations were flowing, it was over. And that was a disappointment but that’s just, you know, life and the nature ... everyone’s very busy with their jobs and stuff. I don’t know how we would do this, but more time. But the problem is people don’t have more time.

Time along with the composition of the group was included in the recommendations about future programs brought forth by the study participants.

Lastly, “homework” as several participants called it (or the weekly session assignments geared to stimulate thinking for the upcoming session) was mentioned by some of the participants. Some favored it and some did not. For example, Judi suggested that, “Once I’m there, I’m able to focus on it and it seems like it’s so hard to find time otherwise and to do it, you know, and really sit back and have a quiet time and think about what you wanted to say. So, no homework, teacher!” Rebecca felt similarly. She directly said, “No homework! No.” On the other hand, Sarah felt that, “Actually the homework was good because it made me get back with ..... because I only did it right before every one. So if I did it right before, then I came in with my mind on that.” Mark also felt positive about the homework. He said, “I think your homework assignments made me sit back and think a little bit about it as well.” At least for some of the participants the “homework” seemed to meet its intended purpose.

In review, the study participants believed there was a benefit for others to participate in the program as well. They readily shared their thoughts and also made specific suggestions as to what they believed were important areas of consideration for future programs of this nature. Namely, the video series and the value of discussions were mentioned. They also pointed out the importance of a group’s composition and shared mixed feelings regarding the inclusion of homework assignments. It was important to consider what the participants had to report
regarding their perceptions of the overall value of the program and/or the value the program could have for others along with their specific ideas related to program improvements. Both these areas were yet another way to examine what the participants themselves valued about the program.

*Researcher Assessment and Suggestions*

After reviewing the participant responses to the second interviews I was pleased to note that there was a major change in the participants’ understanding of racism in the United States and that they specifically learned about the concepts of whiteness and white privilege during the program sessions. However, after further reflection I was a little disappointed to see that there were not more specific examples provided by the participants of using their learning in their practice. After all, this would truly demonstrate that the program sessions were critical and engaging and made a difference in addressing racism. Although it would have been nice to hear more examples, it is important to remember that it probably takes time to implement new learning in practice even though one might have embraced new ideas philosophically. This may be just expecting too much too soon for some of the participants for the reasons I discuss below.

*Understanding whiteness unfolds over time.* First, learning about racism and the concepts of whiteness and white privilege is a process that is challenging because it questions so many long-held assumptions and unfolds over time with additional experiences allowing for the information that was learned by the participants to be applied. That was why it was important to conduct a brief follow-up just to determine if time really might matter and it did in the examples of Mark and Steph. Especially for the white participants this information was new to them and additional time will tell if they apply the information that they learned. It could also demonstrate a fundamental characteristic of white privilege, which is white people’s ability to ignore it. In
addition, this study really just began to scratch the surface of the many ways racism and whiteness and white privilege operate in the United States and therefore more education and learning is necessary.

**Absence of conflict as positive and negative.** Second, an overall absence of conflict was present throughout the program sessions. Judi provided an excellent description of the session atmosphere in her comments. She said:

I think the greatest thing that comes to mind immediately is just the connection I’ve made with my fellow workers. You never get a chance to know someone that well. I don’t know most of the people on my staff as well as I feel like now I know the people that were in there. And that’s because everybody took it seriously and they spoke honestly and from the heart and were willing to share experiences and attitudes and, you know, things they have gone through.

Perhaps not enough conflict existed to demonstrate to some participants the impact racism and whiteness and white privilege can have on others as well as on themselves. On one hand the value participants placed on building deeper relationships with colleagues was an unexpected outcome of the study and generally is considered positive, on the other hand it also most likely reduced the amount of conflict that could have been important to more meaningful learning for the study participants as well.

**Distance from whiteness.** Third, further reflection related to the comments of the participants during their second interviews made me wonder why often times the participants did not acknowledge their race or take ownership for their remarks rather than speaking in general terms about what others should do or think. Is this because everyone knew each other prior to the study and felt this information was implied (and these relationships grew only deeper
throughout the study) or does it illustrate the very nature of white privilege’s ability to be ignored by white people, which created distancing from the topic? Not only was distancing behavior evident in the lack of ownership for their race that many of the participants exhibited in their remarks, but it was also evident in the more general or philosophical way rather than concrete comments they often made when discussing the importance of what they learned.

Importance of people of color’s perspectives. What also became evident from the participants’ remarks was the importance of the discussion namely the examples and information provided by the participants of color in the study. This had more impact on some of the participants than the others, but is worth noting because it supports the rationale for including people of color in the study. Although there was no expectation for them to serve in an educational capacity, they certainly did that at times for some of the white participants. What was surprising to me overall was not that participants learned about the concepts of whiteness and white privilege, but that they placed such value on building deeper relationships with colleagues. I was equally surprised by the degree to which participants of color reported learning about the concepts of whiteness and white privilege. I assumed they knew more about it then they did. However, I think what is a more accurate statement is that they knew about whiteness and white privilege, but now had a better language to discuss it. Again, this is another example of the very nature of white privilege and its illusiveness even to those of color in this study.

With these three primary insights in mind based on my experience of doing this project, if I were to conduct a similar study, work with other groups in the future on this topic, or make recommendations to others doing this work, I would offer the following suggestions. First, I would definitely include participants of color in the study. Not only does it guard against ‘white talk’ (McIntyre, 1997) or at least put limitations on it, it also allows for personal examples that
can be valuable in enhancing learning for all the participants in the group. Second, it is extremely important to allow for ample time for discussion. As I indicated in this chapter, participants not only found the discussion most beneficial to their learning, but also formed deeper relationships as colleagues because of their time together. Whether this would happen with all groups of participants is hard to know, but certainly the value of sufficient time to discuss concepts and ideas cannot be underestimated based on the results of this study. Third, quality materials such as the video series and group activities used in the program are important because they did the most to convey information and stimulate discussion. They were the foundation for the discussion to take place and it is important to continue to use materials and activities of this nature in future program iterations. Overall, the program model used in this study provided a good foundation for further reflection on the concepts and uncovered several suggestions for use with future participants.

Summary

In summary, the fourth and final data source that comprised the formal reflecting step in this action research study was discussed in this chapter. Data were analyzed to discover emergent themes related to what an anti-racist education program includes for continuing education of student affairs professionals and what was learned about the concepts of whiteness and white privilege by the student affairs professionals who participated in the program. Three main areas were uncovered: significant learning, program value for student affairs practice, and program assessment and future suggestions. These areas were considered in greater detail by examining the themes that comprised them.

At least one month after the program concluded, what did participants feel were significant aspects of their learning and how were they implementing what they learned in their
practice? This was the research question specifically addressed in this stage of the action research cycle. First, it was important to consider what the participants reported that they learned by being involved in the study. What participants reported that they learned suggested three main themes that were labeled new information about racism, constructing new knowledge about whiteness and white privilege, and developing greater self-knowledge. It should not be surprising that participants reported learning about whiteness and white privilege since this was the focus of the study and the participants themselves stated it was an expectation that they had of their own participation during the initial interview.

Second, what did participants feel were significant aspects of their learning and how were they implementing what they learned in their practice? To consider this second aspect of the question, study participants noted several areas that discussed the main area of program value to their practice as student affairs professionals. The information reported by participants not only addressed how their new found learning was influencing their practice, but also how it was influencing their relationships with each other. Thus, two general themes emerged that supported the main area of program value for student affairs practice. These were building relationships with colleagues and developing a race conscious philosophy that informs practice over time.

In the last section related to program assessment and future suggestions, study participants also considered how the information they gained could not only benefit those in the student affairs profession but others as well. Specific suggestions were uncovered related to participants’ thoughts regarding improvements to the program. Two themes were identified in the last section: participant assessment and suggestions and researcher assessment and suggestions.
Finally, in the next chapter the data presented in both Chapters Four and Five are further discussed to address the research questions set forth at the beginning of the study. Data considered in this chapter are essential to this discussion because they illustrate from several different perspectives the importance of the program for the study’s participants and what this might suggest for future programs of this nature.
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUDING REMARKS

The purpose of this study was to develop a program aimed at increasing an understanding of whiteness among student affairs professionals, and to examine the process of how they attempted to understand whiteness and white privilege while participating in an anti-racist education program and while dealing with diversity issues on campus. Although participants of color were included in this study, a basic assumption that was presented at the onset was that most white people, including white student affairs professionals, have little understanding of what it means to be white. Further it was assumed that people understand aspects of their own racial identity in the face of those of a different racial identity. Thus, this was an initial investigation of both those of color and white student affairs professionals in higher education, and how they understood whiteness both at the outset of the study and following its completion. It was hoped that the findings would not only illuminate what is currently known about what it means for white student affairs professionals to be white and the relationship of white privilege, but also to suggest new possibilities for anti-racist education to improve practice and create environments in higher education that foster quality education for all students.

In addition, the literature uncovered in preparation for this study presented mainly conceptual information related to diversity and the student affairs profession. Little empirical research based literature was uncovered. Thus, it seemed clear that additional research that could assist student affairs professionals to be more effective contributors in addressing diversity issues on campus was worth examination. This action research project was not only an attempt to address a lack of data-based research that deals with diversity and the student affairs profession, but also to examine the missing discussion about how student affairs professionals deal with whiteness and white privilege in their varied roles on campus.
Being that student affairs professionals bring to their work a worldview that is constructed within unequal racial relationships that are often unconscious and unrecognized, this action research study attempted to first understand how student affairs professionals attempted to understand whiteness and white privilege and second to develop and implement a program for these professionals to further understand these concepts as an important component of anti-racist education. Therefore, given the process-oriented nature of action research, the following research questions were set up in light of the phases of the research project:

PHASE I: IN PREPARATION FOR DESIGNING THE PROGRAM

1. How do student affairs professionals understand whiteness?
2. What is it that student affairs professionals want to learn about anti-racist education, and how and why is it important to them?

PHASE II: INVOLVEMENT IN THE PROGRAM

3. What are key moments in the lives of the participants, either during the program itself and/or in their life experience, when they had some sense of racism in society and/or a sense of their own whiteness?

PHASE III: FOLLOWING THE CONCLUSION OF THE PROGRAM

4. What do program participants feel are significant aspects of their learning and how are they implementing what they learned in their practice?

In this study, it is these four main research questions that were investigated. The main focus of the questions was to gather an understanding about how to critically educate student affairs professionals about whiteness and its associated white privilege. These research questions were examined in relation to the main themes that emerged in the findings presented in Chapters Four and Five. Each of these themes is further discussed in the following sections, which considers
the overall themes uncovered in this study. Lastly, implications for the study and recommendations for future research in the fields of student affairs and adult education are considered.

Whiteness: The Absent Presence

Whiteness: the absent presence refers to the inherent invisible nature of operation of whiteness that was ever present in this study. It is discussed here with regard to several important points to consider about this study that were suggested by the data presented in the previous two chapters. First, however, it is important to note that one of the chief objectives of this study was to expose student affairs professionals to the concepts of whiteness and white privilege as part of an anti-racist education program. In regard to being able to identify the concepts of whiteness and white privilege the study proved successful. This finding was in accordance with Maher and Tetrault (1997) who find that in classrooms where whiteness and white privilege are included as part of discussions related to race, learners are better able to understand these concepts and be able to apply them to learn more about themselves and others.

A Greater Understanding of Whiteness

In the pre-program interviews, some participants knew more than others about the concepts of whiteness and white privilege, but none of the participants could provide an in-depth understanding. Steph who is bi-racial indicated the greatest initial understanding. For example, she noted that for her it means “if you’re white, you’re right and if you’re black, you are wrong.” Mark who is white indicated that he understands that being a white person in our society has afforded him opportunities, but could say little more. Rebecca, who is a black woman, said directly, “I have to admit that I really don’t know very much. I mean, I’m not sure actually.” Regardless of racial background, the study participants had a limited understanding of whiteness
and white privilege prior to the program sessions. However, after the program concluded the participants could say much more about their understanding of the concepts of whiteness and white privilege.

Although the participants were able to fully discuss aspects of whiteness, which was a vast change from their initial or pre-program interviews, none of the study participants discussed all the facets of whiteness. Some addressed its invisible operating nature and some addressed its power and/or privilege. Not only did the white study participants report that learning about whiteness and white privilege was important new information for them, the participants of color did as well. I was actually surprised by the degree to which participants of color reported learning about the concepts of whiteness and white privilege. After all, it was an assumption of this study that white people would learn about these concepts, but it was additionally assumed that the participants of color knew more about the concepts than they did. However, as I indicated previously I wonder if the program sessions assisted them to find a better or common language to discuss it with others. Regardless, all of the study participants were better able to articulate an understanding of the concepts of whiteness and white privilege after completing the program than they were prior to the program sessions.

The Difficulty of Seeing the Absent Presence

Even though this better articulation of the concepts was an accomplishment and is considered a positive outcome of the study, it was important to further examine the remarks of the study participants to determine to what level they truly understood what they learned. It could also be suggested that many of their comments further demonstrated the nature of whiteness and white privilege as an invisible social construct that was at work all the time even
when it was the focus of investigation. As noted in the literature, the real dilemma of white privilege is white people’s ability to decide whether or not to ignore it (Hytten & Adkins, 2001).

*Distancing from whiteness.* In the pre-program interviews for example, most of the participants except for Steph who is bi-racial, tended not to refer to their own race or themselves overall, which could suggest a sort of distancing from the topic. It could also suggest a lack of understanding about or feeling uncomfortable with the topic. My asking participants about these concepts that most knew very little about could have made some feel uncomfortable adding to the distancing in some of their responses. It was also striking to me that the participants of color used personal examples when talking about race, but the white participants mainly spoke about others and really did not acknowledge their own race. Judi was the only white participant who did discuss her whiteness when she talked about her trip to Jamaica. Although the participants were able to identify how knowing about whiteness and white privilege could be important to them personally, there was a general lack of ownership for one’s own race in their responses.

Overall there seemed to be a general distancing from the topic by most of the study participants. Perhaps this could be expected to be true at the beginning of the study, but it was also true at the end of the study as well. This to me underscored the lack of understanding about the concepts of whiteness and white privilege among the study participants in general and illustrated a way in which these concepts operated in this study. As McIntyre (1997) suggests, “the lack of self-reflection about being a white person in this society distances white people from investigating the meaning of whiteness and prohibits a critical examination of the individual, institutional, and cultural forms of racism” (p. 14). It was hoped that this distancing would change for the participants after taking part in the program sessions. This in most instances was not the case.
It is true that Steph more than any one acknowledged her race often in her remarks throughout the study. The other two participants of color, Joe and Rebecca, also referenced their race/ethnic identity in their responses but not as frequently or directly as Steph. The white participants rarely referenced or took ownership for their race. Their comments were often more general statements and spoke to what should be done rather than what they were going to do or have done. Hytten and Adkins (2001) acknowledge that the biggest barriers educators faced when teaching about diversity from a whiteness perspective are resistance and disengagement. The literature also added that resistance is reinforced by the invisibility of white privilege (Gillespie, Ashbaugh, & DeFiore, 2002). Additionally, McIntyre (1997) contends that white people possess a form of “privileged choice” when deciding whether or not they deal with racial issues. This certainly could demonstrate a fundamental characteristic of white privilege, which is white people’s ability to ignore it even in the face of personal stories and examples from those of color. Further, Ndura (2004) suggests that “the absence of cultural diversity is rarely noticed, and when it is, it is also presented as a given, unquestioned condition” (p. 15).

However, it is important to remember that this study really just began to scratch the surface of the many ways racism and whiteness and white privilege operate in the United States and therefore more education and learning is most likely needed. After all learning about racism and the concepts of whiteness and white privilege is a process that is challenging because it questions so many long-held assumptions and unfolds over time with additional experiences allowing for the information that was learned by the participants to be applied. Additionally, it is important to remember that challenging such long-held assumptions about one’s place in society could be a potentially painful process, which is also why some participants might tend to continue to ignore their privilege.
Invisible whiteness in action. Another example to consider which also spoke to the invisible operating nature of whiteness and white privilege in this study was the new information about racism, particularly a new history of race and racism in the United States. Even though all the study participants have earned a masters degree and most likely completed one or more history courses throughout their educational experiences, it was still a ‘history lesson’ that most participants acknowledged as the most significant thing that they learned. As Thompson (1997) acknowledges, education received by members of a privileged group “may fall short of any educational ideal insofar as it fails to provide perspective – that is, insofar as it fails to teach privileged students how their own experience is related to the experience of others very different from themselves” (p. 17). This lack of history regarding race and racism in the curriculum further illustrated how whiteness and white privilege operated as an invisible social construction. Whiteness is more often than not an invisible social construction rarely questioned by white people including those in this study.

The literature supported the idea that white people are often unaware of what it means to be a white person in the United States. Leistyna (1997) suggests that the underlying, evasive beliefs that inform the social construction of whiteness is strategically infused, since those who live by it are unable, or simply unwilling to see and name it. Kincheloe et al. (1998) also suggest that individuals are unable to separate where they are positioned in the ‘web of reality’ from what they perceive. Being that white people are often unable to articulate or address their whiteness, creates a situation whereby one’s position or privilege in society may or may not be questioned. Do the examples provided above indicate that this is the case in this study?

The examples uncovered in the participant data suggested that although whiteness and white privilege were the focus of the program sessions and discussions, its inherent invisible
nature of operation was ever present in the study. It had an absent presence throughout the study as suggested above. Manglitz (2003) also alludes to this absent presence by suggesting that the invisible nature of whiteness has affected adult education by way of curriculum and instructional practices for example. She further suggests that researchers in adult education have begun to examine whiteness and white privilege to continue to expose how these concepts impact adult education practices. Although, it is important to not lose sight of the idea that this is an unfolding process that may take greater time for some than others. In the follow-up six months after the program sessions ended, the responses from Mark and Steph were very encouraging demonstrating that they had already put what they reported learning into their student affairs practice. For others maybe additional time will prove equally beneficial and for others perhaps the invisible nature of whiteness and an unwillingness to question it and what it represents could prevail over time.

Learning in Action Through Engaged Pedagogy

The theme learning in action through engaged pedagogy represents my desire to demonstrate that this study made a difference to the participants who took part in it. It was my belief that to do this a critical or engaged pedagogy of whiteness was necessary. An engaged pedagogy of whiteness provided a theoretical framework of teaching that emphasized student engagement in the exploration of the social, political, and psychological aspects of being a member of a racial group including the influence of power relations and white privilege (Kincheloe, 1999). This form of pedagogy provided the foundation for the program sessions, which were discussed in detail in Chapter Four. Although all the study participants philosophically spoke in such a way that they indicated a more race conscious philosophy of student affairs practice, some also reported actual examples when they shared information
related to how they were incorporating what they learned in their practice as student affairs professionals.

**Whiteness and Engagement in Action of Participants**

Whiteness and engagement in action of the participants is discussed in this section. I reported earlier that Mark and Steph specifically reported examples of their engagement through incorporating what they learned in their practice. Others did so also, however in a much more limited way. For example, Sarah provided two examples when discussing changes to her office’s mission statement and when designing a recent brochure. However, other than the specific examples of changes for professional practice noted above or in the last chapter, other examples were limited in the overall participant discussion. Although, I certainly do not want to take way from those participants that did cite examples or from others that thought of them but for some reason did not share them, but there still was a general lack of connection of learning to practice for some of the participants. McIntyre (1997) also acknowledges her participants’ inability to understand whiteness beyond the naming of racism in her action research study. Therefore, it does seem to suggest that for some this study had a greater impact than for others.

**Challenging an understanding of racism.** An overall example of an engaged or critical pedagogy of whiteness in this study was a changed understanding of the history of race and racism in the United States for most study participants. This suggested that participants not only had to consider their own understanding of history, but also challenge it to incorporate new information. Thompson (1997) emphasizes that in a racist society to be democratic education must be specifically anti-racist, which includes teaching students to examine their actual experiences “in terms that press against the boundaries of convention and of immediate perception” (p. 17). That is to suggest that an anti-racist education must equip learners with the
ability to pursue an understanding of racial issues beyond what appears needed or relevant from the learner’s own perspective.

Since I do possess white skin privilege, my undertaking this investigation was not required and my life could have continued on rather successfully without it. I decided, unlike any of my fellow classmates or colleagues at work, to further investigate it thus perhaps challenging or pressing against the boundaries of convention myself. Additionally, it is an ongoing challenge to press myself to continue to develop an understanding of that which I am only beginning to understand and which is being learned in a situation highly influenced by white privilege. It is very hard to become aware of that which you are unaware of in the first place. How do you know what you are looking for and when you find something if you actually found it? These ideas are discussed further below in the section on whiteness and engagement in action of the white researcher.

Participants of color as educators. Another important aspect of this study to note was the degree to which the participants of color were engaged as educators in the learning process for the other participants. This was noted several times by the white participants through their citing of specific examples shared by those of color and served to further demonstrate that learning was taking place. Yorks and Kasl (2002) support this observation finding that participants engage in both one’s own knowing and the knowing of others to further understand what it means to learn from experience. Yorks and Kasl argue that there is a direct relationship between the degree of diversity among learners and the need to create learning strategies that fully engage learners affectively through an experience-based way of knowing. Therefore, in relation to this study, whiteness was explored with both participants of color and white participants to attempt to unveil a picture of whiteness that was not simply white focused. It is
also important to acknowledge that participants of color having to educate white people were yet another manifestation of white privilege in this study.

What was a little more surprising was the degree to which the participants of color reported learning about whiteness and white privilege. Kincheloe (1999) points out that a critical or engaged pedagogy of whiteness must reveal the dynamics associated with whiteness to whites and non-whites alike in an attempt to illustrate how both groups are hurt by a lack of self-knowledge regarding the impact of whiteness and white privilege. However, this could also serve to illustrate as mentioned in the previous section yet another way these concepts represented influence even over those who are recipients of its disadvantages or negative effects. Although participants were asked about what they learned about whiteness and white privilege, they were not specifically asked what they learned about their own racial identity. This omission certainly could be an indication of how my own whiteness and lack of awareness demonstrated the difficulties of identifying white privilege, which is discussed more in the next section. It is acknowledged here to suggest that learning about whiteness and white privilege is a process, even for the researcher. It is a further reminder that again it is important to keep in mind that a pedagogical analysis of whiteness yields several aspects for consideration and inclusion according to Kincheloe (1999). Therefore, educators must continue to examine previously ignored concepts such as invisible power relations and the ways such social forces shape human awareness (Kincheloe, 1999).

Although learning in action through an engaged pedagogy demonstrated through specific examples of changed practice was an important theme to examine when considering if this study made a difference to the participants involved, it may also be important to remember that all of the participants believed they benefited in some way by taking part in the study and I certainly
came to a greater understanding of whiteness myself from conducting the study. Again, maybe additional time would allow more examples to present themselves to further illustrate how student affairs professional practice can be benefited by participation in an anti-racist education program such as the one employed in this study. It is important to highlight that this is indeed a process and perhaps a six-week program is not enough since it is often too easy to forget about whiteness and white privilege when in most environments it is never acknowledged or considered. Once the program sessions ended the white participants certainly had the luxury of returning to business as usual. Underscoring the idea that “privilege permeates our total being, often becoming part of our implicit knowledge, making its discovery a strenuous exercise” (Rocco & West, 1998, p. 172.).

**Whiteness and Engagement in Action of the White Researcher**

Overall, the study was able to show that an engaged or critical pedagogy was incorporated throughout the delivery of the program sessions because most study participants clearly learned new information and challenged long-held understandings of the history of race and racism in the United States. However, it is important to acknowledge that this learning took place within a system that is influenced by whiteness and white privilege. Therefore, whiteness and engagement in action of the white researcher is considered with regard to the influence of my whiteness and my roles and power relations.

**The influence of my whiteness.** As the researcher and sole facilitator of the program sessions my actions and intentions must also be considered under the influence of whiteness and white privilege. Even when I make a conscious attempt to identify these concepts within the study I am still limited by what I cannot see. As Thompson (1997) points out since anti-racist
pedagogy addresses a specific conception of racism, it is forced to function within existing race relations even while seeking to change them.

My understanding of my own whiteness certainly influenced my roles as researcher and program facilitator in this study. As the facilitator, it would have been impossible for me to not allow my own beliefs to present themselves at times. I also strongly believed that my involvement in this research process and in the discussions with study participants influenced my thinking about my own whiteness and white privilege. It would almost have had to since I have had little opportunity to truly explore these concepts with others in general and specifically with those in my profession. Manglitz (2002) recognizes that there are white educators who are struggling with their own whiteness and white privilege in a continued effort to challenge racism. It would be irresponsible to not suggest that whiteness and white privilege influenced my roles in the study since it would be disregarding the very nature of these concepts to do otherwise.

*My roles and power relations.* My positionality as the researcher and facilitator put me in a position of influence over the study participants whether I intended it or not. It is discussed here with regard to my roles in the study and power relations. Additionally, my position as a white woman could further illustrate the superiority of whiteness through my presence in these roles of responsibility in the study. Johnson-Bailey and Cervero (1998) suggest that the positionality of the teacher, specifically their race, is the most influential factor with regard to classroom dynamics. They further suggest that more work is needed to explore how power relations impact teaching and learning and how these relations can be negotiated to enhance the adult learning environment.

Although all the participants were consulted, I ultimately made the decisions about how to conduct the program sessions and what information was included. It is also important to
acknowledge that my focus on whiteness and white privilege may have suggested to the participants that other factors, such as class, gender, and sexual orientation, are not of consequence. After all, it is acknowledged that assumptions about whiteness work with constructions such as class, gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity to shape classroom knowledge (Maher & Tetrault, 1997).

My roles in the study, therefore, suggested that I knew what the participants needed to learn even though I too was learning in the process. Thompson (2003) suggests that it is worth considering just how anti-racist educators know that they are on the “right path.” It is certainly a question I ask myself as I continue to struggle with the knowledge that I cannot help but operate from a privileged perspective and that I must continue to examine and question myself if I am able to be a successful adult educator for others.

Making It Personal

This section examines the theme making it personal, which looks closer at how the methodology of the study supported an engaged or critical pedagogy, which not only allowed for learning about racism and the concepts of whiteness and white privilege to take place for the participants, but also to demonstrate how the methodology allowed for personal development and relationship or community building to occur as well. Although it is important to remember that critical pedagogy is specifically about challenging structural power relations based on race, class, gender, and sexual orientation, it is discussed here only in light of race particularly since that was the focus of the study.

Participant Perspective

The findings of the study suggested that the methodology incorporated allowed for the participants to experience personal benefits related to their involvement in the study. This was
also true for the researcher. In this section, both the participants’ perspective as well as the researcher’s are discussed in relation to how the study made it personal for those involved. First, the participants’ perspective is considered.

Building collegial relationships. An emphasis on community building is often considered a function of student affairs professionals. For example, Whitt (1997) suggests that student affairs professionals be described with regard to common areas of responsibility including community development. Regardless of the university, the creation of welcoming and empowering educational environments must be a primary concern of student affairs professionals, according to Woodward-Nakata (1999). Along these same lines, hooks (2003) recommends that in order to create a learning environment, hierarchy must be diffused and a sense of community created. According to hooks, a learning environment is where teacher and student work together as partners and education can happen anywhere and at anytime. Other adult educators note creating community as significant to participants as well (Kincheloe, et al., 1998; Tisdell, 2003). However, this community development or collegial relationship building was not necessarily the primary intent of the study, but an important byproduct for the participants.

Changing the campus climate certainly is a grand expectation, but perhaps a bit too far reaching for an initial investigation of elusive concepts like whiteness and white privilege. However, the action research model employed in this study did prove itself effective on several fronts. As discussed above, I believe that the participants did learn information about racism and whiteness and white privilege by taking part in the study, which was facilitated overall by the action research process. Additionally, some of the participants provided examples of employing their new learning in their practice. What was not expected was the degree to which the action
research model used in this study supported overall personal benefits to the participants beyond their learning about racism and the concepts of whiteness and white privilege, particularly in regard to building collegial relationships with each other and in regard to personal information especially about race, that was shared among them.

*Unexpected lack of conflict among participants.* What might be considered particularly interesting about this study was the general lack of conflict among the participants throughout the program sessions, because often times conflict is a part of engagement about diversity issues (hooks, 1994, 2003; Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 1998; Tisdell, 2003). In Chapter Five, Judi provided the best example of the atmosphere by suggesting that “everybody took it seriously and they spoke honestly and from the heart and were willing to share experiences and attitudes.” This overall lack of conflict among participants could have possibly lessened the impact of the material presented and discussed during the program sessions. It could be further suggested that there was just not enough time for conflict to develop (and engaged or critical pedagogy) given the time limitations of the study and the working schedules of the participants. This is not meant to take away form the study’s findings, but simply to acknowledge the realities of educational or professional development settings where participants are working at the same time as attending educational activities. This might also be indicative of ‘white talk,’ in that white people and ‘niceness’ often are uncomfortable with conflict.

However, in this case it seemed that the lack of conflict among participants allowed them to report forming deeper relationships with their colleagues, which may or may not have occurred with the presence of greater conflict, even though having conflict and successfully negotiating it is often regarded as a means to help people get closer. Rebecca provided an
example to illustrate the importance of building collegial relationships, when she noted that the importance of the study was having a different relationship with her colleagues.

Again, it is important to note that the participants were not just spending time together; but they were talking about deep things that are not typically discussed in ‘polite’ conversation since these subjects often make people uncomfortable, particularly in mixed race settings. It is further important to highlight the degree to which talking about these deep things really challenged the power relations presented by the concepts of whiteness and white privilege. Hytten and Adkins (2001), for example, acknowledge that dialogue is an import aspect of their pedagogy of whiteness. Certainly talking is part of the process, but rational talk that is devoid of conflict might again suggest another way in which these concepts, as indicative of whiteness, operated in the study. This might be reflective of what Welp (2002) observes in his study of white men’s talk about whiteness and their emphasis on rationality. This could also highlight the ways, not only in which the study reflected whiteness while becoming more conscious of whiteness, but also the limitations of the extent to which this study (or any study of critical pedagogy) was actually ‘critical’ in its approach.

Support for personal growth and development. While considering what the participants reported that they learned about racism and specifically whiteness and white privilege by taking part in the study, it became evident that the participants also revealed that they developed a greater knowledge of self that would benefit them on a personal level, which suggested yet another positive outcome of incorporating a critical action research model. With this regard it is valuable to consider a classic definition of action research provided by Carr and Kemmis (1986):

Action research is simply a form of self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices,
their understanding of these practices, and the situations in which the practices are carried out (p. 162).

Therefore, it is suggested that although it has already been acknowledged that challenging the invisible power relations associated with whiteness is a process that takes time, it is my contention that this process was furthered by incorporating action research. Inherent in the basic definition provided above is the notion of self-reflective inquiry, which can be seen in participants’ accounts of developing greater knowledge of self thus making their learning personal.

The examples discussed here related to building collegial relationships, lack of conflict among study participants, and learning that supported personal growth and development, all are considered positive albeit unexpected outcomes of this study which was supported by a critical action research process. The methodology incorporated in this study is discussed here to illustrate how it encouraged a process that made it personal as well as informative for the participants. It is additionally suggested that the personal benefits and relationship building reported by the participants could be viewed as an initial step for many in considering challenging information. Given the duration of the study however and the focus on participant discussion, the extent to which the study demonstrated its critical nature could be questioned. However, it is again a limitation that seemed inherent in an initial investigation where identifying and talking about the concepts of whiteness and white privilege were the focus.

**Researcher Perspective**

My involvement in the study also made this a personal and informative process for me as well. Not only did I too learn more about the history of race and racism in the United States through my investigation of program materials to use in the program sessions with the
participants, I had the opportunity for the first time to discuss these ideas with others who were interested. Often times this was challenging for me as I attempted to take part in the discussions as well as attend to my role as facilitator. I also felt a sense of discomfort wondering if I really knew enough about these concepts and ideas to lead discussions about them with others. I often times would mention that I was learning too and should not be viewed as an expert. It is hard to be seen as the leader or teacher in a situation like this and not be viewed in some way as more expert than those just learning. I have to admit that I was pleased that all of the participants found value in their participation in the study. Maybe this is because we are tempted to position ourselves as ‘good whites’ (Thompson, 2003). Meaning that although I might acknowledge whiteness and white privilege as existing concepts it is hard to acknowledge how I perpetuate them. We want to feel like and be good people, as well as be seen as good people by others according to Thompson (2003).

In summary, the findings presented in Chapters Four and Five are discussed in the above sections in light of three themes: race and whiteness: the absent presence, learning in action, and making it personal. The discussion of these themes attempted to highlight two specific areas of this study that were worth further examination. First, a further look at how the concepts of whiteness and white privilege were included in the study as not only learning material, but also how these concepts operated as an ever-present invisible social construction. Second, the value of incorporating a critical or engaged pedagogy was considered followed by a discussion of the unexpected merits of utilizing an action research methodology. The findings of the study are further considered below in the next section, which addresses the implications of the study for practice.
Implications of the Study for Practice

There were several implications of the findings for the practices of adult education and student affairs that can be considered in light of this study. These implications for practice can be examined from two perspectives. Those that related to the study participants and those that related to the process of the research itself. Implications that related to the participants are discussed first.

Implications Related to Study Participants

The implications of this study that related to the study participants are discussed in this section. They are aspects that could be viewed as relating to the human or people area of the study rather than on the mechanics. There were three specific implications that related to study participants.

*Importance of including whiteness in anti-racist education.* First, anti-racist education programs for student affairs professionals that include the concepts of whiteness and white privilege along with a review of the history of race and racism in the United States are important to consider in an effort to improve their practice related to diversity. Since student affairs professionals represent those most often charged with out-of-classroom personal and community development opportunities for students on a college campus, it only makes sense that relevant education programs would assist them to perform their duties more effectively and equitably in order to support an institution’s overall mission to provide a quality education. Howard-Hamilton et al. (1998) suggest that there is a compelling need for education programs to address diversity issues and prepare culturally sensitive and skilled student affairs professionals since it is generally accepted that every student affairs professional is responsible for promoting diversity. It is further suggested that these same professionals still may not have consciously
thought about the varied needs of the diverse students they represent and serve on their respective campuses (Wilkinson & Rund, 2000).

However, it was not my contention that student affairs professionals were inadequately performing their current job related duties. What is a closer representation is that higher education, and thus student affairs, is not insulated from the challenges that face the greater society. The issue of diversity is important to student affairs practice because of the vital role student affairs professionals play in achieving and maintaining quality higher education, which is dependent on successfully addressing issues related to diversity. Most student affairs professionals enter the field with a genuine interest in working directly with students in the areas of personal and career development (Dixon, 2001). Therefore, a program such as the one used in this study suggested that student affairs professionals could learn new information that benefits their practice as well as themselves personally. The program model utilized in this study provided one example to consider when working with other student affairs professionals. Therefore, this research contributed not only to the field of student affairs professional practice, but to its literature base as well.

Value of professional development. Second, this study also has important implications for adult education and ongoing educational or professional development programs since it contributes to the literature with regard to action research and program planning in a specific area of practice: the education of student affairs professionals around the area of diversity. Not only does it suggest an example of program planning in practice, it also underscores the value of an educational or professional development program for both the participants and the researcher. Similar to this study, Welp (2002) also illustrates the value of professional development programming to diversity learning for adults. Welp further indicates that providing professional
development opportunities related to diversity to other adults has allowed him to learn more about diversity for himself as well as his practice as an adult educator. This was certainly the case for me with regard to this study and learning about whiteness and white privilege.

Need to discuss white identity. A third implication for practice, to consider is that participants really need to discuss their identity as white people. That way when they refer to what should be done, they can be encouraged to say, “what I need to do as a white person.” -- rather than speaking in the third person or the least distant “we.” They need to be encouraged to say “I” and to own their whiteness as part of pedagogy rather than being permitted to slip into distance. There are two main perspectives represented in the social science and education literature that address approaching the study of whiteness and white privilege with white people. One perspective deals with white identity development and the other perspective views whiteness and the exposure of its associated privilege to foster its elimination. This study related more to this second perspective and perhaps needed to include more that related to white identity development. Several authors suggest that white identity development should be used to present the study of whiteness and facilitate the discussion of race among white people (Helms, 1992; Kincheloe, et al., 1998; McIntyre, 1997; Nguyen, 2000; Sue, 2003; Thompson, 2003). Further, it is recommended that this must be accomplished in an ongoing, active process without guilt, but with an understanding that to deny the humanity of any one person is to deny the humanity of all (Sue, 2003).

Implications Related to Study Process

The implications of this study that related to the study process are discussed in this section. Most importantly, action research was identified as an appropriate research method in this study because of its strengths, which are: its relevance to an actual situation in the field of
practice, its focus on a systematic process for problem-solving and project development, and its responsiveness to inquiry and change (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). In addition, Elliott (1991) suggests action research improves practice by encouraging the development of practitioner capacity for discrimination and judgment in complex, human situations. Action research “unifies inquiry, the improvement of performance and the development of persons in their professional role” (p. 52). The action research methodology employed in this study clearly was important to supporting learning as well as encouraging meaningful participant interactions. It provides an example for future adult education researchers to review.

**Value of including participants of color.** This study also underscored the importance of including participants of color in the investigation. What became evident from the participants’ remarks was the importance of the discussion namely the examples and information provided by the participants of color in the study. This had more impact on some of the participants than on others, but is worth noting because it supported the rationale for including participants of color in the study. Although there was no expectation for the participants of color to serve in an educational capacity, they certainly did that at times for some of the white participants. Thus, helping them make connections that allowed for a better understanding and an opportunity to empathize with others who are different from themselves. Hytten and Warren (2003) suggest that making connections could be a powerful beginning to more fully understanding the experiences of others. An additional benefit to including participants of color is to help safeguard against ‘white talk’ (McIntyre, 1997).

According to Frankenberg (1993), the process of altering present and future meanings of whiteness is connected to altering the meaning of other to form co-constructed racial and cultural identities and therefore requires a collective, not individual approach. Yorks and Kasl (2002),
who are primarily concerned with ways of knowing, find that participants who engaged in both one’s own knowing and the knowing of others furthered their understanding by learning from experience. This study suggested that an important implication for the fields of both adult education and student affairs is the value of including participants of color when investigating concepts like whiteness and white privilege because they can be integral to the process. This study further suggested that participants of color also found benefit in their participation as well.

**Role of time.** Additionally, this study pointed out that time plays a critical factor in learning about concepts that challenge participants’ assumptions and beliefs, such as the ones associated with racism and whiteness discussed in this research. Since learning about racism and the concepts of whiteness and white privilege is a process that is challenging because it questions so many long-held assumptions and unfolds over time with additional experiences allowing for the information that was learned by the participants to be applied. The added value of reflection, which is an important part of the action research process, cannot always be completed according to a specific time frame. Therefore, it is important to note that further study and time may be needed in order to realize additional or further results in studies such as this one. Ndura (2004) points out that self-reflection may not manifest itself in an immediate change in attitudes, but it will engage participants in the process, “and each step in the right direction must be celebrated” (p. 15).

**Ongoing awareness about impact of whiteness on findings.** Lastly, a final implication of this study to consider relates to the very concepts of whiteness and white privilege, which were also the focus of the investigation. Regardless of the field of practice, adult education or student affairs, it is important to understand and recognize the need for ongoing awareness and reflection about the ways in which these concepts operate. Even though they were the subjects of
discussion and at the front of participants’ perceptions, the invisible ways in which these concepts work was ever present. Examples in this study included some participants’ failure to claim ownership of their race in their comments, the missing discussion of the history of race and racism in the United States in participants’ formal educations, and the more general or philosophical way many participants spoke about the value of their learning to themselves. No matter how dominant, whiteness is still more often than not an invisible social construction rarely questioned by white people. Therefore, a continued awareness about how these concepts can operate even while they are the focus of examination is an implication that can impact findings, regardless of the field of study, if it is not acknowledged.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

While this research addressed a need for a greater understanding of diversity particularly of the concepts of whiteness and white privilege by student affairs professionals in higher education, there were some limitations to the study that must be noted. There were also some important strengths to note as well. In this section, limitations of the study are considered first.

The Study Limitations

There were five limitations of this study: my role as facilitator, limited time for action research cycle iterations, scope of findings, time required to support valued discussions, and use of language. These limitations are discussed here in that order.

The first limitation was my role as the facilitator because I was the sole researcher and primary facilitator of the program sessions conducted with the student affairs professionals. The data that was collected could be influenced by the relationship I have with the study’s participants since we all work in the same division at the same institution of higher education. The lack of conflict among participants discussed previously is another example of how
familiarity between me and the participants could have influenced the study. Triangulation of data and methods were my attempts to counterbalance this limitation.

Next, due to the scope of this study only one formal iteration of the action research cycle was completed. This presented a second limitation as suggested in previous discussions related to the time needed to allow for new information learned to be incorporated into professional practice. Additional iterations of the formal ‘plan-act-observe-reflect’ action research cycle (Carr and Kemmis, 1986) would add breadth and depth to this study’s findings by affording participants additional opportunity to learn more and dig deeper with regard to whiteness and white privilege. Using participants’ assessment and suggestions from the first formal iteration of the action research cycle additional sessions would be created to foster a second iteration. Future iterations of this action research cycle could shed light on the discussion about the time needed for a process such as this one to realize greater results in practice. Lastly, it would also allow me to hone my competence as both the researcher and facilitator, which would add additional credibility to the findings.

Additionally, action research as a methodology has been identified as having its own limitations. It lacks both external and internal controls according to Merriam and Simpson (2000), which means the generalizability of results are limited. This study was conducted within one division of one institution of higher education. While I hope and expect that the findings could have value and be applied in similar contexts for other institutions, divisions of student affairs, and ultimately student affairs professionals, it is beyond the intent of this study to determine that with any degree of certainty.

The time required to support valued discussions was the fourth limitation of the study. Although the program sessions and the included discussions were highly valued by the study
participants, several did acknowledge the twelve-hour time commitment as a possible challenge for future participants. It is important to continue to assess the amount of time required for a program of this nature that would not lose sight of the objectives or ability to incorporate group interaction, but also be time conscious so as not to make its future delivery an impossibility.

At this point it is also important to make note of an unavoidable final limitation of this study presented by the use of language. Language, a significant aspect of this study because it was the primary way information was communicated by me as the researcher as well as the study participants, also presented a fundamental limitation. In the United States the dominant discourse is one of whiteness and white privilege. Therefore, one of the limitations of language in this research is the idea that whiteness is being studied from within a discourse that is predominantly white and has the capacity to produce white talk, which “serves to minimize white culpability for the existence of individual, institutional, and societal racism” (McIntyre, 1997, p. 78). This point is important to acknowledge. However, it is equally important to note that this limitation of language is unavoidable since it is impossible for white people to completely escape their whiteness and white privilege even though they attempt to study it.

The Study Strengths

In addition to the limitations that relate to this study there were strengths that must be acknowledged as well. There were five specific strengths that are important to consider. They are the methodology, the program, benefit to participants, improved practice, and making a difference.

First, it is important to acknowledge that the action research methodology employed in this study was a strength of the research. As discussed previously this methodology not only supported the learning of new information related to the history of race and racism in the United
States and specifically about the concepts of whiteness and white privilege, but it also allowed for building deeper relationships among colleagues and learning that supported personal growth and development. The action research methodology incorporated in this study was a strength because it encouraged a process that made it personal as well as informative for the participants.

Second, the program model used in the study was another strength presented here for consideration. The sessions were highly rated by the eight participants. The overall average rating for all six of the program sessions was 4.33. The rating scale was given as one to five with one being least valuable in terms of its helpfulness in learning about whiteness and white privilege and five being most valuable in terms of its helpfulness in learning about whiteness and white privilege. Given that this was a qualitative study this statistic is presented only to further demonstrate that the participants found the program sessions valuable in learning about whiteness and white privilege. In addition, based on the findings presented in Chapters Four and Five, the program model was successful at not only delivering new information, but also by encouraging group interaction among participants. Additionally, the unexpected positive effects of the program sessions, such as building deeper relationships with colleagues and developing greater self-knowledge further illustrated that the program model employed was a further strength of the study. An important outcome of this study was the development of a program model that included whiteness and its associated white privilege as important components of anti-racist education.

A third benefit of this study was that all the participants reported that they benefited by being involved. Some participants shared examples of personal benefits, such as building deeper relationships with colleagues. Others discussed specific examples of direct impact to their practice and others spoke more generally or philosophically about developing a race conscious
philosophy that informs their practice as student affairs professionals. Either way, the study participants clearly pointed out how they found value to themselves personally and/or to their practice through their participation in the study, which certainly must be viewed as a strength of the study.

Next, an essential aspect of action research is a focus on improved practice. Therefore, a fourth strength of this study was my own improved practice not only as a researcher, but also as an adult educator and student affairs professional as well. As a researcher, I realized the value of thorough planning even if you need to make adjustments and accommodations during the study itself. I believe my planning efforts allowed me to focus more on being involved along with the participants in the process rather than spending time worrying over program details. I was generally over prepared and had to learn to adjust my session outlines to let the discussions lead themselves rather than forcing them in one direction or another based on my need to ask all my discussion questions. It was certainly helpful to have extra questions, but I had to learn quickly not to be concerned if they were not all addressed.

As an adult educator my practice was improved through gaining concrete experience educating adults in a formal way. A basic aspect of andragogy is that adults bring their life experience to the learning process. This was emphasized in this study and reminded me that it is important as an adult educator to facilitate ways in which these life experiences can be shared to help illustrate concepts and provide concrete examples for consideration. As a student affairs professional, I too shared in learning about others’ experiences and examples of practice. Additionally, I have examined my own practice to determine where changes can be made. Most recently, I increased diversity training with our student orientation leaders from one hour to six
hours and included the need to acquire and develop multicultural competencies in all job
descriptions.

Lastly, a final strength to consider was that the study made a difference. In this study, a
critical or engaged pedagogy was considered in conjunction with action research because the aim
was not only to unveil study participants’ meaning of an often unconscious and subtle issue like
whiteness, but also to incorporate a process of research that would allow student affairs
professionals to get directly involved in an effort that could positively influence their practice.
By evidence of the examples of changes in practice presented by participants like Mark, Sarah,
and Steph, it can be suggested that this study has made a difference to some student affairs
professionals at one institution of higher education. Although this study could be viewed as a
small start, it could also be viewed as a positive one that illustrated the final and possibly the
most important strength of this research – it mattered.

Recommendations for Future Research

First and foremost, it is essential to acknowledge that due to the scope of this study only
one formal iteration of the action research cycle was completed. This is not a criticism since the
research process had to stop somewhere, but it goes suggest that the most obvious
recommendation for future research would be to complete future iterations of this action research
cycle with the current participants. Using the participants’ assessment and suggestions along
with the findings from the first formal iteration of the action research cycle additional sessions
could be created to foster a second iteration. Since the value of group interaction was
highlighted in the findings, it would be the emphasis of these future sessions. I think it is also
important to cultivate further participant learning about themselves including looking specifically
at changes in one’s view of their own racial identity as well as including case studies for further
illustration and demonstration of applying what is learned about whiteness and white privilege in their practice. Some participants requested greater discussion related to addressing questions about ‘now what’ and ‘how to’ issues and case studies could provide examples to facilitate this request. Besides this obvious recommendation there are also several other recommendations for future research suggested by this study.

As well as future iterations of the action research cycle with the participants included in this study, future research should replicate this study or the first formal iteration of the action research cycle to consider findings with relationship to other participants as well. It should also investigate additional program materials such as the video series and group activities to determine additional sources and formats of materials to utilize in future programs with future participants. Even though the video series utilized in this study was an integral aspect of the program sessions for the study participants, future research to identify additional program materials that will be valuable to participants is necessary.

Being that the study participants discussed the importance of group interactions and discussions, future research that investigates additional ways to support this process is also warranted. Most study participants felt the discussions that occurred as part of the program sessions were a valuable aspect of the program and should be continued for future programs and participants. The racial composition of future participants in a study such as this one is another important area for future research to consider. It would be interesting to consider the findings from all races of participants to further identify and explore common themes and ideas.

Although the program sessions and the included discussions were highly valued by the study participants, several did acknowledge the twelve-hour time commitment as a possible challenge for future participants. It is important to continue to assess the amount of time
required for a program of this nature that would not lose sight of the objectives or ability to incorporate group interaction, but also be time conscious so as not to make its future delivery an impossibility. Future research efforts could consider different program models that have a lesser time commitment and the resultant value to participant discussion. Flexibility to deliver programs of this nature that are meaningful yet realistic to deliver with shorter time commitments can also be investigated.

Final Reflections

My interest in this study stemmed not only from a desire to improve practice for student affairs professionals, but also from an exploration of the concepts of whiteness and white privilege, which began in coursework required to complete my adult education doctoral program. Since I have undertaken this vein of study, the way I view myself as a white woman and part of a larger world has changed and causes me to think and do things differently. It made me take action not only in regard to this study, but to new program development and staff hiring decisions in my workplace as well. This made me wonder if other student affairs professionals who learned about whiteness and white privilege would also in some way take action or change the way they thought. Even though the study’s findings support that this is the case, I hope that the participants themselves would say it is true.

It was my deeply held desire to attempt to begin to make a difference in my work environment and ultimately the campus climate by taking up this research effort. However, it was never my intention to be viewed as an expert on this subject matter because I recognize, now more than ever, that it is challenging to see my own whiteness and white privilege when I live and work in a world that is highly influenced by its invisible operating nature and power relations. I question what I am not aware of and how I might be inadvertently supporting white
privilege through my actions. This presents a dilemma between wanting to ‘do good’ and not
doing any harm by further perpetuating racism through the reinforcement of the ideals related to
whiteness and white privilege. This to me will be the challenge that must never end since what it
means to be whiteness is not a static social construction.

This inability to escape my own whiteness or the power of whiteness’s invisible nature of
operation was important learning for me with regard to this study. Even though the concepts of
whiteness and white privilege were under investigation, they continued to operate and play a role
in the study not just as information to be learned but by influencing the overall environment and
participants as well as the researcher involved. I think I have a much greater appreciation for the
difficulty involved in trying to study concepts that are difficult to name and discuss.

It makes me wonder sometimes, if ignorance is not bliss since often times education for
me does more to support my belief that there is so very much I do not know than to create a
sense of mastery over a subject matter or area of consideration. In the end my deep value for
education as one of the few mechanisms that can change the world makes me know that the
uncomfortable feeling of knowing that you just do not know or will need to continue to struggle
to know is part of a greater educational purpose and ultimately will make a greater difference if it
is continued rather than stopped. It would be impossible at this juncture to stop my desire and
process for lifelong learning. What is just so daunting to me is that this quest is never ending and
there are no right answers, just a fundamental desire inside to know that I do my best to try and
make this world and my tiny little part in it a better place because I am a part of it.

It is continually important to remind myself that not everyone thinks like I do or sees the
value in addressing diversity the way I do. Therefore, this study reinforced for me the need to
continue to learn myself about how to continue to improve my practice as an adult educator and
student affairs professional that incorporates ever-changing ways to connect with those I attempt to serve through my practice. After all, this study was instrumental in reminding me that not all people learn in the same ways, take the same information away as part of their learning, or apply what they learned in the same fashion. This study was not unlike other educational endeavors for me. Although it attempted to seek out answers it more likely suggested more questions in my mind and reinforced the need to further research efforts in this area as an adult educator but also to continue to provide such learning opportunities for my colleagues in student affairs as well.
REFERENCES


Helms, J. E. (1992). *A race is a nice thing to have: A guide to being a white person or understanding the white person in your life.* Topeka, KA: Content Communications.


APPENDIX A: AGREEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY and RESPECT

The Journey Toward Understanding Whiteness Among Student Affairs Professionals: An Action Research Study in Anti-Racist Education

As a participant in this study you are being asked to read and abide by this Agreement of Confidentiality and Respect. It is being used because participants may disclose information during the six-week program that they may feel is confidential in nature. Therefore, all participants are being asked to agree not to divulge information shared during program sessions to others.

By signing this agreement you agree to hold all information that is communicated to you by fellow participants in strict confidence and not to use the confidential information for your own benefit or the benefit of others, and not to disclose, distribute or disseminate the confidential information in any way to any third party.

Participants have the responsibility to:

- Treat all participants with courtesy and respect.
- Contribute towards the provision of a safe environment for discussion and sharing.

You have the right to:

- Be treated with courtesy and respect.
- Feel safe to discuss and share your thoughts and feelings.

Respect for the rights, dignity, and integrity of others is essential for the well-being of all participants in the study. Actions by any person, which do not reflect such respect for others are damaging to every participant. Every participant in the study should be free from interference, intimidation, or disparagement.

If you consent to the terms listed above on the Agreement of Confidentiality and Respect, please sign your name and indicate the date below. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

______________________________________  _____________________
Participant Signature      Date
APPENDIX B: SCRIPT FOR RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS

The Journey Toward Understanding Whiteness Among Student Affairs Professionals: An Action Research Study in Anti-Racist Education

My name is Andrea Kirshman and I am a doctoral candidate at Penn State University.

As part of my course work at Penn State I would like to study student affairs professionals and their understanding of whiteness and white privilege as an important part of anti-racist education.

To be in this study you need to be 18 years of age or older. You also will need to be a participant in this program for about 4 months. Your participation is voluntary, so you do not have to participate if you don’t want to. You can also end your participation in the study at any time by just letting me know. You also do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer.

If you decide to be in the study you will be asked to complete (2) interviews that will last approximately 2 hours each. Interviews will begin in November at a time convenient to you. The interviews will be tape-recorded. No one will know your assigned identifier (an anonymous way to identify your data in the study) except for me; and no one but me will listen to the tapes. The tapes will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in my home and then will be destroyed by fire (5) five years after this study has concluded. If the research is published, no information will be written that will identify you.

If you decide to be in the study you will also be asked to complete a six-week program that entails two-hour weekly sessions that include activities that will stimulate discussion related to diversity issues specifically those that relate to whiteness and its associated white privilege. There will be approximately (8) eight Kutztown University student affairs professionals that you may or may not know in the program.

You will be asked questions about your thoughts and beliefs in the study group of eight as you go through the six-week program and participate in the (1) one focus group. The focus group will include questions posed at the group members for response. The focus group will be tape-recorded. No one will know your assigned identifier (an anonymous way to identify your data in the study) except for me; and no one but me will listen to the tapes. The tapes will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in my home and then will be destroyed by fire 5 (five) years after this study has concluded. If the research is published, no information will be written that will identify you.

The other members in the program will know your identity, but not your assigned identifier used to discuss your data in my dissertation. Additionally, all program participants will need to sign an Agreement of Confidentiality and Respect (Note: See Appendix A).

You will also be asked to complete session evaluations and reflective writings for each week during the six-week program. Only my primary advisor and myself will review the evaluations and reflective writings.
There are few risks to participating in this study, however participants may experience slight discomfort in being asked some personal questions about themselves, their families and/or their backgrounds/culture.

If you participate in this study you may enhance your awareness of whiteness and white privilege. You may also gain a better understanding of ways in which you could engage others in learning about whiteness and white privilege in an effort to improve the climate for both students and employees at Kutztown University.

If you have any questions you may contact me, Andrea Kirshman at (610)683-4683/kirshman@kutztown.edu or my advisor, Dr. Elizabeth Tisdell at (717)948-6640/ejt11@psu.edu.

Thank you for your time and consideration – it is very much appreciated!
The program model that was used in this study consists of six two-hour weekly sessions and includes discussions and scenarios designed to elicit further understanding about whiteness as an important component of anti-racist education. The intended size of the participant group is eight since the program format resembles small group discussions with assignments to be completed outside of the discussion group used to facilitate the process. Specifically, the video series *Race: The Power of an Illusion* (California Newsreel (Producer), 2003) and exercises taken from Katz’s (2003) book, *White Awareness: Handbook for Anti-Racism Training* are incorporated. In addition, other activities and resources as well as materials from participants are incorporated as appropriate. Participant evaluations and reflective writing are used at the end of each program session to add in planning future sessions and to generate additional data to consider with regard to what is being learned and the effectiveness of the specific learning strategies employed in addition to the general program model.

The program model outline follows and includes all applicable supporting materials (or references thereto). It is organized by each of six sessions with supporting materials and participant assignments that relate to that week included immediately following that session’s outline.
Session #1 Outline

At the first program session it is important to review expectations of participation in the program as well as for the group of participants to get to know each other on a more intimate level. After an initial icebreaker type activity related to uncovering basic information, such as name, job title, role on campus, etc., more in-depth activities are included. An activity I call ‘Common Ground’ is intended to uncover what group members have in common and is included along with the group resume to highlight the abilities and experience of the group. This way all group members will have a better understanding of not only who the group members are, but also what group members bring to the group in terms of experience and background. The idea of action research is discussed and the first activity related to whiteness and white privilege is completed.

00:00 – 00:05  Welcome and Introduction to Program

Thank participants for agreeing to be part of program.

Briefly describe how the program will work and what is included.

00:05 – 00:15  Review of Participant Expectations

Agreement of Confidentiality and Respect

Participation (Establish ground rules so that everyone knows they will be heard and that no one person will dominate discussions; encourage active listening; invite individuals to participate.)

Assignments (Your assignments will be collected and maintained as part of the action research process.)

00:15 – 00:30  Initial Icebreaker Activity
Two Truths and A Lie (Instructions to participants: Since some of us know each other fairly well and others not as well, I thought we would try a somewhat different approach to sharing information about ourselves, such as our name, job title, etc. So, please use the index card provided to list two things about you that are true and one thing that is a lie. As a group we will try to uncover the lie. Questions?) Note: If basic introductory information is not included it will be sought following the activity so all participants know each other on an introductory level.

Materials required: index cards, pens.

00:30 – 00:55 Participant Discovery Activity #1

Common Ground (Instructions to participants: Select a partner and together create a list of as many things as you can think of that you both have in common. You will have 3 minutes to generate your list. Remember, in order for something to make the list you must both have it in common. ... time to generate first list ... Ok, now each group of two needs to join another group of two and generate a new list. You can use your initial lists to work from and add new items. Remember, in order for something to make the list you must all have it in common. You will have 5 minutes to generate your list. ... time to generate second list ... Alright, now let’s come together as a group and generate a final list of what this group has in common. Again remember, in order for something to make the list everyone in the group must have it in common. You will have 8 minutes to generate your list. ... time to generate final list ... So, who wants to share the group’s list? ... list is read ... Did you learn anything about each other that you didn’t know before this exercise? ... time to discuss ... What did this exercise tell you about the group? ... time to discuss ...)

Materials required: paper, pens.
Participant Discovery Activity #2

**Group Resume** (Instructions to participants: This time we’ll start out as two groups of four in order to develop a group resume. Each group will have 3 sheets of poster board and markers to create your group’s resume. You will have 15 minutes. Now let’s look at both resumes and pull together what this group of participants brings to us in terms of experience and expertise.)

Materials required: 6 sheets of poster board, markers.

Our Assignment as an Action Research Group

**Script:** Action research can be used to solve specific social problems, such as a need for a greater understanding of diversity and multiculturalism, that are found in our environment (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). Action research formally originated in the 1960s with roots in solving social problems and anthropological research methods (DePoy, Hartman, & Haslett, 1999). Action research upholds the belief that those who experience a phenomenon are those most able to investigate it. Its purpose is to generate knowledge to inform practice especially where results are intended for immediate application. Action research is not just a staff development strategy, but also a means to uncover the beliefs of practitioners and the settings in which they work. It is for this reason that action research is utilized to investigate the process of how you as student affairs professionals attempt to understand whiteness and white privilege particularly in relationship to your higher education work setting.

Therefore, our assignment is to use action research, a cyclic process that involves four-steps: plan, act, observe, and reflect (Carr & Kemmis, 1986) to determine what student affairs professionals want to learn about diversity, multiculturalism, and/or anti-racist education, and how and why is it important to them? By participating in the initial interview with me, we have already begun to complete the planning step in the action research model. Our program
together over the next six weeks will allow us to continue to work on the planning step as well as work on the acting, observing, and reflecting steps. At each program session we will act, observe, and reflect, which will allow us to plan for each subsequent session. Finally, a concluding individual interview with me about a month after the program ends will conclude the reflect step of the action research cycle.

So, to get the ball rolling and begin the act step of the cycle we will look at “Ten Things Everyone Should Know about Race.”

01:30 – 01:55  “Ten Things Everyone Should Know about Race” Discussion

Provide handout (California Newsreel, 2003, p. 4)

Discussion Questions:

1. What is your reaction to the list of ten things?
2. Do you agree with all of them?
3. Do you disagree with any of the ideas on the list?
4. Did anything on the list surprise you and how so?
5. Do you think there is anything missing from the list?

01:55 – 02:00  Assignment #1 and Session #1 Evaluation

Provide handout for assignment titled Autobiographical Sketch.

Distribute and collect evaluation.
AGREEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY and RESPECT

The Journey Toward Understanding Whiteness Among Student Affairs Professionals: An Action Research Study in Anti-Racist Education

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If you consent to the terms listed above on the Agreement of Confidentiality and Respect, please sign your name and indicate the date below. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Participant Signature __________________ Date ________________
“Ten Things Everyone Should Know about Race” (California Newsreel, 2003, p. 4)

1. **Race is a modern idea.** Ancient societies, like the Greeks, did not divide people according to physical differences, but according to religion, status, class or even language. The English word "race" turns up for the first time in a 1508 poem by William Dunbar referring to a line of kings.

2. **Race has no genetic basis.** Not one characteristic, trait or even gene distinguishes all the members of one so-called race from all the members of another so-called race.

3. **Human subspecies don’t exist.** Unlike many animals, modern humans simply haven’t been around long enough, nor have populations been isolated enough, to evolve into separate subspecies or races. On average, only one of every thousand of the nucleotides that make up our DNA differ one human from another. We are one of the most genetically similar of all species.

4. **Skin color really is only skin deep.** The genes for skin color have nothing to do with genes for hair form, eye shape, blood type, musical talent, athletic ability or forms of intelligence. Knowing someone’s skin color doesn’t necessarily tell you anything else about them.

5. **Most variation is within, not between, “races.”** Of the small amount of total human variation, 85% exists within any local population. About 94% can be found within any continent. That means, for example, that two random Koreans may be as genetically different as a Korean and an Italian.

6. **Slavery predates race.** Throughout much of human history, societies have enslaved others, often as a result of conquest or debt, but not because of physical characteristics or a belief in natural inferiority. Due to a unique set of historical circumstances, North America has the first slave system where all slaves shared a common appearance and ancestry.

7. **Race and freedom were born together.** The U.S. was founded on the principle that "All men are created equal," but the country’s early economy was based largely on slavery. The new idea of race helped explain why some people could be denied the rights and freedoms that others took for granted.

8. **Race justified social inequalities as natural.** The “common sense” belief in white superiority justified anti-democratic action and policies like slavery, the extermination of American Indians, the exclusion of Asian immigrants, the taking of Mexican lands, and the institutionalization of racial practices within American government, laws, and society.

9. **Race isn’t biological, but racism is still real.** Race is a powerful social idea that gives people different access to opportunities and resources. The government and social institutions of the United States have created advantages that disproportionately channel wealth, power and resources to white people.

10. **Colorblindness will not end racism.** Pretending race doesn’t exist is not the same as creating equality.
Assignment #1 – Autobiographical Sketch

Write a brief autobiographical sketch of your background. How would you explain who you are to others? It may be helpful to consider some of the areas below. Please complete prior to Session #2.

~ Your background in terms of race, culture, ethnicity, religion, national origin, and/or your social class background.

~ The locality or community where you grew up including what other race, ethnic, social class, and/or religious groups resided there as well.

~ Your earliest images of color or race as a factor in school.

~ Describe both advantages and disadvantages you may have experienced because of your background – your race, culture, ethnicity, and/or national origin.

~ Describe in 1 or 2 sentences a personal benefit and a disadvantage you may have experienced as a consequence of your race, culture, ethnicity, and/or national origin.
Evaluation – Session #1

Please complete the following questions. Your answers will be used to design and improve future sessions. Thank you.

List three things you learned during this session.

1.

2.

3.

What information or materials that were not provided should be included to improve the session?

In what additional ways could this session be improved to meet your needs and expectations?

Please rate this session on a scale from 1-5 in terms of its helpfulness to you in learning about whiteness and white privilege.

1  2  3  4  5

not helpful      helpful      very helpful
Session #2 Outline

At the second program session the group begins to view the three-part video series *Race: The Power of an Illusion* (California Newsreel (Producer), 2003). The first episode of this video series is titled “The Difference Between Us.” This episode shows how scientific studies including genetics upset the assumption that humans are members of distinct groups or races. This episode is mainly dedicated to understanding why this is the case. Myths and misconceptions about racial differences are also explored. Group discussion follows the viewing of episode one.

00:00 – 00:05 Session Introduction

Any issues from last session?


00:05 – 01:00 View Episode 1 - “The Difference Between Us”

01:00 – 01:50 Group Discussion of Episode 1 - “The Difference Between Us”

Questions:

1. Were you surprised by anything in the episode? Why?

2. Is there a difference between a biological view of race and a sociological view of race?

3. Is ancestry different from race?

4. Who has benefited from the belief in a biological view of race? In what ways?

5. Did the episode present anything that changed or shifted your thinking? If so, what?
6. Is it difficult to make this adjustment to your thinking?
   Why?

7. Ideas about racial differences are not uncommon in discussions related to athletics. Why do you think this is the case?

8. Why do some groups dominate certain sports and not others? What does it mean that the dominate groups have changed over time?

9. What ideas in this episode do you think are important for others to know?

10. Did this episode relate in any way to the autobiographical sketch you prepared about yourself?

01:50 – 02:00 Assignment #2 and Session #2 Evaluation

  Collect Assignment #1 titled Autobiographical Sketch.

  Provide handout for assignment titled Questions to Consider (questions taken from California Newsreel, 2003, p. 9).

  Distribute and collect evaluation.
Assignment #2 - Questions to Consider

Write down your responses/reactions to the following questions. Please complete prior to Session #3.

1. How long do you think the idea of race has been around?

2. Where did it come from?

3. Do you think Africans were enslaved in the Americas because they were deemed inferior, or were they deemed inferior because they were enslaved?
Evaluation – Session #2

Please complete the following questions. Your answers will be used to design and improve future sessions. Thank you.

List three things you learned during this session.

1.

2.

3.

What information or materials that were not provided should be included to improve the session?

In what additional ways could this session be improved to meet your needs and expectations?

Please rate this session on a scale from 1-5 in terms of its helpfulness to you in learning about whiteness and white privilege.

1  2  3  4  5
not helpful  helpful  very helpful
Session #3 Outline

The third program session continues the three-part video series Race: The Power of an Illusion (California Newsreel (Producer), 2003) started in program Session #2. The second episode of this video series is titled “The Story We Tell.” This episode traces the concept of race to the European conquest of the Americas, including the development of the first labor system where all slaves shared the physical attribute of dark skin. By the mid-19th century, race was the focus to explain everything from individual behavior to the fate of societies. This episode shows how social inequalities came to be regarded as natural characteristics. Group discussion follows the viewing of episode two.

00:00 – 00:05  Session Introduction

Any issues from last session?


00:05 – 01:00  View Episode 2 - “The Story We Tell”

01:00 – 01:50  Group Discussion of Episode 2 - “The Story We Tell”

Questions:

1. Were you surprised by anything in the episode? Why?

2. In what ways has race been used to justify inequality?

3. Why was it not slavery but freedom and the notion that “all men are created equal” that created a moral contradiction in colonial America, and how did race help resolve that contradiction? (Question taken from California Newsreel, 2003, p. 9.)
4. Did the episode present anything that changed or shifted your thinking? If so, what?

5. Is it difficult to make this adjustment to your thinking? Why?

6. What is the meaning of the episode’s title, “The Story We Tell?”

7. What stories are told today to mask or cover up racism or other forms of oppression? Why do you think they are told?

8. How did racism benefit white men? White women?

9. Can racism be addressed without reinforcing biological notions of race? How?

10. What ideas in this episode do you think are important for others to know?

01:50 – 02:00 Assignment #3 and Session #3 Evaluation

Collect Assignment #2 titled Questions to Consider.

Provide handout for assignment titled Additional Questions to Consider (questions taken from California Newsreel, 2003, p.11).

Distribute and collect evaluation.
Assignment #3 – Additional Questions to Consider

Write down your responses/reactions to the following questions. Please complete prior to Session #4.

1. Does race affect your life? Why or why not? If so, in what ways?

2. What stereotypes have you heard or seen about different racial groups? Where do they come from?

3. Do you think people today should be held accountable for past discrimination? Why or why not?
Evaluation – Session #3

Please complete the following questions. Your answers will be used to design and improve future sessions. Thank you.

List three things you learned during this session.

1. 

2. 

3. 

What information or materials that were not provided should be included to improve the session?

In what additional ways could this session be improved to meet your needs and expectations?

Please rate this session on a scale from 1-5 in terms of its helpfulness to you in learning about whiteness and white privilege.

1  2  3  4  5
not helpful          helpful       very helpful
**Session #4 Outline**

The fourth program session concludes the three-part video series *Race: The Power of an Illusion* (California Newsreel (Producer), 2003) started in program Session #2. The third and final episode of this video series is titled “The House We Live In.” This episode shows how institutions give race its meaning and power by privileging white people. The episode contends that today the typical white family has eight times the wealth of the average black family. Forty years after the Civil Rights Movement, inequalities still exist and ‘colorblind’ policies only reinforce these inequalities according to the information presented in this final episode. Group discussion follows the viewing of the final episode.

00:00 – 00:05  Session Introduction

  Any issues from last session?


00:05 – 01:00  View Episode 3 - “The House We Live In”

01:00 – 01:50  Group Discussion of Episode 3 - “The House We Live In”

Questions:

1. Were you surprised by anything in the episode? Why?

2. How did the European ethnicity come to represent being white? What made this possible?

3. The video shows how governmental policies created unfair advantages for whites in the past, which have resulted in a substantial gap in wealth between whites
and nonwhites. Can you think of examples of this today?

4. Central to the concept of the American Dream is the notion that anyone who works hard enough will be rewarded – that anyone can “pull themselves up by their bootstraps.” How has this been made more difficult for people not defined as white? What is the long-term impact of that denial? What difference does access to financial resources make in terms of your life opportunities? (Questions taken from California Newsreel, 2003, p. 11.)

5. Is colorblindness different from equality? How so?

6. Did the episode present anything that changed or shifted your thinking? If so, what?

7. Is it difficult to make this adjustment to your thinking? Why?

8. What ideas in this episode do you think are important for others to know?

01:50 – 02:00  Assignment #4 and Session #4 Evaluation

Collect Assignment #3 titled Additional Questions to Consider.

Provide handout for assignment titled Final Questions to Consider (questions taken from California Newsreel, 2003, p.12).

Distribute and collect evaluation.
Assignment #4 – Final Questions to Consider

Write down your responses/reactions to the following questions. Please complete prior to Session #5.

1. How am I making this a more equitable environment?

2. Who is included in this picture and who isn’t; who has had opportunities in my environment and who hasn’t?

3. What can I do about this?
Evaluation – Session #4

Please complete the following questions. Your answers will be used to design and improve future sessions. Thank you.

List three things you learned during this session.

1. 

2. 

3. 

What information or materials that were not provided should be included to improve the session?

In what additional ways could this session be improved to meet your needs and expectations?

Please rate this session on a scale from 1-5 in terms of its helpfulness to you in learning about whiteness and white privilege.

1 2 3 4 5
not helpful helpful very helpful
Session #5 Outline

At the fifth program session three small group exercises taken from Katz’s (2003) book, *White Awareness: Handbook for Anti-Racism Training* are incorporated to further explore the concepts of whiteness and white privilege. The first exercise called “What is White Culture?” is designed to help participants see the aspects of white culture that may be invisible to them as well as help them understand how culture affects us and underlies everything we say and do. The next exercise titled “Connecting with White Culture” builds on the first. Its goals are to assist participants to explore white identity and connect the ‘theory’ of a white culture with participants’ lives and actions. The concluding activity is called “The Costs and Benefits of Dealing with Racism” and is intended to help participants explore their motives for dealing with racism.

00:00 – 00:05  Session Introduction

Any issues from last session?


00:05 – 01:00  Exercise # 1 - ”What is White Culture?” (Katz, 2003, p. 130-133).

Instructions: Divide participants into two groups of four and ask the groups to think of themselves as anthropologists and to brainstorm aspects of white culture. Provide a handout of questions for the groups to consider. Once the groups have completed their lists, review the items listed by both groups. Provide a handout about aspects and assumptions of white culture in the United States.
Discussion Questions:

1. What did you learn about white culture?
2. What was it like to create the list?
3. What did you notice about the groups’ lists?
4. In what ways do these aspects of white culture underlie our words and actions?
5. What are the positives you see in white culture? The negatives?
6. Are you surprised to realize white culture exists? Why?
7. Are there certain aspects of white culture you find disagreeable? Which ones? Why?

Materials required: large sheets of paper, markers, masking tape, copies of handout.

01:00 – 01:30 Exercise # 2 - “Connecting with White Culture” (Katz, 2003, p. 154-155).

Instructions: Divide participants into four groups of two and ask the groups to look over the lists produced in Exercise #1 and select two or three aspects of white culture they feel are important to them, or are deeply embedded in their lives or personalities, and consider the questions presented on the handout.

Discussion Questions: Report out what was discussed in each group.

Materials required: results from Exercise #1, copies of handout.
01:30 – 01:50  Exercise #3 - “The Costs and Benefits of Dealing with Racism”


Instructions: Ask participants to complete the handout and be as honest as possible.

Discussion Questions: Discuss the responses and reactions as a group.

Materials required: copies of handout.

01:50 – 02:00  Assignment #5 and Session #5 Evaluation

Collect Assignment #4 titled Final Questions to Consider.

Provide handout for assignment titled Real Life Examples and copy of McIntosh (1988) to read.

Distribute and collect evaluation.
What is White Culture? Handout #1

Group Questions

1. What do white people value?

2. What defines status in white culture?

3. What is white culture’s concept of time?


5. What celebrations/traditions/holidays do whites observe and how? What are the rites/rituals?

6. What are white aesthetics? Consider art, music/dance, religion/faith, history, food, dress, games/play/fun, and definitions of beauty.

7. How would you describe the family/structure for white people? What are other relationships like?

8. How do white people show emotion?

9. List any other factors that you can think of that help define white culture.
What is White Culture? Handout #2

Some Aspects and Assumptions of White Culture in the United States


While different individuals might not practice or accept all of these traits, they are common characteristics of most U.S. white people most of the time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rugged Individualism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-reliance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual is primary unit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independence and autonomy</td>
<td>Highly valued and rewarded</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individuals assumed to be in control of their environment – “You get what you deserve”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
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<td>Be #1</td>
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<td>Win at all costs</td>
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<td>Winner-loser dichotomy</td>
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<td>Action orientation</td>
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<td>Master and control nature</td>
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<tr>
<td>Must always “do something” about a situation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aggressiveness and extroversion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Decision-Making</td>
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<td>Majority rules (when whites have power)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hierarchical</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>“The King’s English” rules</td>
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<td>Written tradition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Avoid conflict, intimacy</td>
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<td>Don’t show emotion</td>
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<td>Don’t discuss personal life</td>
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<td>Be polite</td>
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<tr>
<td>Holidays</td>
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<tr>
<td>Based on Christianity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Based on white history and male leaders</td>
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<tr>
<td>History</td>
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<tr>
<td>Based on northern European immigrants’ experience in the United States</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heavy focus on the British Empire</td>
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<td>Primacy of Western (Greek, Roman) and Judeo-Christian tradition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Justice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Based on English common law</td>
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<tr>
<td>Protect property and entitlements</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intent counts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Protestant Work Ethic</td>
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<td>Hard work is the key to success</td>
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<td>Work before play</td>
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<tr>
<td>“If you don’t meet your goals, you didn’t work hard enough”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emphasis on Scientific Method</td>
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<tr>
<td>Objective, rational linear thinking</td>
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<td>Cause-and-effect relationships</td>
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<td>Quantitative emphasis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Status, Power and Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wealth = worth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ownership of goods, space, property</td>
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<tr>
<td>Your job is who you are</td>
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<tr>
<td>Respect authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adherence to rigid time schedules</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time viewed as a commodity</td>
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<td>Future Orientation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Plan for future</td>
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<tr>
<td>Delayed gratification</td>
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<tr>
<td>Progress is always for the best</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Tomorrow will be better”</td>
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</table>
Some Aspects and Assumptions of White Culture in the United States (con’t)

Family Structure
- Nuclear family (father, mother, 2.3 children) is the ideal social unit
- Husband is breadwinner and head of household
- Wife is homemaker and subordinate to husband
- Children should have own rooms, be independent

Aesthetics
- Based on European culture
- Woman’s beauty based on Blonde, thin – “Barbie”
- Man’s attractiveness based on economic status, power, intellect
- Steak and potatoes; “bland is best”

Religion
- Christianity is norm
- Anything other than Judeo-Christian tradition is foreign
- No tolerance for deviation from single-god concept
Connecting with White Culture Handout

Group Questions

1. How is this aspect of white culture present in your life?

2. How does it affect your interactions with other white people? With people of color?

3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of this aspect of white culture?

4. Looking at the lists of aspects of white culture again, which aspects serve you well and which aspects are barriers to working and interacting with other whites and with people of color?
1. What would I give up by acting against racism?

2. How am I benefiting from racism?

3. What price am I paying for my racism?

4. What is my worst fantasy of what could happen if people of color were now in power?

5. What limits do I put on helping change and addressing institutional racism?

6. What needs of my own would I satisfy by being actively anti-racist?
Assignment #5 – Real Life Examples

Consider your daily practice and interactions with students and other campus constituents in order to gather additional information that could shed light on our conversations about whiteness and its associated white privilege and to provide concrete examples for further discussion and exploration of the topic with the group. Please use this sheet to outline your thoughts and examples. Please complete prior to Session #6.
Evaluation – Session #5

Please complete the following questions. Your answers will be used to design and improve future sessions. Thank you.

List three things you learned during this session.

1. 

2. 

3. 

What information or materials that were not provided should be included to improve the session?

In what additional ways could this session be improved to meet your needs and expectations?

Please rate this session on a scale from 1-5 in terms of its helpfulness to you in learning about whiteness and white privilege.

1  2  3  4  5
not helpful    helpful    very helpful
Session #6 Outline

During the final program session participants consider their daily practice and interactions with students and other campus constituents in an effort to gather additional information that could shed light on our conversations about whiteness and its associated white privilege and to provide concrete examples for further discussion and exploration of the topic. Participants identify how they gathered their own information about whiteness and white privilege from their own practice and what they learned from their investigations. A focus group is utilized to facilitate discussion as a closing activity of the six program sessions.

00:00 – 00:05  Session Introduction

Any issues from last session?

Overview of Session #6

00:00 – 00:20  Discussion of Assignment #5 Real Life Examples and McIntosh (1988)

Discuss the responses and reactions as a group.

00:20 – 01:50  Focus Group

Provide verbal instructions about how the focus group will work and inform/remind participants that the focus group will be taped recorded.

Use Focus Group Guide.

01:50 – 02:00  Session #6 Evaluation and Participant Recognition

Collect Assignment #5 titled Real Life Examples.

Distribute and collect evaluation.

Provide participant recognition for participation in the program sessions.
FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

The Journey Toward Understanding Whiteness Among Student Affairs Professionals: An Action Research Study in Anti-Racist Education

- How did you gather your own information about whiteness and white privilege from your practice as a student affairs professional?

- What did you learn from your investigations?

- Consider your daily practice and interactions with students and other campus constituents, what additional information have you gathered that could shed light on our conversations about whiteness and its associated white privilege?

- Consider your daily practice and interactions with students and other campus constituents, and provide any concrete examples for further discussion and exploration of the topic of whiteness/white privilege.

- Do you think including the concepts of whiteness and white privilege could be an important component of anti-racist education for student affairs professionals in higher education? Why?

- What questions do you still have about whiteness and white privilege?

- What kinds of ideas do you have about what an anti-racist education program (Anti-racist education attempts to make invisible racial structures visible and includes any educational initiatives or programs that directly address the issue of race in order to improve the status quo for all persons.) for student affairs professionals should include?
Evaluation – Session #6

Please complete the following questions. Your answers will be used to design and improve future sessions. Thank you.

List three things you learned during this session.

1. 

2. 

3. 

What information or materials that were not provided should be included to improve the session?

In what additional ways could this session be improved to meet your needs and expectations?

Please rate this session on a scale from 1-5 in terms of its helpfulness to you in learning about whiteness and white privilege.

1  2  3  4  5
not helpful helpful very helpful
APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW GUIDES

INTERVIEW GUIDE for FIRST INTERVIEW

The Journey Toward Understanding Whiteness Among Student Affairs Professionals: An Action Research Study in Anti-Racist Education

- Anti-racist education attempts to make invisible racial structures visible and includes any educational initiatives or programs that directly address the issue of race in order to improve the status quo for all persons. With this in mind, what do you want to learn about anti-racist education?
- Why is anti-racist education important to you?
- Describe a key moment in your life when you had some sense of racism in society.
- Describe a key moment in your life when you had some sense of your own whiteness (or blackness, etc.).
- What do you know about the concept of whiteness?
- What do you know about the concept of white privilege?
- How do you believe knowing about whiteness and white privilege could be important to you? To others?
- Why do you think including the concepts of whiteness and white privilege could be an important component of anti-racist education for student affairs professionals in higher education?
- What kinds of ideas do you have about what our six two-hour weekly program sessions should include?
- How do you hope to benefit by taking part in this study?
- What other ideas or concerns do you have that I should be aware of as I plan our program sessions?
INTERVIEW GUIDE for SECOND INTERVIEW

The Journey Toward Understanding Whiteness Among Student Affairs Professionals: An Action Research Study in Anti-Racist Education

- Anti-racist education attempts to make invisible racial structures visible and includes any educational initiatives or programs that directly address the issue of race in order to improve the status quo for all persons. With this in mind, what did you learn about anti-racist education by participating in this study? (What do you still want to learn about anti-racist education?)

- Why is anti-racist education important to you?

- What do you know about the concept of whiteness?

- What do you know about the concept of white privilege?

- How do you believe knowing about whiteness and white privilege could be important to you? To others?

- Why do you think including the concepts of whiteness and white privilege could be an important component of anti-racist education for student affairs professionals in higher education?

- What kinds of ideas do you have about what our six two-hour weekly program sessions should include for future participants?

- What other ideas or concerns do you have that I should be aware of as I plan future program sessions?

- How do you believe you benefited by taking part in this study?

- Do you think differently about racism since you participated in this study? In what ways?
• Can you provide any examples of how you have used what you learned in the program sessions in your practice?

• How do you intend to use what you learned in the program sessions in your practice?
VITA

Andrea Orwig Kirshman

Prior to her doctoral studies, Andrea earned a Bachelor of Science degree in psychology from York College of Pennsylvania. She also earned a Master of Arts degree in student personnel services from Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

Andrea is a student affairs professional with over 17 years of experience working in higher education. She has professional experience in several areas of student affairs including career planning and placement, new student orientation, professional development for staff, leadership training, and events planning. Since assessment of services and programs are an important part of the student affairs profession, Andrea has on-the-job experience conducting both interviews and focus groups. Currently, she is the Director of New Student Programs and Services at Kutztown University.

In addition, since 1996 Andrea has presented on the topics of diversity and professional development strategies at The Pennsylvania Adult and Continuing Education Conference, The American Association for Adult and Continuing Education Conference, Kutztown University, St. Lawrence University, and The National Association of Women in Education Conference. She is currently the chairperson of the Professional Development Committee for the Division of Student Services and Campus Life at Kutztown University.

Andrea is a member of the National Orientation Directors Association and has received national recognition for the outstanding publications produced under her supervision for new students. She is also a 2000 graduate of Leadership Berks, an organization that emphasizes leadership and community service in Berks County. In 2002, along with the seven amazing women in her doctoral cohort, she received the outstanding graduate student in adult education award from The Learned Society of the Whispering Pines.