THE WHITE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM: EXPLORING A MODEL OF WHITE IDENTITY MANAGEMENT

By

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- 2-1 3D Model of White Identity Management
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<table>
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<th>Term</th>
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<tr>
<td>Deny</td>
<td>When white identifying people do not believe that their race gives them any privileges (Knowles et al., 2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dismantle</td>
<td>When white identifying people actively engage in disrupting and halting systems of racial and ethnic oppression (Knowles et al., 2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance</td>
<td>When white identifying people push away from white privilege, believing that race is not important, being “colorblind,” and preventing conversations about race (Knowles et al., 2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group-Image Threat</td>
<td>A situation where a white person’s perception of their group identity and group placement is being threatened (Knowles et al., 2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meritocratic Threat</td>
<td>A situation where white person’s perception of self and achievement is being threatened (Knowles et al., 2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat to White Privilege</td>
<td>A situation or instance that challenges a white person’s sense of self or group-identity (Knowles et al., 2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Privilege</td>
<td>Unearned social advantages granted to those with white skin through both micro and macro social systems (McIntosh, 1999)</td>
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The topics of race and white privilege in the United States have been studied through many theoretical lenses. The recently proposed 3D Model of White Identity Management diverts from previous models and suggests that white individuals are aware of their white privilege and utilize one of three strategies: they deny, distance themselves from, or dismantle white privilege. These strategies are viewed as general stages in this mixed-methods, exploratory study. The sample was comprised of six white individuals likely to be in the dismantling stage, with the goal of exploring their understanding of white privilege and the factors that may have contributed to their decision to engage in anti-racist work. The study utilized a semi-structured interview, the Life History Calendar method, and demographic information to collect data. Findings indicate an evolution of understanding white privilege present for individuals in the dismantling stage, a likelihood for backtracking or resisting this evolution, and challenges connected to managing privilege. Interactions with diverse individuals, level of education, intersectionality, travel experience and class all have the potential of being
predictors for entrance into the dismantling stage. Both scholarly and practical implications of this study are discussed.
The concept of “white privilege” was first introduced in 1935 by WEB Du Bois (1935) in his piece Black Reconstruction in America. In this piece, Du Bois writes about the “public and psychological wage” that was paid to white laborers because of the color of their skin. He describes how in a post-slavery time, when low-wage white workers competed with low-wage Black workers, the experience of being poor and white versus poor and Black looked and felt very different. Despite receiving a low-wage, the white workers had access to public defense, maintained the right to vote, and could attend public events and send their children to good schools. Du Bois argues that competition between white and Black low-wage workers, combined with the view that Blacks were inferior, led to violence and lynchings (Du Bois, 1935). The essay received support and criticism from academic and political arenas.

Later, in a 1965 essay titled “Can White Radicals be Radicalized?” Theodore Allan speaks about white-skin privileges (Allan, 1967). In this essay, Allan discusses the labor movements in the United States and discredits the different claims that had been made about why the US workers and farmers did not seem to be able to organize. He states that many of these claims directly pertained to white workers and completely forgot Black workers, referring to them as the “excluded class” (Allan, 1967). He went on to write another essay in 1974-1975 in which he describes the history of slavery and labor and how the ruling elite broke up the solidarity between African and white workers in order to rely solely on African slavery as a means of production (Allan, 1975). In this piece Allan states: “The plantation bourgeoisie deliberately extended a privileged status
to the white poor of all categories as a means of turning to African slavery as the basis of its system of production” (Allan, 1975).

While the term white privilege has been used for almost 100 years, white people in general started paying attention to the term when Peggy McIntosh, a white scholar, released her article “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” in 1988 (McIntosh, 1990). Her article lists out the many privileges white people have because of the color of their skin, including not having to counteract race-based biases around violence and financial responsibility, and having people of your race featured in school history classes (McIntosh, 1990). This article is regarded as one of the first times “white privilege” was given some weight in terms of its legitimacy (Crowley & Smith, 2015; Phillips & Lowery, 2015). It is important to note that this concept had been in existence since 1935, but was not brought to the forefront of the conversations for white individuals until roughly fifty years later, when a white person (McIntosh) wrote about the epiphany of realizing her own race and the privilege associated with it. The way in which this term emerged amongst whites is representative of how white privilege functions: serious thought is given to ideas when they are brought up by white people.

While race is performed internationally, not just within the United States, the racial context that was focused on within this study was that which is defined within the confines of the United States. White privilege has currently become part of a national conversation. This has been demonstrated by the topics of the 2016 U.S. presidential debates (Flores, 2015; Weigel, 2016), and also by many popular, main-stream music tracks dealing with race and privilege by artists such as Beyonce, Kendrick Lamar and Mackelmore (Beyonce, 2016; Lamar, 2014; Macklemore, Lewis & Woods, 2016). The
conversation spans academia, politics, activism and entertainment, engaging those who do not typically feel comfortable speaking about privilege and race.

The activist group #BlackLivesMatter has been a pivotal group in helping to move the conversation about privilege and race into the living rooms of those outside academia (Sidner & Simon, 2015). Their efforts to dismantle racist systems including racial profiling and violence against Black people from police officers and law enforcement incited by the murder of Trayvon Martin in 2012 has created a wave of conversations, both in academia and outside of it, about race in America (Garza, 2014). Since their inception, the nation-wide group of activists have been putting together protests, calling out politicians, and demanding justice for the Black community. Some white persons have become accomplices – i.e., active participants – to the #BlackLivesMatter movement in the dismantling of white privilege.

Despite the attention race has received in the last 60 years and the prevalence of this topic nationally, research is still unclear as to what specifically moves a white person to engage in anti-racist work. The 3D Model of White Identity Management suggests that there are three strategies that white people may find themselves using to manage their identity; deny, distance and dismantle (Knowles, Lowery, Chow & Unzueta, 2014). This model differentiates itself from other models in that it rejects the “invisibility perspective” which suggests that white people are generally unaware of their privilege unless an external force has pushed them to confront it (Knowles et al., 2014). Instead, the 3D model suggests that white people are constantly aware of their own privilege, and manage their responses to this in one of three ways (Knowles et al.,
These scholars suggest white individuals may use denial prior to possibly using the distance and dismantling strategies (Knowles et al., 2014).

**Purpose of the Study**

While there is much research on in-group and out-group relations and racial identity, there has been very little research on white people in regards to their identity as white and their own white privilege. The 3D model offers a potentially useful conceptual framework but that framework has not yet been tested or explored scientifically. The purpose of this study was to operationalize the last construct within the 3D model, and to both explore and establish factors that help predict the utilization of the dismantling strategy. Increased research in these areas could possibly help us understand what characteristics and experiences encourage acceptance and understanding for white people in terms of their privilege.

**Significance of Study**

The findings from this study have theoretical and practical use. From a theoretical perspective, this study will help us establish factors that may predict or facilitate use of the dismantling strategy which would be beneficial to future researchers interested in white identity, white privilege, and social change in general. From a practical perspective, educators, both in higher education and grade school, may better understand how to engage their white students in dialogues about race. Those who work in multicultural or diversity training programs could better target participants, and structure their curriculum to help those who are white understand their privilege and act on that understanding. Activists and community organizers working to educate the public, and those whose organization strives to help with social issues all would benefit
from having a more comprehensive understanding of the ways in which white identifying people experience their own whiteness.

This study intended to gather a more in-depth understanding of race, particularly the white race, as it connects to privilege and identity. This information can be utilized to better equip those in formal and informal settings in which moving more white people from denial of their own privilege, to acceptance and anti-racist action would benefit their cause.

The findings from this study are just one part of a broader process that will, hopefully, lead to systemic change and healing for both people of color and those with white skin. Perhaps an understanding of what moves white people to dismantle systems of racial hierarchy could have ties to other systems of social hierarchy (gender, sexual orientation, ability, class, etc.). If that is the case, the findings from this line of research could be applied to other groups of privileged people in order to help move all individuals, regardless of their privileged identity, to interact with their world more critically, to understand and accept their privilege, and to work to dismantle all systems of oppression in order to create a more just nation.

**Rationale**

The study is important because it is a first step in exploring a model that has never before been explored. This model is based on an assumption that has not existed within other white identity management models: white individuals are acutely aware of their own privilege but live in a state of denial until prompted to utilize the other two strategies (Hardiman, 1982; Helms, 1998; Knowles et al., 2014). What is important
about this difference between the 3D Model and previous models is the possible impact it has on the way in which researchers view white individuals.

Denial, rather than unawareness, suggests a psychological impact on the person in denial. White individuals in the stage of denial could be experiencing adverse psychological and psychosocial impacts. What this means is that diversity and cultural competency trainings could possibly have long-lasting and positive psychological benefits for white individuals. The implications of this revelation could encourage more and better engagement in diversity and cultural competency trainings in the future.

Having a more complete understanding of whiteness, white privilege and white identity could aid in shifting a national conversation about race that rests on opposition (white versus people of color) into a conversation about race and mental health, and the negative impacts of racism and prejudice, not just on those who experience them, but those who perpetrate them. Through this study, a picture of the experience of whiteness and white privilege came about, and through that picture more white individuals may be able to be moved from denial of their privilege to working to dismantle systems of racism and racial oppression.

**Research Questions**

RQ1 To what extent, if any, are the participants aware of their own white privilege?

RQ2 What factors, if any, are related to a white person’s willingness to dismantle white privilege?

**Hypotheses**

HO1 White identifying people that fall into the dismantling stage will be aware of the existence of white privilege, and will be aware of the way they themselves benefit from white privilege.
Factors such as the following will have contributed to movement into the dismantling stage.

- Level of Education
- Intersectionality
- Interaction with Diverse Groups
- Travel Experience

**Assumptions**

The first and largest assumption made in this study was that white privilege exists and is granted to anyone bearing white skin in the United States. While there is merit to the argument that poor, white individuals also face oppression, it is important to note that those individuals face oppression because of their class, not because of their skin color (Wilson, 2012). The second assumption was that the 3D model is only applicable to the United States, because the study was conducted in the United States, and due to the complex definitions of race throughout the world, may not be applicable in other contexts.

The third assumption surrounded the categories of the 3D model as stages versus states. The creators of the 3D model did not note whether understanding of white privilege is progressive (i.e., individuals would move through the stages of deny and distance toward dismantling or vice-versa) or static (i.e., individuals would be in one state permanently with little or no movement). This study assumed that the three categories represented stages, and that individuals actively doing dismantling work would have had experience with the first two stages (or strategies) of the model prior to their work. The last assumption made in this study, by both the authors of the 3D Model...
and this study, was that white individuals aware of their white privilege would naturally be motivated to dismantle the systems that grant them that privilege. This is not always the case.

**Limitations**

A primary limitation to this study was the fact that it only analyzes one stage of the 3D model. This limitation comes from the very nature of exploratory research, and while not testing each part of the model was a limitation, choosing to explore the dismantling piece of the model can help to inform future research on the alternative constructs in the model, as well as providing immediate practical implications.

Another limitation of this study was that the model has not been tested before. This means that, while there is room to grow and learn, the constructs have not been operationalized and there is no strong base of literature to go off of that is specific to the 3D model. Instead, the study relied on additional related bodies of literature. This reliance on literature not pertaining to the 3D model may have decreased the validity of the findings of this study. Ways to mitigate this limitation will be discussed further in Chapter 2.

In Chapter 2, the existing literature will be explored. This includes the founding theories of the 3D model, theories that assist in operationalizing constructs, and studies involving white identity management. In Chapter 3, methodology will be discussed including the creation of the interview guide and index, as well as coding and data analysis. In Chapter 4 results will be presented. Lastly, in Chapter 5 implications and conclusions will be offered.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This study explored the 3D White Identity Management Model created by Knowles and colleagues in 2014. One challenge of studying this model is the depth and breadth of literature upon which it draws. Specifically, while this model was not presented within the framework of a specific theory, it has its roots in both Sociology and Psychology. The literature presented here will draw from both disciplines. Some of the theories are meant to help frame the model and build its parameters, while other theories help operationalize the constructs of the 3D model.

Chapter 2 is organized into three parts. In the first part, two theories will be introduced that help to frame the 3D Model of White Identity Management. These theories are Social Identity Theory and Self-Categorization Theory. These theories help to build a framework for this study and will assist in understanding the ways in which individuals identify their social grouping and how social groups identify who their members are.

In the second section, five models will be introduced that converge and diverge with the 3D White Identity Management Model. The five models are; Political Solidarity Model of Social Change, White Feminist Antiracist Model, Edward’s Social Justice Ally Model, Hardiman’s White Identity Management Model, and Helm’s Model of White Racial Management. All of these models will be compared to the 3D Model of White Identity Management. At the end of Chapter 2, these constructs will be presented in Table 2-1. The ways in which these different constructs compare and contrast to the 3D Model will be discussed. The last part of this section will look at the ways in which some
of these models have been tested in order to better understand how to operationalize them, and also to inform data collection and analysis. These different models help to operationalize the construct of the 3D Model that this study will focus on; dismantling.

The third section will present prior research that helps to inform the factors connected to placement into the dismantling stage. Table 2-2 will display these variables at the end of Chapter 2. The variables include; level of education, interaction with diverse groups, intersectionality, and travel experience.

**Part 1: Related Theories**

This section presents two theories that provide the framework for the 3D White Identity Management Model. These theories helped to create the lenses that were used during data collection and analysis. Both theories focus on general placement into social groupings, whether that placement occurs by the individual, or is created by the groups themselves.

**Social Identity Theory**

The Social Identity Theory focuses on the interaction of social groups as they connect to the individual (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner & Onorato, 1999) and helps to explain the way that individuals act in groups in different contexts. It has three constructs: centrality (access to the group-identity), in-group affect (feelings about the group), and in-group ties (sense of attachment to the group) (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This theory paved the way for many theories coming out of social psychology and could be particularly useful in understanding group-image threat as it relates to the 3D Model.
Self-Categorization Theory

Self-Categorization Theory evolved from Social Identity Theory, but it differs by focusing on the way in which individuals categorizes themselves in reference to whatever group they belong to (Turner & Onorato, 1999). These categories begin at the interpersonal level (self-defined as an individual) and can move through the intergroup level (self-defined by what group they are in) to the subordinate level (self-defined by the groups they are not in). Of course, these identities are fluid and not linear, and one person can experience all three depending on the group context they are in (Turner & Onorato, 1999). It is important to understand identity as fluid and contextual, and looking at the 3D Model through this theory could help to determine if movement occurs in a linear fashion, and if the stages are static, rather than fluid.

Part 2: Related Models

In this section, five models will be presented with limited detail. Then, the paper will present the endpoint construct of each model and compare them to the dismantling construct of the 3D Model. The goal here is to extract the core pieces of each framework which can inform the exploration of the 3D Model.

Political Solidarity Model of Social Change

A model created out of Social Identity Theory and Self-Categorization Theory, the Political Solidarity Model of Social Change examines the relationship between the authority, majority and minority in regards to the way social change comes about (Subasic, Reynolds & Turner, 2008). In this model social change happens when there exists solidarity from the majority with the minority, while there exists challenge from the majority to the authority. Social change cannot happen when there is apathy, sympathy or hostility between the majority and the minority (Subasic et al., 2008).
White Feminist Antiracist Model

White Feminist Antiracism was developed in the 1980’s in order to tackle the white-washing of feminism. In this, the way that white women came to understand their race and the privilege that went with it was explored, and a model was created in order to capture that process (Frankenberg, 1993). In this model there are four constructs following a similar path as the 3D Model; essential racism, color-evasiveness, power-evasiveness, and race cognizance (Frankenberg, 1993).

Essential racism is just that; believing in a hierarchy of races. Color-evasiveness describes the positioning of people who believe they do not see race (Frankenberg, 1993). While color-evasive people tend to deny the fact that different races exist, those who are power-evasive accept that there are different races, but do not believe that there is any privilege or marginalization associated with any one race (Frankenberg, 1993). Both evasive constructs could be helpful in understanding the different nuances of the distancing construct found in the 3D Model that will be explored. Race cognizance exists when a person both believes that different races exist, that they come with different experiences, and that those different experiences are tied to power and marginalization (Frankenberg, 1993).

White Feminist Antiracism is important and applicable to this study because of the population that this study intends to focus on. The focus on those white individuals involved in anti-racist activism will most likely be involved in other types of activism as well. Because of this, it is important to take into consideration the intersections of race and other identities in order to understand the way those other identities may impact possible movement through the 3D model.
Edward’s Social Justice Ally Model

Most Social Justice Ally Models describe changes in individuals as they move through their college career and, therefore, cannot be wholly applied to this study or the general population. However, they can offer insight into the topic and it is important to understand the ways these models connect with and diverge from the 3D Model. Edwards’s (2006) model focuses on those already engaged in social justice, and their motivating factors for that engagement. The model is broken into three factors; aspiring ally for self-interest, aspiring ally for altruism, and ally for social justice.

An aspiring ally for self-interest is someone who is acting on behalf of a personal need to help an individual in their own life. Because of this motivation behind engaging in ally ship, these individuals tend to not see the systematic oppression that exists (Edwards, 2006). An aspiring ally for altruism is motivated more towards a strong focus on helping, but through this they tend to victimize and pity those who they are trying to help (Edwards, 2006). An ally for social justice is the most effective ally. They are motivated through both self and other’s needs and see that everyone is negatively impacted by systems of oppression. Rather than helping an individual or a group of people, these allies are focused on dismantling the systems that are the root of oppression (Edwards, 2006).

Hardiman’s White Identity Management Model

Positioned in a counseling framework, Hardiman created her model of White Identity Management in the early eighties by analyzing the autobiographies of white people who had been identified as having a “high level of racial consciousness” (Hardiman, 1982). Through this analysis she identified five stages of white
development; naïveté, acceptance, resistance, redefinition, and internalization (Hardiman, 1982).

Within the naiveté stage, white children are learning about their own place in the racial hierarchy, and are picking up on social cues and norms. When an individual moves into the acceptance stage they have picked up on those norms and cues and have learned to accept them. They tend to think of themselves as “normal,” rather than a person with a racial identity (Hardiman, 1982).

In the resistance stage, experiences that contradict those accepted norms start to create a pattern that is hard for the individual to ignore. An example of this could be a white person who was raised to believe Black individuals are unintelligent, and later attending a diverse university and meeting a large number of educated Black individuals. As the example suggests, these experiences can come from more education or personal experiences (Hardiman, 1982). In redefinition, individuals take those contradicting experiences and use them to process and understand at a deeper level, their own race, privilege and racism. The last stage, internalization, takes place when a white individual takes pride in and accepts their own whiteness, works to create new ways of being white that do not involve racism, and accepts and empathizes with those white individuals in stages prior to internalization (Hardiman, 1982).

Helms’s Model of White Racial Management

In the mid-eighties to mid-nineties, also coming from a counseling framework, Helms worked to create a comprehensive model of White Racial Management. In this model there are six statuses: contact status, disintegration status, reintegration status, pseudoindependence status, immersion/emersion status, and autonomy status (Helms,
In her work, she also created a worksheet to pinpoint an individual’s racial identity profile (Helms, 1998).

Contact status is when a white identifying individual is unaware of their own racial identity. Disintegration status is the first acknowledgment that an individual has a white identity. Reintegration is when a white identifying person exhibits racist behavior by preferring whites. Pseudoindpendence takes place when a white identifying individual can intellectually appreciate others’ and their races. Immersion/emersion is when a white identifying individual honestly observes their own privilege. Lastly, autonomy is when an antiracist white identity is created.

Both Hardiman and Helms contribute to this research by providing ways to operationalize the constructs from the proposed model to be explored. Because the 3D Model is more recent, it has not been tested before, and the different constructs have not been operationalized, therefore, to ensure validity of the findings, the research and methodology will rely on existing literature.

3D Model of White Identity Management

The model that is explored in this study is the 3D Model of White Identity Management (Knowles et al., 2014). This model is one of the few, if not the only model, that does not rest on the “invisibility perspective” which assumes that white people are generally unaware of their privilege. This 3D model contests this assumption and, instead, suggests that white people are constantly aware of their own privilege, but live in denial prior to possibly utilizing distance and dismantling strategies (Knowles et al., 2014).
The 3D Model surmises that when self and whiteness combine to create a white identity, that white identity will be presented with a threat to white privilege. This threat can either be received in the form of a meritocratic threat or a group-image threat (Knowles et al., 2014). Meritocratic threats specifically threaten a person’s perspective of themselves. An example of this would be the belief that one is a good person, and then being presented with information that suggests that one has been unknowingly benefiting from a system that harms others. Group-image threats will threaten an individual’s perspective of the group they belong to. Realizing that one shares the same group identity as members of a racial hate group, for instance, can be psychologically threatening for the individual.

Depending on the perception of the threat, an individual will react one of three ways; denying the existence of white privilege (typically the result of a meritocratic threat), distancing one’s self from race, whiteness and privilege (can result from either threats, but protects best against meritocratic threat), and dismantling the very systems that provide that privilege (usually resulting from a group-image threat) (Knowles et al., 2014). If an individual reacts with dismantling, then traces of denial and distancing will not be present. Figure 2-1 at the end of Chapter 2 presents a visual model of this process.

In the next section, comparisons and contrasts of the different models presented above will be made with the 3D Model. First, a discussion of how each models’ endpoint construct may be useful in analyzing data is presented. Table 2-1 is presented at the end of Chapter 2 and showcases the endpoint constructs of each of the above models.
Comparisons to 3D Model

As Table 2-1 showcases, the five models presented converge and diverge with the 3D Model of White Identity Management in multiple ways. Some are based on racial equity, while others are based on general social change. Certain stages are identified by actions, while others are a combination of actions, perceptions and motivations. Some are incredibly detailed, while others are more ambiguous.

The Political Solidarity Model of Social Change differs from the 3D Model because it is focusing on general social change, rather than specifically focusing on race. The two models possibly converge, however, in terms of motivations. One could suggest that solidarity from the majority with the minority, or solidarity from a white individual with a person of color could possibly be motivated by group-image threat. It will be important to look for group-image threat in the data, while also being aware of the possibility for the constructs of solidarity and challenge presented in the Political Solidarity Model of Social Change to be present in the data.

The White Feminist Antiracism Model is focused on race, but through the lens of intersectionality and feminism. This model differs from the 3D Model because there is not a presence of action-oriented behavior to dictate placement into the model. Instead it is focused on beliefs and perceptions. Of course these beliefs and perceptions will most likely be present in an individual within doing dismantling work, action is necessary as well. It will be interesting to see whether someone could be doing dismantling work without the beliefs presented in the White Feminist Antiracism Model.

Surprisingly, while not based in race, but social justice, Edward’s Social Justice Ally Model ties in nicely with the 3D Model. Within Edward’s model, both action and motivation are necessary. The construct of ally for social justice states that motivation is
tied to both self and other’s needs, and that action to change the system is necessary. It
could be suggested that the group-image threat that the 3D Model proposes drives
entrance into dismantling could be seen as working for both self and other’s needs. The
improvement of one’s group benefits the group member, but also the group as a whole.
This similarity in models will be interesting to observe as data is collected.

Hardiman’s White Identity Management Model is different from the first three in
its complexity. This model is focused on race, and while it does not specifically tie
entrance into internalization to anti-racist activism, it does state that action has to be
taken. That action comes in the form of creating new ways to be white that are not tied
to racism, which seems to be connected to group-image threat. The way in which this
model diverges from the 3D Model is also tied to the 3D Model’s group-image threat.
While the 3D Model argues that dismantling happens in an effort to reshape the group’s
image, Hardiman argues that to reach the end of her model an individual must accept
their own whiteness and accept other white individuals that are not yet in the
internalization stage. It will be important to pay attention to the ways in which
participants in this study perceive their whiteness and white identity.

Helm’s White Racial Management Model is by far the most complex of all the
models in terms of the tasks necessary in order to be placed in autonomy status. An
individual in this status, Helms argues, has both a positive awareness of one’s racial
identity, while also abandoning racial privilege, and understanding the ways that racial
privilege impacts people of color. These are challenging tasks to complete, and it will be
important to see if these three characteristics can take place at the same time. It is also
important to note that autonomy status, similar to the 3D Model and its dismantling
construct, dictates a commitment to anti-racist activism, as well as the aforementioned perspectives.

In summary, each of these models is important in fully operationalizing the dismantling construct of the 3D Model. While the 3D Model has its similarities and differences with each of the presented models, they will be useful in determining how accurate the dismantling construct is, as well as what it might be missing. In the next section, studies that test the theories and models above will be presented. It is important to understand how these models have been tested, as it will inform best practices as this study moves forward.

**Testing of Models**

The model this study utilized, the 3D Model by Knowles and colleagues (2014), is relatively new, and thus has not been explored yet. This section will review a series of studies testing other identity management models. This review focuses on the methodologies that were used, and what new information was gleaned. Studies that have identified variables that contribute to engagement in activism work are also examined in order to increase the soundness of the variables that were explored in this study. The literature reviewed includes studies that focus on an anti-racist framework, and, when appropriate, more general social justice work.

In Malott, Paone, Schaefle, Cates, & Haizlip’s (2015) study, Helm’s white racial identity development is utilized, focusing on the autonomy status of this theory. The authors’ goal was to expand upon this theory, and the focus on the autonomy status, a racially aware status, was meant to understand the characteristics that are present when one lives within this section of Helm’s model (Malott et al., 2015). The population
was antiracist, autonomy status, white-identifying individuals with a sample size of 10. A phenomenological, qualitative approach was used. The interviews focused on meanings connected to white identity, the way in which racial identity develops over time, and the way in which participants’ lived experiences are impacted by antiracist identities. Six first-order themes were found in the data; “whiteness as oppressive, reconstructing white identity, antiracism as essential to a positive self-concept, white racial identity development as ongoing and nonlinear, struggles to make lifestyle decisions that honor antiracist beliefs and struggles with relationship” (Malott et al., 2015).

The findings both moved beyond Helm’s theory and contradicted it. The study found that the biggest challenge of being in Helm’s autonomous state is having a positive white identity, which most participants found incredibly challenging. This suggests that Helm’s model may need to be adapted in order to encompass this challenge, and perhaps the impossibility of having an anti-racist, positive white identity (Malott et al., 2015).

Verkuyten and Martinovic’s 2015 focused on discrimination of immigrants by the Dutch, and the ways in which Dutch engage in attempting to fight that discrimination. Focusing on in-group and out-group relations and power threats, the two-tiered study attempted to understand why and when individuals from the majority group engage in stopping injustices happening to minority group individuals (Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2015). Both of the studies had populations composed of Dutch citizens.

The findings show, for the first study, that when the majority perceives a higher power threat, they are less likely to feel that their national identity is inclusive of cultural diversity (Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2015). This is connected with less awareness of
discrimination against immigrants. It was found that deprovincialization was connected to higher awareness of discrimination. In the second study those who had a stronger common identity that included cultural diversity were more likely to protest (Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2015). This suggests that when majority members create their definition of national identity that includes cultural diversity, they are more likely to see and act to correct discrimination that immigrants, and possibly other minorities face (Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2015).

What is important to take away from this article is the way in which individuals create their own identities, and that when those identities include diversity, it can be a precursor for being anti-racist. This applies to the current study by providing a new dimension to identity that may help encourage movement into dismantling work. Perhaps white Americans who are proud of the diversity of their nation will have an easier transition into dismantling.

Linder (2015) used intersectionality theory and narrative inquiry to explore negative feelings associated with being white, and with engaging in anti-racist activities. Through this exploration, a conceptual model was created. The population in her study was white-identifying, anti-racist, feminist undergraduate women (Linder, 2015). The methodology used was narrative inquiry paired with a transformative paradigm. These forms of methodology were utilized through three individual interviews with each participant, along with a focus group.

The results coalesced to create a conceptual model specific to anti-racist, white feminist development (Linder, 2015). Themes of sexism as a mode of understanding racism, struggles with guilt and shame, and attempts to not appear racist and to
distance oneself from whiteness were found throughout the data (Linder, 2015). The model created through the data collection is specific to white women, but could, in the future be applied to other gender identities.

What is important, and very specific to this study, is the focus on white feminist women who are grappling with their own privilege, while simultaneously engaged in feminist activism. This study is also incredibly important by laying out how to conduct interviews with white individuals who are engaged in anti-racist activism and what considerations to make. It also presents possible themes to look for in regards to the variable of intersectionality. The way in which sexism can be used as a mode to understand racism could be a theme that is present within the current study, and will need to be explored.

In the next section of the literature review, literature concerning specific variables in RQ2 will be examined. Some of these studies were found while doing research on the different theories and models already presented, while others were focused on due to their likelihood of being predictors of placement into the dismantling stage. Each variable will be explored, using past research to help operationalize and inform the interview guide.

**Part 3: Operationalizing Variables**

There are logical and theoretical reasons to believe that at least four variables are related to a white-identifying person’s experience with dismantling. These variables are showcased in Table 2-2 at the end of Chapter 2 and will be discussed in this section.
Level of Education

There are a number of reasons to believe education might be related to this study. Bobo and Licari (1989) studied whether or not higher education impacts the ability of individuals to be more tolerant of targeted groups. The researchers utilized the General Social Survey to collect secondary data focused on their main variables. The study shows that, even when controlling for party affiliation, college educated individuals are more accepting and tolerant of target political groups (Bobo & Licari, 1989).

Jayakumar (2008) used survey data from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program in order to explore if attending a diverse or hegemonic university would have an impact on white individuals cultural competency later in life. The data was controlled for exposure to diverse or segregated neighborhoods prior to entering college. The results found that exposure to a diverse student population during collegiate years directly or indirectly impacted the cultural competencies of white individuals later on in the work force (Jayakumar, 2008).

Both of these recent studies provide reasoning to include items on the variable of level of education in either the interview or the questionnaire portion of the current study. These studies also bring about another important aspect of this variable; diversity of the institution. Below, the variable of interaction with diverse groups is explored. It is important to remember that while this research will attempt to separate the variables from one another, sometimes the synergistic intersection of those variables can create a different variable altogether. Understanding race and identity is a complex matter that can be challenging to separate into distinct categories and themes.
Interaction with Diverse Groups

Significant exposure and interaction with groups different to oneself could possibly contribute to entrance into the dismantling stage. Bohmert and DeMaris (2015) used a longitudinal study over four years to examine the impact of both interracial friendships and racially diverse neighborhoods on views of affirmative action and feelings of connection with minorities for undergraduate students. The results indicated that those with more interracial friendships had more positive attitudes towards race (Bohmert & DeMaris, 2015). The results also indicated that the same impact was seen in connection to racially diverse neighborhoods. Interestingly, politically conservative students had lower feelings of commonality with other races, and were less likely to support affirmative action (Bohmert & DeMaris, 2015).

This study is important to consider as it helps strengthen the variable of interaction with diverse groups. Something that will need to be considered during the collection of data is the varying dimensions of this variable. Strength of relationship, length of relationship, number of interracial friendships, and age of relationships are all dimensions of this variable that could shape the strength of it.

Ford and Orlandella (2015) also explored whether intra-group or inter-group experiences in a program on race and identity impacted white individuals’ perceptions of their identities as white, and as of allies. The researchers utilized two classes being taught at predominantly white, liberal university. One class was composed of all white students, while the other had a combination of white individuals and People of Color. Both classes were focused on racial identity development and social justice (Ford & Orlandella, 2015).
The analysis took place utilizing the final papers of consenting white students from each class. These papers asked the students to speak about social identity, social structures, and their experiences in the class (Ford & Orlandella, 2015). The results of this study showed that there was no difference between students participating in the inter-group class and students participating in the intra-group class. White students showcased themselves as still in a stage where they were grappling and reconciling with their white identities (Ford & Orlandella, 2015).

This study is important for two reasons. The first is that it shows that the group in which you learn about privilege and oppression may not matter as much as the content. This has important implications for understanding the evolution of white identity for anti-racist activists. The second reason this study is important is that it showcases the very real struggle that white individuals have in understanding their white identity, while wanting to be allies. This complex process is not presented in a linear fashion, but in a messier, more complex way. This could possibly have implications for the 3D model that is being explored.

**Intersectionality**

The cross roads of gender and race are the roots of intersectionality and at its core is the idea that a person’s identities meet and converge to create their own lived experience (Collins, 1998). The roots of this theory rest on the experience of Black women. In the experiences of African American women, there is a convergence of two marginalized identities which leads to an experience that is unique, apart from the experiences of white women and Black men (Collins, 1998).
Intersectionality refers to the ways in which multiple marginalized identities inform the lived experiences of individuals. This is an important variable that takes into consideration the ways in which white identities may interact with other identities (gender, age, class, religion, ability, sexuality, etc.) to create experiences that are more likely to motivate movement into the dismantling stage. Kleiman, Spanierman and Smith’s 2015 study focuses on intersectionality, and how having different identities may impact an individual’s ability to empathize with members of other racial groups. The study specifically looks at white, straight men, and white men who identify as gay, bisexual or queer (Kleiman, Spanierman, & Smith, 2015). The population in the study were white identifying men, both straight and sexual minority-identifying, in Canada. The study collected demographic information and used five other scales as well in their study. These scales were the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale, Psychosocial Costs of Racism to Whites scale, Confronting White Privilege subscale, the scale of Ethnocultural Empathy, and the Heterosexist Harassment, Rejection and Discrimination Scale (Kleiman, Spanierman, & Smith, 2015).

Those participants who did not identify as heterosexual were found to be less color-blind and to have higher levels of racial empathy. Experiencing heterosexism and being more “out” were also connected to lower likelihood of color-blindness and higher levels of racial empathy (Kleiman, Spanierman, & Smith, 2015). The results support the idea of intersectionality, and how differing identities can inform and build upon one another to have greater understandings of those who might fall into minority categories (Kleiman, Spanierman, & Smith, 2015).
This concept of intersectionality is incredibly important in conducting the current research. The way in which identities intersect can create completely specific experiences that individuals with one dimension of those intersecting identities may not be able to understand. Intersectionality was an important component of both the qualitative and quantitative methods in the current research study and were used to understand if having an intersecting identity with whiteness that is marginalized could be a precursor for movement into dismantling work.

**Travel Experience**

Similar to exposure to diverse groups, experience with traveling, particularly international travel, could possibly be a motivator to engage in anti-racist activism. Salisbury, An, and Pascarella (2013) conducted a study to verify the anecdotal evidence that study abroad experiences lend to better and more in-depth cultural competency. The sample size for this study was nearly 1,700 undergraduate college students who participated in study abroad experiences from seventeen institutions (Salisbury, An, & Pascarella, 2013). While the results showcased the positive and significant impacts of studying abroad on cultural competency, diverse experiences and integrative learning experiences were just as significant and positive (Salisbury, An, & Pascarella, 2013).

Anderson, Lawton, Rexeisen, and Hubbard (2006) implemented a pilot study in order to test whether or not studying abroad had an impact on intercultural sensitivity. The study involved a pre and post-test for undergraduate students who were involved in a short-term study abroad experience (Anderson et al., 2006). Using the Intercultural Development Inventory, the researchers tested the impact the experience of studying abroad had on the participants’ sensitivity to different cultures (Anderson et al., 2006).
The results showed that there was a positive change after the study abroad experience, but not as great of a change as the researchers were hoping for. A small sample size may also have had an impact on the results (Anderson et al., 2006).

Both of these studies, while positive in showcasing the impacts of study abroad experiences, also give reason to believe that perhaps studying abroad is not the most effective form of increasing one’s cultural competency. This will be an interesting variable to explore in the interview. While these studies give some important information, the fact that they were only focused on college students and specific to study abroad trips means that they are not completely applicable to the sample and experiences of the participants in the current study.

**Conclusions**
In summary, the four variables presented above will be included in data collection in order to answer RQ2 which focuses on predictors of engagement in dismantling work. Of course, other variables may present themselves throughout data collection and analysis which will be discussed in Chapter 4. In Chapter 3, methodology, research questions, sampling, and analysis will be discussed. Instrumentation will also be presented, as well as data collection plans. The theories and studies presented here will be used to frame the methodology and operationalize the constructs explored in this study.
Figure 2-1. 3D Model of White Identity Management (Knowles et al., 2014).
Table 2-1. Final stage of each model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Final Stage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political Solidarity Model of Social Change</td>
<td>Social change can only happen when there exists both solidarity from the majority to the minority and challenge from the majority to the authority (Subasic et al., 2008).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Feminist Antiracism Model</td>
<td>Race cognizance takes place when a white individual believes different races exist, they come with different experiences, and those experiences are tied to power and marginalization (Frankenberg, 1993).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward’s Social Justice Ally Model</td>
<td>An ally for social justice exists when the ally is motivated by both self and other’s needs and sees that everyone is negatively impacted by systems of oppression, thus working to not change a person or a community, but the systems that oppress them (Edwards, 2006).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardiman’s White Identity Management Model</td>
<td>Entrance into the internalization stage happens when a white individual accepts their own whiteness, works to create new ways of being white that are not tied to racism, and accepts and empathizes with white individuals not yet in the internalization stage (Hardiman, 1982).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helm’s White Racial Management Model</td>
<td>Autonomy status is characterized by a positive awareness of one’s own racial identity and how it is connected to privilege, cross-racial friendships, avoidance and abandonment of racial privileges, an understanding of the ways that racial privilege impacts people of color, and commitment in antiracist actions and activism (Helms, 1998).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3D Model of White Identity Management</td>
<td>Dismantling is when white individuals engage in anti-racist activism in order to combat group-image threat (Knowles et al., 2014).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2-2. Variables in the literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intersectionality</td>
<td>Kleiman, Spanierman &amp; Smith (2015)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

Chapter 3 discusses the study’s research design and methodology, data collection, and data analysis methods. This was exploratory research on a multifaceted and complex topic. Rather than focus on generalizability, this study was expected to generate findings which can inform future studies.

**Research Design**

This study utilized a single-case, descriptive case study design where the individual was the unit of analysis (Yin, 2009). This design was chosen in order to help establish theoretical explanations for a specific phenomenon: white individuals participating in anti-racist activism. Descriptive or exploratory case studies are appropriate when needing to understand an event of interest after the event has occurred and are well suited for studying complex social phenomena (Yin, 2009). In this study, the event that had occurred was the anti-racist activism committed by white individuals, with the focus being on how those individuals became motivated to do this work. The study did not utilize embedded units, replication, or comparison groups (Yin, 2009). Both the study’s methods and data collection strategies help to increase the validity of this study’s findings through: supporting the research design in making clear connections from the hypotheses to the interview protocol questions, ensuring that the unit of analysis was considered at both the hypothesis level as well as the data collection level, relying on a strong case-file for each participant, and the use of multiple methods of data collection (triangulation) (Yin, 2009). These methods will be discussed in depth in the next section.
**Research Methods**

The methodology for this study was mixed methods. Using a variety of methods, the researcher is better able to capture reliable data, so long as data collection instruments are well tested (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The study used three specific methods to collect data during each participant’s interview: the Life History Calendar, the in-depth interview, and the demographic questionnaire. Combined, these different methods provided a more complete picture of each participant. These data collection methods will be described in-depth shortly. In the next section, sampling procedures and challenges will be discussed.

**Population/Sampling**

The original sampling goal for this study was to reach saturation. Saturation is generally thought by scholars to have been achieved when no new themes are presented in the data (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006). Referral sampling was utilized in this study, therefore, the saturation goal was to sample two tiers deep with 60% repeat referrals. However, due to the challenges that arose during the sampling process, the sampling goal was not met. This will be discussed in more detail later in this section.

This research was exploratory and hypothesis-generating rather than hypothesis testing. Therefore, the sampling was not focused on generalizability (as is traditionally the case in studies) but on what Luker (2008) refers to as data outcroppings, or places where there are logical and theoretical reasons to believe the phenomenon in question will be observed. Specifically, this study utilized three waves of referral sampling (Kemper, Stringfield & Teddlie, 2003) to recruit the theoretical population of white, anti-racist activists. The accessible population of this study was comprised of white
individuals engaged in anti-racist activist work in North Central Florida. This location is important when discussing race and activism because of the history of the area; confederate flags are still flown from houses and vehicles. Due to the nature of engaging in anti-racist activism in an area with the challenging racial climate of North Central Florida, this accessible population may not be generalizable to other parts of the country, regardless of sample size.

The study used three waves of referral sampling (Gorard, 2013) to identify white individuals engaged in anti-racist activism who are presumed to be in the dismantling stage. Identification of these individuals was not easy, and there are limitations that could be introduced when a white person (i.e., the researcher) identifies participants in this category. To combat this potential bias, seven local activists of color were asked to refer white individuals who were actively engaged in anti-racist activism. These individuals were eighteen and older, in school or out of school, and were located in North Central Florida. These activists of color were identified through their work within the community (non-profit leaders, educational leaders, community leaders and activists).

First, researchers reached out to seven activists of color via email or letter (see Appendix C). The letter stated that they were identified as social justice leaders in the community and their help was being sought to identify participants for a study on white anti-racist activists. They were able to respond via email, or phone. The researcher then followed up with these potential participants directly. Out of the seven activists of color contacted, two responded, with only one referring participants for the study. This lack of
response was the first sampling challenge encountered in this study, and it will be discussed in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 more in-depth.

The potential participants were then contacted via letter, email or phone, depending on what contact information was available (See Appendix C for a sample letter/phone script). Confidentiality was important here. The letter was transparent by saying the potential participant was recommended by a local activist of color but that the name of the referrer would not be shared. Beyond this nominator, nobody outside of the research team knew the identity of the participant. One participant was identified through this wave of sampling.

When this first wave of sampling did not provide enough participants, a second wave of referral sampling (Gorard, 2013) was utilized by contacting leaders of activist hotspots in the community. These so-called hotspots were identified by their public and recent racial justice and anti-racist work and included a feminist bookstore, a local hub for community organizing, and two progressive churches with strong activist foci. Three participants were identified through this method of sampling.

Concurrent with the first two sampling waves, a third wave of referral sampling was utilized (Gorard, 2013). Specifically, participants were asked at the end of each interview if they knew of another person who would fit the criteria for the study. The researcher followed-up with these persons directly and two participants were identified through this method of sampling.

A total of six participants were included in the final sample. The sample did not reach saturation due to the lack of respondents at each wave of referral sampling. Because of the challenges in finding respondents, and the subsequent small sample
size, the study findings are not generalizable beyond the sample. Chapter 4 and 5 discuss the possible reasons behind such a small number of respondents, and Chapter 5 specifically looks at ways future research on this topic can mitigate these challenges.

**Data Collection Plan**

Prior to conducting the data collection, the interview guide was created by the researcher. Once created it was tested through two avenues. The interview guide was first approved by a round of experts comprised of the researcher’s committee. After this, the interview guide went through pilot testing with a faculty member who was chosen because of their past and current involvement in racial and social justice activism. This testing led to a slight reordering of questions in order to help participants move more logically through each item.

Once each participant was identified, a time was arranged between the researcher and the participant to meet and conduct the interview. The location of the interview was in a place where the participant had a reasonable expectation to privacy, and was determined in part by the participant. The participant was asked if there was a place they would feel most comfortable (such as a coffee shop or office).

A one-time, recorded in-depth interview of approximately 90 minutes was conducted with each participant. The interview was conducted in three parts. First, the interview began by utilizing the Life History Calendar (LHC) methodology. During the LHC, the participants were given a blank sheet of paper with a line drawn across it and asked to spend five to ten minutes to fill out their timeline, which could be started from birth, or any meaningful life moment, and ended at the present time. They were asked to identify the specific events and memories that they felt contributed to their doing anti-
racist work. An opening question focused on the current activism work the participant was involved with was provided prior to the LHC section assisted in focusing the participant’s mind.

This LHC methodology helped the participants to explore the timing, importance, and sequence of major and minor life events (Axinn, Pearce & Ghimire, 1999). This methodology was chosen as a means to enhance validity of this study’s findings by providing another method of data collection. Different from a string of questioning, using methods like LHC gives the data collection process more variety, and aids in connecting to the more creative side of the participant (Axinn, Pearce & Ghimire, 1999).

After the Life History section of the interview, an in-depth, semi-structured interview guide (See Appendix B) was used in order to explore topics brought up in the Life History section, and to address the research questions. The interview guide contained questions such as: 1) Do you feel you have more left to learn? and 2) What motivates you to do this work? The interview guide was followed loosely, allowing for probing and emergent conversation.

Lastly, a brief demographic questionnaire (See Appendix B) was administered to the participants. The participants were told they did not have to answer any question with which they were uncomfortable. The participants were given time after they completed the questionnaire to address with the interviewer any topics on the questionnaire upon which they wished to expand.

Data Analysis
The next section will cover the data analysis procedures utilized during this study. Data analysis took place in two phases: individual case analysis and cross-case
analysis. At the individual level, a narrative analysis (Polkinghorne, 1995) of each interview was created and sent to the participant for approval. Next, data coding was conducted on the narrative analysis, the Life History Calendar (Axinn, Pearce & Ghimire, 1999), the semi-structured interview, and the demographic questionnaire. At the group level, a cross-case analysis identified patterns and variation that may inform future research.

**Data Analysis Phase I: Individual Case Analysis**

For each participant, a case summary—or what Polkinghorne (1995) would describe as narrative analysis—was created. This one to two-page analysis ordered and summarized interview data chronologically and in a way that mirrored how the participant described the story themselves. This process allowed the researcher to identify the various contextual elements important to each case. Next, member checking was utilized to ensure trustworthiness. In this member checking process, the narrative analysis was sent to the interviewee. Interviewees were asked to comment on a) the accuracy of the summary, and b) their comfort level with how their story had been de-identified. Four out of the six participants responded, and only one requested minor edits to their narrative analysis. These edits were made and each participant received an email thanking them for their time and input.

Interview data and demographic questionnaire data were then coded at the individual level in three phases. The first wave of coding identified the presence (or absence) of the factors and experiences identified in the literature as relevant to the research questions. The second wave of coding identified the specific nuances of these factors and experiences (nuances that were later used to identify group-level patterns).
This phase of coding included, for example, the nature of specific critical instances related to the participants’ understanding of white privilege and the nature of the participants’ travel experiences. Finally, the researcher coded for emergent themes not identified from the literature. The result of the process was a two to three-page coding sheet for each individual.

Data Analysis Phase II: Cross Case Analysis
After individual-level analysis had taken place, the code sheets were used to conduct a cross-case analysis. Specifically, patterns and variation across interviews (connected to the research questions) were identified (Patton, 2002). This process included a high-level description of the presence of factors, as well as a drilled-down description of the patterns and variation identified for each variable or factor. While the sample size was small, the patterns identified can be considered post hoc groups that may inform future studies.

Ensuring Trustworthiness of Qualitative Data
One method was used to ensure the trustworthiness of qualitative data. This study used member checking to ensure the researcher properly understood the participant. The narrative analysis was created and then presented to the interviewee for their review. At this point, the interviewee was asked, 1) is your story accurately represented here? And 2) are you comfortable with how your identity has been disguised? This method of trustworthiness helped to increase the validity of the data, while also providing security to the participant that they were being presented anonymously. In Chapter 4, findings from the data collection will be discussed at length, followed by Chapter 5 which delves into the implications of this data.
CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS

This section discusses the results of this study. It starts with a brief review of the methodology, and then presents the findings to each of the two research questions: to what extent, if any, are the participants aware of their own white privilege, and what factors, if any, are related to a white person’s willingness to dismantle white privilege?

This study utilized a mixed methods design, incorporating the Life History Calendar, a semi-structured interview, and a demographic questionnaire. Referral sampling was utilized to target white individuals most likely in the dismantling stage. Six individuals participated by meeting with the researcher one-time, for roughly 90 minutes. Data analysis took place in two phases. The first phase—the individual-level phase—began with a narrative analysis summary (See Appendix D) that was created for each participant. After this, three rounds of coding were conducted on all individual-level data (narrative analysis, interview data, Life History Calendar, and demographic questionnaire). After this, a cross-case analysis was completed at the group-level. In the next section, the sample will be discussed in terms of their demographics and their involvement in activism.

Sample Characteristics

The sample for this study was composed of six white-identifying North Central Florida residents. All participants identified as cisgender, straight women. Each participant came from a middle to upper class background and each had received at least a Bachelor’s degree from a higher education institution. Participants’ ages ranged from 30 to 80 (mean= 57) and careers included K-12 teachers, higher education faculty members, and librarians. Half of the population was retired. It is important to reiterate
that because of the smaller sample size, the findings of this study can only be
generalized to the participants within this study.

The participants’ activism varied as well due to the reliance on referral sampling. All but one participant had direct connections to some kind of formal racial justice activism. This person was an outlier, and will be discussed later. Those with direct connections to racial justice activism described at least two, sometimes three forms of activism. Most of the participants described their activism happening through a variety of avenues; three of the participants described their activism as happening through their church and four individuals described their activism as political. This political activism was observed in actions like sitting on county or city coalitions, protesting, and writing letters to representatives. Three participants also described using their formal positions as teachers and researchers (both K-12 and higher education) to do activism work. This was apparent in the focus of their research, as well as the social issues that they brought up in the classes they teach. One participant described her activism as also happening online, by sharing articles and engaging in online discussions regarding social justice issues. Table 4-1 at the end of Chapter 4 showcases the variation of activism within this sample. It is assumed here that all participants except the one outlier (participant four) is likely to be in the dismantling stage—this assumption is held for Chapter 4 and analyzed in Chapter 5.

**Participants’ Awareness of White Privilege**

The first research question of this study was: to what extent, if any, are participants aware of their own white privilege? The starting hypothesis was that individuals doing dismantling work would be aware of the existence of white privilege
and how they themselves benefit from white privilege. Three specific items from the interview guide addressed this research question: the evolution of understanding their white privilege, the participants’ experience of backtracking and resisting that evolution, and the participants’ willingness to make sacrifices for People of Color. In this section, the outlier within this study is discussed first, the item focused on evolution is discussed second, followed by the backtracking and resisting item, and finally the participants’ willingness to make sacrifices.

In general, the sample was highly aware of their own privilege. Specially, five out of six described an evolution to their understanding of their white privilege, four described experiences of backtracking or resisting this evolution, and five of the six described sacrifices they believed they needed to make to mitigate those privileges. These experiences point to participants being highly aware of their own privilege because they showcase a level of self-reflection and willingness to see how and where they are a part of the broader racial systems of oppression.

**Outlier**

One participant within this study existed as an outlier. This participant had been recruited to the study via referral sampling but, during the interview, it became evident that she did not engage in anti-racist activism at the time of the interview. She did, however, attend a progressive church that had a social justice focus. When asked about her past experiences with anti-racist activism, she described working with the NAACP in a different state, and stated that in this work she took an annual celebration and “made it better” than was the case when a Person of Color had organized this event in the past. When asked about her evolution of understanding her own white privilege, she
stated there was never a point where she was not aware of her own privilege and cited learning about slavery at a young age in grade school as a critical instance that made her aware.

These examples, combined with this participant’s lack of substantial racial justice activism work could mean that this participant was not actually in the dismantling stage, but was in the distancing stage. Distancing, in this scenario, could look like engaging in conversations about race, while not having a level of self-awareness and an understanding of one’s place within systems of racial oppression. This later point is illustrated in the story told by the participant about making an NAACP event better, a story she recounted without discussing the nuances of power and privilege that were almost certainly at play. As will be described in the subsequent section, the remaining participants were much more attentive to their own evolution of understanding and to the nuances of privilege.

**Evolution of Understanding White Privilege**

Participants were asked to describe their evolution of understanding white privilege. Although the 3D Model of White Identity Management (Knowles et al., 2014) does not suggest the presence of an evolution, understanding whether this evolution exists is both important for future studies of this model, as well as future studies on race and identity. Five out of the six participants described a period of unawareness prior to being exposed to and accepting the concept of white privilege. As previously stated, the participant who did not describe this period of unawareness stated that “it was always there” and connected her education on slavery in school at an early age to her understanding of white privilege. For those that did describe an evolution, there was
variation on two levels: first, in regard to the length of time from exposure to understanding, and second, in the identification of critical incidents that influenced this evolution.

**Time from exposure to understanding.** Out of the five participants that described an experience of evolution of understanding their own white privilege, two groups seemed to form: those who experienced this evolution slowly over time, and those who had a critical instance where they accepted the concept. Two participants described this slow evolution as “gradual,” with one stating that as she had more experiences her “attitude changed.” Three participants noted a critical instance that lead to their acceptance of their own white privilege.

**Critical instances.** The three participants who described critical instances varied in the sort of instances they described. One participant described an experience in higher education of being exposed to and simultaneously accepting the concept of white privilege. Two other participants spoke of personal experiences that were critical, with one speaking about her experience registering people of color to vote while doing work for the ERA (Equal Rights Amendment) and another noting that her experience teaching in a “naturally” segregated school was the critical instance where she accepted and understood her own white privilege.

**Backtracking / Resisting Awareness of White Privilege**

When asked about whether they resisted or backtracked in their evolution of accepting white privilege, four out of the five participants who described an evolution stated they experienced some resistance or backtracking. The participant who noted she had an evolution of understanding white privilege, but did not note an experience of
resistance, described her evolution of awareness and acceptance of white privilege as simultaneous, and an critical instance that took place in a higher education setting.

There was variation into how the remaining four participants experienced resistance. One participant spoke of this resistance in a general way, stating that “none of us wants to feel the blame” and “most people resist.” Another participant noted that she was resistant of the concept of white privilege until her critical moment while teaching in a segregated school. One participant noted an experience where she was actively trying to do racial justice activism, but was told to step back by some People of Color involved. This participant stated how this experience caused her to step back for a bit and take time to process. She was able to move past this experience and stay involved in racial justice, but it was impactful and caused backtracking. The last participant that spoke of resistance or backtracking spoke of feeling “halted by others’ racism” to the point that she could not act. This variation prevented any actual groups from being formed within the sample in regards to resistance and tells us that both backtracking and resistance can be experienced in different ways, perhaps depending on the context and the individual.

Willingness to Make Sacrifices for People of Color

Five out of six participants noted that they felt they had to, at some point, make sacrifices for People of Color. Four of these participants described this sacrifice in the context of managing their privilege. This included stepping back at meetings and knowing when to step up and use their privilege to make change and when to give space for People of Color to lead. One participant described this experience as “the unburdening of privilege feels like giving something up.” Each of these four participants
stated that there were probably times when they chose not to step back, despite feeling like it was perhaps the right thing to do.

Another participant that noted they felt they had to make sacrifices for people of color described the experience of wanting to but not actually making these sacrifices because she was worried about what people thought. This was in the context of having conversations with other white people about their prejudice and racism. This participant spoke about “berating herself” when she did not engage in these conversations.

Summary
In general, participants who have been involved in racial justice activism, despite age differences, or the ways in which that activism is done, are able to communicate their evolution of white privilege. They are also able to communicate an experience of resistance or backtracking to this evolution, however, this experience might be specific to the individual. Many of the participants were concerned with managing their privilege and attempt to balance a challenging line between stepping back for others to step up, while also utilizing their privilege to take action. This finding is consistent with the starting hypothesis that individuals in the dismantling stage would be aware of the existence of white privilege and how they themselves benefit from white privilege. In the next section, the second research question, factors related to participants’ willingness to dismantle white privilege will be discussed.

Factors Related to Willingness to Dismantle
In this section, the second and final research question is addressed – what factors are related to participants’ willingness to dismantle white privilege. The hypothesis for this research question was that the following factors would contribute to
participants’ willingness to dismantle: interaction with diverse groups, education, intersectionality, and travel experience. In addition to these literature-derived factors, childhood income emerged as a factor in the study and is also discussed. The section is organized in the following order: interaction with diverse groups, education, intersectionality, travel experience, and lastly, the emerging factor of childhood income.

Table 4-3 at the end of Chapter 4 identifies the presence of different factors in each participants’ interview. All participants received a Bachelor’s degree or higher, and acknowledged a moderate degree of interaction with diverse individuals. All participants noted a variation of gender, religion and ability in terms of their marginalized identities. Participants also all had experiences traveling internationally, and noted a childhood income of middle to upper class. Ages of participants varied from 30’s to 80’s.

Table 4-4 identifies the extent to which the participants’ believed each factor was important in contributing to their racial justice work. In this table, all participants noted the importance of interacting with diverse individuals and five participants noted the importance of education as well as having other marginalized identities. Four participants noted class as an important factor, and only two participants noted travel experience as an important factor in contributing to their current activism work. Tables 4-3 and 4-4 are meant to be observed together, in order to understand what factors were present, and what factors were noted as important or unimportant to each participant. Next, each factor will be considered in-depth. Factors are described in the order of importance as expressed by the participants.
Interaction with Diverse Groups

Presence of Factor. Interaction with diverse groups (Bohmert & DeMaris, 2015; Ford & Orlandella, 2015) was the most notable key factor for this study. These experiences varied, however, each participant reported that throughout their childhood and adolescence they experienced a moderate level of interaction with people and groups of people that were different from them.

Perceived Importance. Five out of the six participants stated that interaction with diverse groups was the most important factor contributing to their current work. Each participant connected their understanding of white privilege, including the anti-racist work they currently do, to past experiences with people who were different from them. In discussing interaction with diverse individuals, participants were grouped into one of two categories: those who moved from the North to the South and were confronted with stark segregation and racism, and those who taught in K-12 schools and, in that capacity, witnessed stark segregation and racism.

Two participants, both in their 70’s, told similar stories of moving from Northern towns to North Central Florida when segregation was still legal. One participant spoke about small acts of resistance, such as letting her children drink from the “colored” water fountain or going through the “colored” entrance in the bakery. The other participant noted that her move to the South was one of the first times they had interacted with People of Color.

Two other participants spoke of their experiences as teachers, and described how blatant segregation was and is in schools. Both participants had experiences where they were in charge of teaching two classes, one of which was a form of remedial education (e.g. low-readers), the other, a more prestigious class (e.g. an honors class).
The remedial class for both participants was mainly lower-income, non-white students, while the more prestigious class was almost completely white. This stark separation in students by the color of their skin impacted both participants, each to the point where they decided to understand why. One of these participants noted that even though she had been presented with the concept of white privilege earlier, she did not have her “oh, I get it moment” until teaching those two classes.

Participants also reported as particularly influential other sorts of experiences in childhood and adolescence with individuals different from themselves. One participant noted meeting a Black person for the first time in her fourth grade class and realizing the little girl sitting in front of her was “a real person, who just happened to be Black.” This personal connection appears in other participants stories as well, with one participant speaking about the impact of her parent’s negative reaction when, in middle school, they found out she had a Black boyfriend. Another mentioned making friends with a Black student who was bussed in from a different part of town and feeling that there was a difference in the way her new friend was treated.

**Level of Education**  
**Presence of Factor.** The level of education of each participant was noted in the literature review as a possible contributing key factor in terms of movement into the dismantling stage at the beginning of this study (Bobo & Licari, 1989; Jayakumar, 2008). As Table 4-3 shows, each participant had a Bachelor’s degree or higher, with half of the participants having graduated with a Master’s degree, and one-third of the participants currently in pursuit of their Doctoral degrees.
**Perceived Importance.** All except one participant noted that education was a key factor in helping move them into their current anti-racist activism work. The individual who did not note that their level of education was an important factor in this movement had received her degrees later in life and reported her understanding of white privilege had begun prior to her higher education experience. While almost all of the participants noted the importance of education, they also noted how impactful this experience was in comparison to other key factors. Only one participant felt education was the most important factor.

When education was deemed important, there was variation in how it contributed to their anti-racist work. The participant that noted education as being the most important variable stated that higher education was the avenue in which she first learned about systems of oppression, privilege, and racial justice. Another participant stated that, while experiences with diverse groups was the most important factor, her experience in higher education eventually gave her the language to describe what was already occurring in her mind around race and equity.

Education was also an avenue for two participants’ activism. Both are currently pursuing their PhD’s and teach classes at the undergraduate level. Each spoke about using their research and teaching platforms to understand racism and inequity, and to help others understand these concepts. Higher education was described as both a conduit for movement into dismantling and a place where dismantling work is enacted.

**Intersectionality**

**Presence of Factor.** The sample of this study was composed of cisgender women who identified themselves as straight American citizens. While intersectionality
(Kleiman, Spanierman & Smith, 2015) was not the primary factor in their current work, five participants did describe intersectional identities, specifically, gender, ability and religion.

**Perceived Importance.** Gender, and the experience of being female, was the most notable identity in terms of allowing the participant to more easily understand and accept the concept of white privilege. Four of the participants noted gender was influential in their understanding of white privilege. One participant noted that her understanding of the patriarchy helped her understand systems of white supremacy, while another stated that while her gender was important her “whiteness trumps it all.”

Ability was also mentioned as being an avenue of understanding for some participants. Three participants noted that ability was an impactful aspect of their identities, however their experiences of ability varied. One participant has been physically disabled for most of her life and feels this experience has helped her “empathize with other marginalized groups.” Another participant grew up with a stutter and is half deaf, but never considered these “identities.” Lastly, one participant reported that aging had created barriers for her as she has gotten older, but did not feel it impacted her understanding of white privilege.

While religion was mentioned as a marginalized identity, it was not described as an important experience in helping participants understand and accept their own privilege. Three participants identified religion as a marginalized identity with one identifying as a Scientologist, and the other two identifying with a progressive, non-denominational religion. Only one participant, the individual that identified as a Scientologist, reported that her experience in her religion made her feel marginalized,
stating that she sometimes “does not tell people” because of the way some people view her religion. Each of these participants noted that their religion impacted their values on social justice issues with one participant stating that she “does not believe in a higher power, and we have to save ourselves” and another stating “social justice is a spiritual thing.”

**Travel Experience**

**Presence of Factor.** All of the participants in this study were fairly well traveled (Salisbury, An & Pascarella, 2013; Anderson, Lawton, Rexeisen & Hubbard, 2006), and all had traveled to different countries. The least-traveled participant had taken a trip to Mexico, while the most traveled participant had lived in many other countries, and traveled to many more. Europe and Canada – two Western areas of the world- were the most frequented locations by the participants, with four participants having traveled to Europe and three having traveled to Canada.

**Perceived Importance.** While every participant had experience with traveling outside of the country, participants described it as the least influential factor, with only two participants reporting that the experience of traveling to other countries as important in understanding and accepting the concept of white privilege. One of these participants described her experience of traveling to the Caribbean as impactful due to the level of poverty she observed. The other participant noted that her travel experience was important, but not as important as their experience interacting with diverse groups.

**Emergent Factor – Class**

**Presence of factor.** While class was not one of the factors that emerged in the literature as being related to anti-racist work, it was included in the demographic study
and did emerge as a commonality for participants in this study. Specifically, all participants grew up in middle to upper class. Two-thirds of the participants noted that the resources and access that their class provided could have had an impact on their ability to engage with the concept of white privilege and pursue activism. No participant specifically brought up class as an important factor in either the Life History Calendar or the interview. This factor was only brought up after the demographic questionnaire when the participants were asked to reflect on the impact of their class on their willingness to work to dismantle systems of racial oppression.

**Perceived importance.** When asked about their thoughts on the impact of their childhood income on their understanding of white privilege and eventual anti-racist activism, participants mentioned that their income gave them a “leg up” and provided them with “resources like time and money” and without those resources, they would “be too focused on surviving” to be able to focus on social justice. One participant also noted that her childhood income gave her the resources to go to college and to travel, two of the other variables noted in the literature that could contribute to movement into the dismantling stage.

**Summary**

The findings indicated that participants were generally aware of and could describe a nuanced understanding of white privilege. The findings also point to a number of factors which appear to have contributed to participants’ current dismantling work. The findings indicate that interaction with diverse individuals may be precursors for spurring on involvement in racial justice and anti-racist activism for participants. While these experiences are varied, it seems that another important component to this
variable is direct exposure to obvious racism and segregation. While education was not
deeded as important as exposure to diverse individuals, it was the most common
variable, along with class, with every individual having at least a Bachelor’s degree.
Intersectionality was important and presented itself through experiences of gender,
ability, and religion, with gender being the most influential. Travel experience was not
deeded impactful by the majority of participants in terms of involvement in anti-racist
and racial justice activism and as mentioned above, class emerged as a factor that was
present in each participants’ experience, despite being strongly focused on. In Chapter
5 the data will be discussed in greater depths along with the implications, limitations,
and possible impacts of this study.

Table 4-1. Racial justice/anti-racist activism involvement of sample

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Table 4-4. Key factor consideration

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CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

In Chapter 5 the findings from Chapter 4 will be discussed in terms of their theoretical, methodological and practical implications. This exploratory study utilized a mixed methodology comprised of the Life History Calendar, a semi-structured interview and a short demographic questionnaire. Six participants were included in the sample and after each interview a narrative analysis was created and sent to each participant for member checking. Data analysis took place at the individual level and group level.

The key findings were presented in Chapter 4. The first research question, to what extent, if any, are participants aware of their own white privilege, was answered. It was hypothesized that participants in the dismantling stage would have both an awareness of white privilege and how they themselves benefited from this privilege. This hypothesis was supported by the data. Five out of six of the participants were able to communicate their evolution of understanding their own white privilege, with four describing experiences of backtracking and resisting this evolution and five expressing experiences of making sacrifices to mitigate the impact of their privilege. The second research question focused on factors that may be related to participants’ willingness to dismantle racial systems of oppression and it was hypothesized that these factors would include: interaction with diverse groups, intersectionality, education, and travel experience. These hypothesized factors were supported by the data. Specifically, interaction with diverse individuals was described as the most influential by participants in understanding privilege, with access to higher education following. Intersectionality, specifically the experience of being female or disabled were noted by participants as possible contributing factors to dismantling work. International travel was a part of all
participants’ experiences; however, participants saw this as one of the least influencing factors of those discussed. Class was an emergent theme that was present in each participants’ history, but not spontaneously discussed by most of the participants until prompted after the demographic questionnaire. It is important to note that while this study allows for the creation of hypotheses for future research, the results cannot be generalized and are specific to the participants within this study.

Chapter 5 is divided into four sections. First, this Chapter 5 relates the findings of this study to the model upon which it was framed: the 3D Model of White Identity Management. Second, Chapter 5 identified future research both from a theoretical and methodological perspective. Third, practical implications of the study findings are described. Finally, Chapter 5 identifies study limitations.

3D Model

This study was framed by the 3D Model of White Identity Management (Knowles et al., 2014). This model suggests that white individuals are aware of their own privilege (rather than unaware), a notion which goes against most other models. In fact, most other models accept the idea of the “invisibility perspective” which suggests that white individuals are completely unaware of their privilege until a critical moment. The 3D model surmises that white individuals utilize one of three strategies. These strategies are denial, distancing and dismantling. In denial, white individuals are unaware of this impact as well as their privilege. An individual is considered to be in the distancing category when they are aware of their own white privilege, but distance themselves from their white identity and that awareness. The third and final category, dismantling, is defined by a white individual actively working to dismantle systems of racial oppression.
Authors of the model suggest that movement of individuals through this model relies on two different threats to an individual’s white identity (Knowles et al., 2014). The first threat, meritocratic threat, is suggestive of the denial or distancing categories. A meritocratic threat is a threat to a white individual’s belief that they are a good person. The other threat is the group-image threat which is a threat to a white individual’s belief that they are part of a good group. According to this model, this threat can contribute to placement in the distancing category, but is more likely to contribute to placement in the dismantling stage. The authors do not explicitly describe movement through this model. This study assumed that movement through the model exists and that those doing dismantling work would have experiences with the first two constructs (denial and distancing). The authors also did not note if utilization of these strategies were defined as general responses to perceived threats, or specific responses to perceived threats. This study viewed the model’s constructs as general responses. Future research will be needed to comb out the details of this model.

This model is fairly new and has yet to be tested empirically. This study was among the first—if not the first—to begin exploring this new model. In this section the study findings connected to the 3D Model will be discussed. The findings showcased in regards to the 3D Model of White Identity Management, as they apply to the study participants, are twofold. First, evolution does not happen in a straight line. Secondly, characteristics of two or more stages of the model may be present simultaneously in one individual. These findings will be elaborated on below.
A Complex Evolution

The 3D Model suggests that an individual cannot be in multiple stages at once-that the individual responds to threats in either denial, distancing, or dismantling (Knowles et al., 2014). This model also does not give a clear indication of the way in which evolution may happen in this model-whether evolution is only progressive, only linear or if backtracking can happen. The findings connected to the participants’ understanding of white privilege indicate that evolution to the dismantling stage does not necessarily happen in a linear form, and that there can be traits of multiple stages occurring for an individual at the same time. Specifically, out of the five participants who were actively engaged in racial justice activism work, all articulated an evolution from unawareness of their privilege to their current state. Four out of five of these participants also reported experiences of backtracking or resisting this evolution, which suggests a presence of distancing-type behavior, even despite their movement toward and, in some cases, even while demonstrating what could be described as dismantling-type behavior. An example of this would be one participant who had been engaged in dismantling work for most of her adult life, who had an experience of being told to step back by People of Color. This experience was described as “confusing” and it led this participant to pulling back for a time. In this example, there is a presence of both dismantling-type behavior (actively working against racial systems of oppression) and distancing-type behavior (pulling back from the work to process an experience of being “called out”). In essence, for four participants, dismantling work was a journey with stops and starts.

Another example of the fluidity of these stages would be a participant’s reaction after the most recent presidential election. This participant was doing dismantling work
prior to the election, but noted that after the election she felt defeated and had to take a step back from the work. While this may be noted as backtracking, it may also be described as self-care. It is difficult, without precise definitions, to flesh out the differences between these two, but what can be concluded is that for this study's participants, this evolution was not a straight, linear path and that the experience of any stage was dynamic, not static.

This fluidity also was evident by the number of participants that felt they were compelled to make sacrifices in order for People of Color to benefit, and the acknowledgement that sometimes they chose not to make those sacrifices. Five of the six participants involved in dismantling work noted that they felt compelled to make these sacrifices. These sacrifices revolved around managing white privilege, typically in an activist setting (stepping up or, at times, stepping back) or were connected to speaking out when something racist was said or done. In either situation, the participants’ sacrifice was connected to the ways in which they were perceived; either by giving up power by allowing others to speak, or by possibly creating conflict when confronting someone behaving in a racist manner. In both scenarios, participants felt there were times when they did not share power in the ways in which they would have liked, and experienced different levels of guilt in regards to these moments. While no participants gave specific examples of choosing to not make these sacrifices, many spoke generally about managing their own white privilege when in activist spaces with People of Color, feeling that they needed to let other voices be heard in the group, but choosing to speak anyways. It is also important here to note that the idea of making
these “sacrifices” may be better understood through the language of power-sharing. This concept will be discussed further in the advancing methodology section.

Based on these data, future iterations of the model should explore multiple kinds of evolutions, including the presence of multiple factors at each stage, which would be more helpful in capturing the actual experience of managing white identities. This model would not necessarily be linear, but would be comprised of both critical instances of growth and slow and gradual growth, as well as critical instances of resistance and possible backtracking. Self-care would also be an important component of this model. In the next section, the findings of this study and their implications for the invisibility perspective aspect of the 3D Model of White Identity Management will be discussed.

**Invisibility Perspective**

One of the main arguments of the 3D Model of White Identity Management is that rather than being unaware of their own white privilege, white individuals are in denial of that privilege until they experience a critical moment or incident that moves them into the distancing stage (Knowles et al., 2014). While this tenant was not tested in this study, the findings do suggest further research is necessary. All but one participant spoke of an evolution that began with unawareness, and either gradually grew into awareness or were thrust into awareness by a critical instance. No participant described being in denial. This, of course, is where the study limitations come into play.

The study is not longitudinal. There is no way to confirm whether participants’ reported experiences of unawareness was in fact unawareness or, as the 3D Model would suggest, denial. Additionally, confirmation bias and social desirability bias (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann & Hanson, 2003) might suggest participants’ reported
experiences are not entirely accurate. In fact, when exploring the Life History and their evolution, multiple participants specifically said there was a possibility they were remembering things the way they wanted to remember them, rather than how they actually were experienced. The invisibility perspective needs to be explored in future studies. The next section will explore the implications of this study’s findings on the 3D Model’s concept of group-image threat.

**Group-Image Threat**

The 3D Model of White Identity Management suggests that utilization of any of the three strategies (denial, distancing, dismantling) takes place as a response to either an individual meritocratic threat or a group-image threat (Knowles et al., 2014). Movement into dismantling specifically rests, according to this model, on the exposure to a threat to group-image. This means that according to the 3D Model, five out of the six participants should have described a group-image threat at some point during the interview, most likely when answering the question “what motivates you to do this work?” For example, they might have said they were motivated by changing the legacy of white individuals or that their motivation came from a belief that white individuals could do better. These sorts of motivations were not heard. Instead, the answers in response to this question were varied, with one participant possibly hinting at the meritocratic threat “I am sure there is some guilt that comes into play, as well as wanting to be a good person…” and three individuals speaking of individual, spiritual motivations “life led me to a heart of love to make the world a better place” and “no one is coming to save us, which means we have to save ourselves.” No individual described being motivated by improving the group that they belong to (white identifying).
There are two possible ways of thinking about this discrepancy. One perspective is that this study has incorrectly categorized individuals in the dismantling stage. That is definitely a possibility; however, it is not necessarily the case. There are a number of reasons why individuals would engage in dismantling-level anti-racist work outside of correcting a group-image threat. For example, the individualistic focus may be reflective of the nature of the Western world, and in particular the United States. The culture is individualistic, and perhaps this makes it more difficult for individuals to contextualize their micro-level actions to macro-level patterns or, if they do contextualize it at the macro-level, may still focus interventions at the micro-level. Another perspective is that the dismantling category in the model may need to be broken into two sub categories, with meritocratic threat being the motivation for one, and group-image threat being the motivation behind the other. To reconcile these perspectives, it will be important to explore if true dismantling work can be done without a more global, less individualistic motivation.

Summary

The findings of this study have important implications for both the 3D Model of White Identity Management, as well as other models exploring white identity and privilege. The findings of the study suggest that evolution and backtracking, denial versus unawareness, and motivations for doing dismantling work are very complex. While these complexities are challenging to capture within a succinct model, the nuances may be important to accurately explain white identity management. As will be discussed in the next section, more research is needed.
Future Research

This section describes potential future research both from a theory-building and a methodological perspective. The theory-building section revisits the models described in Chapter 2 will be discussed in reference to the findings from Chapter 4. The methodology section describes potential future studies and the methodologies that could be used to explore white identity and white privilege.

Building Theory

In Chapter 2, six models were presented, including the 3D Model of White Identity Management (Knowles et al., 2014). These models were utilized in order to help operationalize the 3D Model of White Identity Management, a newer model that has not been tested. In this section three topics will be explored. The first of these topics focuses on the findings of this study and how they support or contradict what has been found in the models used to operationalize the 3D Model. The second topic focuses on how the findings from this study expand the general understanding of white identity management. And lastly, this section explores next steps for research regarding building theory.

The findings of this study support the final stage of many of the models including the Political Solidarity Model of Social Change (Subasic et al., 2008), the White Feminist Anti-Racism Model (Frankenberg, 1993), and the Social Justice Ally Model (Edwards, 2006). The Political Solidarity Model of Social Change, which is connected not connected to any one identity of privilege, suggests that to reach the final stage there must exist both solidarity from the majority to the minority and challenge from the majority to the authority. This was present in all participants as there were members of a racial majority who were actively involved in anti-racist work. Within the White Feminist
Antiracism Model, race cognizance, the final stage of the model, is reached when white individuals believe that there are different races, with different experiences, and those different experiences are tied to systems of power. The participants in this study engaged in anti-racist work also fell into this category—five of the six spoke of different experience of systemic power and privilege. Edward’s Social Justice Ally Model, another model not specifically tied to white privilege but social justice, denotes that to fall into the final category of ally for social justice there must be motivations coming from the self and other’s needs. There also needs to be an awareness of every person (not just those in the oppressed group) being negatively impacted by systems of oppression, and the focus being tied to changing those systems, rather than a person or community. While these motivations were not necessarily explored in this study, the participants engaged in anti-racist work had an awareness of systems, and a focus, even if not explicitly explored, on changing these systems rather than people or communities.

Both Hardiman’s White Identity Management Model (Hardiman, 1982) and Helm’s White Racial Management Model (Helms, 1998) are significantly more in-depth than the aforementioned models. These two models are more detailed and the stages more nuanced. The final stage of the Hardiman’s model incorporates acceptance of whiteness which includes redefining whiteness while also accepting other white individuals not yet in the final stage. These concepts were not directly showcased in the findings from this study, but offer a much more comprehensive way of understanding white identity management. The final stage of the Helm’s model is even more complex. It involves having a positive awareness of one’s own racial identity, having friends of different races, abandonment of privilege, and understanding of the ways privilege
impacts People of Color, and a commitment to anti-racist activities. Both of these models connect both motivation, awareness and action, something that the other models presented in Chapter 2 do not necessarily include. These differences in models could possibly be attributed to the different disciplines they come from. Both the Helm’s and Hardiman models come from psychology backgrounds, possibly helping to create more nuanced picture of a white individual, while the other models which are based more in a sociological framework could possibly focus on more generalized models so as to capture more white individuals within their models.

This consideration of discipline along with the dichotomy of nuance versus simplification in models leads to the next exploration regarding this study and building theory. The participants of this study, while in some ways fitting into the 3D Model, also had experiences and life histories not accounted for in the model. This could be because of the newness of the model and its lack of exploration prior to this study, but it also has other implications. Models can be helpful in research and practice because they make sense of complex social concepts. However, by their very nature, models also simplify complex social concepts and, in some cases, this simplification can detract from the model’s potency. While this study only had an n of six, the findings suggest that even with an n of six, the participants experienced great variation in white identity management. Researchers must be careful to account for the complexity this topic demands.

Moving forward, in regards to building theory, models focusing on white identity management need to both be broad enough to capture the experiences of all white people (at least in the United States) while also being nuanced and complex enough to
be useful. These findings do not suggest that the 3D Model of White Identity Management is erroneous, but that future research should explore and tease out the nuances in white individuals’ experiences in regards to their privilege. In the next section, the implications of the findings of this study on methodology will be explored.

**Advancing Methodology**

In this section four concepts regarding methodology will be considered. The first focuses on sampling and the challenges that come with attempting to sample from a specific population such as white individuals with characteristics from the dismantling stage of the 3D Model (Knowles et al., 2014). The second section will focus on interviewing and the possible biases that can come from research on white identity. The third section focuses on factors related to the dismantling stage. Lastly, language will be discussed in regards to getting the most information-rich data from participants.

**Considerations on sampling.** The sampling goal of the study was to reach saturation, which for this study was determined to be a two-tier level with 60% repeat referrals. The sample was composed of white individuals with dismantling characteristics referenced in the 3D Model (i.e., engaged in dismantling behavior such as anti-racist work) (Knowles et al., 2014). It utilized three waves of referral sampling. It began with a referral sampling procedure that involved People of Color in the sampling process to avoid any bias that might have arisen when a white researcher identifies white people in the dismantling stage. Specifically, sampling began by reaching out to seven POC who were publicly doing anti-racist work and asking them to provide up to three names of white individuals they felt were doing high-quality anti-racist work. Only two individuals responded, with only one giving names of possible participants. Next,
two progressive churches in the area were approached and, while both responded positively, only one was able to actually provide names. This church provided five names, with three of those individuals participating in the study. Referral sampling was used again when participants were asked to identify possible future participants after their interview. In total, three participants came from the initial church contact with one progressive church, two participants were referred by earlier participants, and one participant was referred by a Person of Color.

There are multiple issues to consider when attempting to understand the complications that came from sampling in this way. The first complication that arose came from receiving little to no responses from People of Color. There could be many reasons for this. First, the data collection for this study began after an incredibly tumultuous federal election cycle in 2016, which could have left activists of Color frustrated, disheartened, and discouraged by white individuals, and perhaps there was a level of distrust that came from these experiences. Another possible reason for this could be that there truly are not very many white individuals actually doing good anti-racist work, and that these activists of Color did not have individuals to name. Perhaps these individuals do exist, but are not doing work on the frontlines, and are instead working quietly backstage.

For future research it may be important for researchers to, prior to sampling, build relationships with individuals of Color doing activism work. Building this trust and working in a more collaborative way with individuals of Color would possibly also provide more information-rich data in terms of what a Person of Color looks for in a
white person doing this kind of work, rather than relying on theorists who are mostly white, and their definitions of white identity management.

It is also worth considering the possibility that white individuals truly in the dismantling stage just do not exist or do not exist in large numbers. Privilege is a powerful piece of identity and is obviously a challenging piece for individuals to get beyond, and perhaps white individuals in the study’s area (the South) are not at a place yet where that can happen.

Another consideration for future research on this topic and the sampling procedures that come with it is establishing clear and concise methods of screening individuals prior to sampling. This would be tied to the utilization of a clear model that has well defined constructs that the researcher could rely upon in order to make sampling selections. Being able to more clearly and accurately select individuals for a study would make sampling procedures more straightforward in future research.

**Considerations on interviewing.** As mentioned in the section on the Invisibility Perspective, it is possible that the Life History Calendar and the semi-structured interview, while helpful tools in collecting information-rich data, perhaps also lend themselves to bias. Social desirability and confirmation biases can be present when an individual is talking about a sensitive subject, and particularly when they are talking about their life histories. A longitudinal study, or a study with multiple time-points of data collection could prevent against these biases and give a clearer picture of the evolution of white individuals in their understanding of white privilege.

**Considerations on factors.** The study gathered data on the participants’ perceptions of importance of specific factors contribution in moving them through their
understanding of their own white identity and privilege. This information was telling, as discussed in Chapter 4, but it also has the possibility of being skewed depending on the thoughts and experiences of participants. Class is a good example of this, as it was a present factor in each of the participants’ experiences, but was only brought up as a contributing factor after being asked by the interviewer. This showcases the ways participants’ perceptions of the importance of factors can give an inaccurate picture of what factors are actually tied to white identity evolution.

One way this issue could be mitigated is to conduct a large scale quantitative study of white individuals, with two comparison groups: white individuals doing and not doing anti-racist work. Such a study would help tease out the actual vs. perceived relationship of these factors to dismantling behavior. More factors could be included such as personality traits, parents or guardians’ political stances, or which region participants lived in during childhood and adolescence.

**Considerations on language.** Finally, it is important to discuss language and the relationship between language and experience. While this study was not linguistically informed, the data analysis process uncovered some bias inherent in the language used in this study, bias that is reflective of the topic at hand. For example, the interview guide asked participants to identify whether or not they felt they had to choose to make sacrifices for People of Color to benefit. This very language—the language of sacrifice—may have influenced the responses. It accurately connotes a position of privilege but may over-emphasize the loss inherent in dismantling systems of oppression. In hindsight, a different and, perhaps, better question may have been: how, if at all, do you consciously and actively seek to share power with POC?
Also related to the topic of language is the definition of terms. What is the difference, for example, between resisting and self-care? If an individual steps back from activist work due to being overwhelmed, are they still in the dismantling stage and engaged in self-care or are they in the distancing stage and backtracking? As the model develops, these sorts of terms must be operationalized further.

**Practical Implications**

While the theoretical and methodological considerations are important to advancing theory, research must also provide insight into practice. This section will discuss the potential implications for practice related to both individuals and leaders. The section on individual growth focuses on the ways the findings of this study may provide help to individuals attempting to understand their own white identity. The section for leaders focuses on those individuals and organizations that provide facilitated growth experiences such as diversity and cultural competency workshops and scholarships.

**Individual Growth**

In this section implications for individual growth will be discussed. These include understanding the nuances of the evolution of white identity, managing privilege in activist spaces as well as an accepting of the normal challenges of resisting white identity and the guilt that can come with it. The factors associated with this evolution will also be discussed in terms of individual growth.

Data from this study suggests that participants in the dismantling phase experience an evolution of understanding of white privilege as well as backtracking and challenges related to sharing power. These data suggest this is a dynamic process rather than a binary or static experience. If it is understood that white identity
management is a journey—rather than a destination—it would may change how individuals evaluate themselves and others in relationship to diversity and anti-racist work.

Nuanced challenges arise for white-identifying individuals who attempt to manage their privilege in activist spaces. Participants described a constant balancing act of deciding when to step up and utilize their privilege to help make change happen or when to step back to allow marginalized voices to be heard. Similarly, participants noted that it is not always possible to say something or do something when another individual says or does something racist. Helping white individuals manage the feelings they experience in these situations could be an important way to facilitate an understanding of white privilege without engendering resistance. The goal, in essence, changes from being perfectly anti-racist to making progress on a long-term journey.

The factors focused on in this study provide an opportunity for white individuals to reflect on their own experiences and how they may impact their willingness to understand their own white privilege. Specifically and when applicable, individuals should consider their access to higher education and class bracket background. These factors may not feel to individuals like important variables that contribute to their evolution towards dismantling, but are nonetheless influential. These factors are also other ways in which privilege can manifest, which means that a white individual should incorporate an understanding of the privileges associated with education and class as well as their whiteness.
Implications for Leaders

The study also has implications for leaders of facilitated growth such as cultural competency and diversity trainings. Participants in this study reported that exposure to concepts connected to privilege did not automatically lead to an acceptance of their white privilege or a beginning to dismantle systems of oppression. Instead, this process took time and, for many, included specific critical incidents such as a move from the North to the South (and subsequent experience of segregation) or experiences in teaching. However, the study also found that trainings—in particular, formal education—did help provide a framework for understanding these critical experiences. In essence, there is an important role for facilitated growth; however, it is not the only approach which should be used.

Specifically, future trainings and workshops should be sculpted to understand and incorporate the concept of evolution as it relates to understanding. Likewise, these trainings should also incorporate space for white individuals to resist and backtrack without discounting these individuals’ experiences, but perhaps providing support through these feelings of resistance. Finally, the trainings should also help white individuals understand how to both manage their privilege as well as manage the guilt that may come with not always acting the way they believe themselves to act—a common experience among study participants.

Trainings, for example, might incorporate significant practices in self-reflection, particularly in regards to possible set-backs that can occur during white identity and its evolution. These set-backs should be understood as part of a larger growth process. The trainings could also provide resources for white individuals stuck in a certain part of their evolution, or stuck in a period of resistance. This resistance should also be seen as
a normal part of this evolution, which may allow more white individuals who are in the
dismantling stage to develop patience and understanding for white individuals not yet in
this stage. The goal here is not to baby or pamper white individuals but to recognize that
change takes time.

The most influential factor for participants was interactions with diverse
individuals. While trainings and workshops should not use People of Color as training
mechanisms, perhaps trainings might incorporate creative and personal connections to
accounts and stories from People of Color which may be a more effective way of
moving white individuals along their evolution. This may look like building relationships
with People of Color doing activist work, utilizing technology to share stories from
People of Color, or paying speakers of Color to come in and discuss their experiences
with systems of oppression. This may also look like moving away from traditional
trainings and provide instead immersive experiences that may be more impactful.

It could be important for leaders to use self-reflection to help white individuals
understand the nuances of multiple privileges – specifically education and class. Higher
education and class identities are not being spoken about, but are more layers of
privilege, that perhaps are not as obvious right now as race – despite this, they are all
related and need to be explored. In the next section, the limitations of this study will be
discussed.

Limitations
The limitations presented here will focus on two issues related to sampling: the
identities of the participants, the area from which the participants were identified.
Another limitation, the more general challenging nature of sampling for this specific
population, has already been discussed in-depth. It is important to note that the sample size was intentionally small. The sampling goal of this exploratory study was to identify information-rich cases to better understand a specific experience. Another limitation regarding the 3D Model of White Identity Management (Knowles et al., 2014) will also be discussed.

**Participant Identity - Lack of Intersectionality**

As mentioned in Chapter 4, the sample for this study was made up of white, straight, cisgender women, all with a Bachelor’s degree or higher and all with a background of middle or upper class. While some of the participants came from different religious backgrounds and some had disabilities, it was largely homogeneous. While researchers never expect to generalize from a study with an n of six, it is likely that more intersectionality among the sample would have influenced the findings. Future studies might specifically reaching out to white individuals from lower class backgrounds, who do not identify as cisgender females, and who fall within the LGBTQ+ identities. This sort of sampling could yield a much more complex and nuanced understanding of the ways in which white individuals of different identity intersections manage their privilege and engage in dismantling behavior.

**North Central Florida and Generalizability**

This study is both strengthened by and limited by its location. The study took place in North Central Florida, which is located in the South in a swing state and in a portion of the state that is largely conservative, save for one “blue island.” It is not uncommon to see confederate flags flying on cars and on houses. The strength of this location is that the study provided examples of anti-racist work in an area of the country
which is still under the legacy of the confederacy. However, this specificity may mean that the evolution of understanding of white privilege described here may be unique to this area. In future studies, collecting data from multiple areas of the country to observe the regional impacts on white identity could provide more information-rich data.

Movement and Placement in the 3D Model
The 3D Model of White Identity Management (Knowles et al., 2014) is a new model and has not been heavily explored. This impacted the theoretical grounding of this study, despite utilizing existing literature to attempt to assuage this limitation. Two assumptions were made about this model due to the lack of clarity from the authors: 1) that movement exists within the model and 2) that the strategies (deny, distance, dismantle) presented in the model could be viewed as stages. The assumption on movement in the model was utilized because of the nature of dismantling work. This work takes a level of commitment and thus is not likely to be a one-time response to a threat to white identity. This is also the basis for the assumption that these strategies could also be stages: individuals doing dismantling work are typically planning to do the work long-term, thus suggesting a stage, rather than a strategy reacting to a one-time threat. Future studies should explore both of these ideas and attempt to create a more accurate picture of white identity management.

Conclusions
This exploratory, mixed-methods study engaged six white-identifying individuals involved in ant-racist actions to explore how they understand white privilege and to identity the factors that contributed to their anti-racist work. The hypotheses were supported: most participants described a nuanced journey of their understanding of
white privilege and a number of factors appear to be related to their anti-racist work. While not generalizable, this study does suggest that white-identity management research and future models need to account for the complex nuances of this experience. Additionally, there are implications of this study for individuals seeking to grow, as well as for diversity and cultural competency trainers. While modest in size, this study is both important and timely.

An accurate history of the United States must include an account of racism, beginning with the institution of slavery. For social change to happen white individuals cannot rely on the work and labor of People of Color, but must take on the responsibility of dismantling systems of racial oppression themselves. The United States is at a point where more and more conversations around race are taking place. With the rise of Black Lives Matter as a response to the police brutality targeting Black individuals, it is critical that white individuals to accept and understand their white privilege, and then to actively work against systems of oppression.

To help white individuals move through the evolution of understanding their own white privilege, there needs to be both future research on this experience as well as new ways of providing trainings and workshops that are effective. Models and theories need to be able to capture the complex experience of managing white privilege and white identity while still being simple enough to frame research. Collaborative research approaches should be pursued in the future, with a focus on both white identity management and what People of Color feel are the necessary motivations, attitudes, and actions of white individuals involved in effective and impactful anti-racist activism. Bridging the gap between academia and activism could help to elucidate these complex
issues as well. This conversation on race is ongoing within academia and in the public sphere, and it will evolve as more research is conducted.
White Anti-Racist Activism

Please read this consent document carefully before you decide to participate in the study.

Purpose of the research study

The purpose of this study is to understand what motivates white-identifying individuals to engage in anti-racist activism.

What you will be asked to do in the study

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to a) complete a brief demographic questionnaire (15-20 minutes), and b) participate in an in-person interview (60-90 minutes). The interview will be recorded and transcribed. During this interview you will be asked about what events and memories you believe led you to engage in anti-racist activism. The interview will be conducted in a place you feel comfortable and where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy, such as your office or nearby coffee shop.

Risks and Benefits

There are no risks to participating in this study. There are no direct benefits or compensation for participating in this study, though you may enjoy the process of reflecting on the important work you are doing.

Your Privacy

Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. Your name will never be revealed to anyone outside of the study team, and details of your story will be changed to protect your privacy. You will be invited to review a summary of the interview and provide feedback as to a) whether I accurately understood your perspective, and b) whether I have sufficiently de-identified your story (e.g., changed names or locations), or if you would like to make additional changes to protect your privacy. All documentation will be destroyed two years after the study begins.

Voluntary Participation
You have the right to withdraw consent at any time without consequence. You do not have to answer any question that you do not wish to answer. If you feel uncomfortable at any time, you can stop the study.

Who to contact if you have questions about the study

Lauren Pearson-Dawe
Graduate Student, Department of Family, Youth & Community Sciences
3025 McCarty Hall D
Gainesville, FL 32611
Phone: 352-895-7665

Jennifer Jones, PhD
Assistant Professor, Department of Family, Youth & Community Sciences
3025 McCarty Hall D
Gainesville, FL 32611
Phone: 352-274-7163

Who to contact about your rights as a research participant in the study
IRB02 Office
Box 112250
University of Florida
Gainesville, FL 32611-2250
Phone: 352-392-0433

Agreement

I have read the procedure described above. I voluntarily agree to participate in the procedure and I have received a copy of this description.

Participant Name: ________________________________ Date: ______________
Participant Signature: ____________________________ Date: ______________
Principal Investigator Name: _________________________ Date: ______________
Principal Investigator Signature: ______________________ Date: ______________
Supervisor Name: _________________________________ Date: ______________
Supervisor Signature: ______________________________ Date: ______________
Interview Guide

Before we start on some of the activities, I want to give you some information about what you will be doing today and why. I also want to give you time to ask me any questions, and for me to ask you some opening questions to get you started on thinking about today’s topics.

As you read in the informed consent, I am studying how white people become motivated to work in anti-racist activism. My hope is, with this study, and your participation, that that motivation will be better understood in order to help motivate more white people to engage in anti-racist activism.

Before we begin with opening questions, do you have any questions or concerns for me? Remember, you can refuse to answer or participate at any time.

Also remember that after our meeting today, I am going to type up a summary of our time together and send you a copy to verify that I have understood what you have said and to also make sure you are being presented in an anonymous way.

OQ1. What can you tell me about the type of work you do that involves activism?
   Probing: Is that a formal or informal position?
   Probing: Why have you chosen this work?

Now that we have talked about your work, I want you to think about how you got to where you are today, particularly in reference to your engagement in anti-racist work. I have in front of you a sheet that you can use to place your life history on. You can start from your birth, or from a particular moment and end in the present. Any events, or factors that you felt contributed to, or hindered you in getting from where you were in your understanding of race, whiteness, white identity, and white privilege can be placed, as best you can, in chronological order.

Feel free to ask any questions or discuss out loud your thought process at any time. You will have five to ten minutes to complete this.

IQ1. Great! Tell me about what you wrote?
   Possible probing questions:
   1. You mentioned (some variation of…) ________________, could you tell me more about that?
      a. Education
      b. Intersectionality
      c. Interacting with diverse groups
d. Travel experience

2. It sounds like you are saying…….. (verify)

3. When you look at this, how would you describe your evolution of your understanding of white privilege?

4. Do you think there were times when you back tracked or resisted this evolution?

5. Who was influencing you during that time? (person, group of people, organization)

IQ3. Do you feel you have more left to learn? If so, what?

IQ4. Are you surprised that this is the work you are in presently, looking at the beginning and the present?

IQ5. What motivates you to do this work?

IQ6. Do you feel, in this work, that you (as a white person) must choose to make sacrifices in order for people of color to benefit?

   a. Probing: Are there times when you don't do this?

Questionnaire

We are going to move on now to a questionnaire. The questionnaire covers some variables that I am interested in, as well as demographic questions. I am going to give you time to finish it while we are together today, and if you have any questions during this part, please feel free to ask. After you are finished, I am going to glance over the questionnaire, to see if there is anything relating to the topic of our interview that I might want to ask about. Remember, if you do not want to talk about or answer any questions, you completely have the right to do so.

1. What is your highest level of education? Check one.
   ___Some high school
   ___High school diploma or GED
   ___Associate’s degree
   ___Technical degree
   ___Bachelor’s degree
   ___Master’s degree
   ___Professional degree
   ___Doctoral degree

2. Thinking back to when you were a child, how would you classify your family’s income level? Check the best estimate.
   ___Low income (i.e., your family struggled to make ends meet)
   ___Middle income (i.e., your family was generally able to make ends meet but may not have had enough for many “extras”)
   ___Upper income (i.e., your family did not have to worry about money and had plenty for “extras”)
3. Thinking about your current financial situation, how would you classify your income level?
   ____ Low income (i.e., you struggle to make ends meet)
   ____ Middle income (i.e., you are generally able to make ends meet but may not have enough for many “extras”)
   ____ Upper income (i.e., you do not have to worry about money and have plenty for “extras”)

4. How would you describe your political affiliation?
   Use this tool to place yourself

   RIGHT (conservative) ____________________________ LEFT (liberal)

5. Do you believe you have other identities that are marginalized? Check all that apply.
   ____ Gender (non-male, non-binary, non-cisgender)
   ____ Religion (non-Christian)
   ____ Sexuality (non-straight)
   ____ Ability (physical, cognitive, emotional/mental)
   ____ Nationality (non-American)
   ____ Citizenship (non-U.S. citizen)
   ____ Class (non-middle class or higher)
   ____ Other: ____________________________

6. How much have you interacted with racial or ethnic groups different from your race or ethnicity?
   ____ Not at all
   ____ Moderate degree
   ____ High degree
   ____ Very high degree

7. How much do you interact currently with racial or ethnic groups different from your race or ethnicity?
   ____ Not at all
   ____ Moderate degree
   ____ High degree
   ____ Very high degree

8. Have you traveled abroad (out of the United States)?
   ____ If yes, where: ____________________________
   ____ No

Debrief:
DQ1. First, is there anything that struck you in the questionnaire that you want to discuss?

DQ2. I see you marked (see list) but did not mention that as something that motivated you to start your work in the earlier part, could you explain that?

a. Education
b. Socioeconomic status
c. Political affiliation
d. Intersectionality
e. Interacting with diverse groups
f. Travel experience

DQ3. Is there anything you want to discuss?

Thank you so much for not only participating in today’s study, but for doing the work that you do. I know these topics can be tricky to discuss, and so appreciate you taking the time to meet with me and answer my questions. I will be sending you a copy of the summary of today’s meeting within the next week for your approval. And I will gladly keep you informed on the status of my study, so that you can see the final project. Thank you again!
Email to Study Referrers
Hello INSERT NAME,

My name is Lauren Pearson-Dawe and I am a graduate student in the Family, Youth, and Community Science department at the University of Florida.

I am reaching out to you because I have heard about the exceptional activism work you do within our community. I am studying white anti-racist activism and I am hoping that, through your activist work, you have come into contact with individuals who might be strong candidates for a study I am conducting for my master’s thesis.

The goal of this study is to understand what motivates white individuals to engage in anti-racist activism and, consequently, how we might with better motivate white individuals to participate in anti-racist activism.

Specifically, I am looking for white or white-identifying adults (18 years of age or older) who are engaged in anti-racist activism. This activism can be formal or informal. It can be part of their daily work or it can be part of what they do in their personal time. But it must be activism they do out of a sincere desire to dismantle systems of privilege and oppression.

Do you know anyone who would fit this description?

If so, I would appreciate if you would share with me their name, and, if possible, their email address. You may use the enclosed form and self-addressed, stamped envelope or you can email me at laurenldawe@ufl.edu. I will then reach out to these individuals, letting them know they have been suggested for this study by a community activist. I will not reveal your name to them, though you are welcome to do so. They will have the choice of whether to participate or not.

If you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact myself or my faculty supervisor, Dr. Jennifer A. Jones.

Thank you not only for your time, but for the important work that you do.

Lauren Pearson-Dawe

Lauren Pearson-Dawe
Graduate Student
PO Box 110310, Gainesville, FL 32611
352-895-7665

Jennifer Jones, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
PO Box 110310, Gainesville, FL 32611
352-274-7163

This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB201602206)
Referral Form
Referee Name: ___________________________

Please identify white or white-identifying individuals who are engaged in anti-racist activities.

Potential Participant Name: _______________________________________________________
Potential Participant Email (preferably) or Phone Number: __________________________
Brief Reason for Your Nomination of Potential Participant:
___________________________________________________________________________

Potential Participant Name: _______________________________________________________
Potential Participant Email (preferably) or Phone Number: __________________________
Brief Reason for Your Nomination of Potential Participant:
___________________________________________________________________________

Potential Participant Name: _______________________________________________________
Potential Participant Email (preferably) or Phone Number: __________________________
Brief Reason for Your Nomination of Potential Participant:
___________________________________________________________________________

Do you know of other activists in the community whom I should ask to refer potential participants for this study? If so, please share their name and email addresses.

Potential Referee Name: _________________________________________________________
Potential Referee Email (preferably) or Phone Number: ____________________________
Brief Reason for Your Nomination of Potential Referee:
___________________________________________________________________________

Please return this sheet by either:

1) Emailing it to laurenldawe@ufl.edu
2) Using the self-address, stamped envelope.

_____ Check this box if you would like to receive the results of this study. If so, please provide an email to which I may send the results: _________________________

Thank you for your contribution to this study!
Email to Study Participants

Hello INSERT NAME,

My name is Lauren Pearson-Dawe and I am a graduate student in the Family, Youth, and Community Science department at the University of Florida. I am conducting a study on white-identifying individuals who engage in formal or informal anti-racist activism. The goal of this study is to understand what motivates white-identifying individuals to engage in this type of work.

You are being contacted because it has been noted that you do exceptional activism work within the Alachua County community. We are impressed with your work and invite you to participate in this study.

If you agree to take part in the study, you will be asked to a) complete a brief demographic questionnaire (15-20 minutes), and b) participate in an in-person interview of 60-90 minutes. During this interview you will be asked about what events and memories you believe led you to engage in anti-racist activism. The interview will be conducted in a place you feel comfortable such as your office or nearby coffee shop.

If you are interested in participating and would like to know more, please call me at (352)895-7665 or email me at laurenldawe@ufl.edu. You may also contact my supervisor Dr. Jennifer A. Jones with any questions you may have.

Thank you for your consideration of this study and for the important work that you do.

Lauren Pearson-Dawe  Jennifer Jones, Ph.D.
Graduate Student  Assistant Professor
PO Box 110310, Gainesville, FL 32611  PO Box 110310, Gainesville, FL 32611
352-895-7665  352-274-7163

This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB201602206).
Participant 1

Samantha holds a formal, unpaid position within a local church that is active in social justice, as well as being involved in local task forces focusing on race and race relations. Samantha also volunteers regularly with children of color through an afterschool program.

While exploring Samantha’s life history, there were multiple events that were noted as being influential in motivating the engagement of the individual in racial justice activism. She grew up in the 40’s living in a predominantly white area. Her white family lived in a white neighborhood and she attended all white schools. Samantha was diagnosed with a potentially debilitating disease in 1953, and had an experience during this time that struck her as meaningful. After church one day, she dramatically complained of being cold to her parents, and one of the adults said that they needed to go because she was cold. This experience struck her because she realized that what she does and says matters and has weight.

In 1965, another important event took place in the Samantha’s life. She moved from her all-white area in Illinois to a mid-sized town in North Central Florida. This was the first time she was exposed to people of color, as well as the many issues that come with a diverse, Southern town. It is also important to note that during this time, North Central Florida was still legally segregated. During this time, Samantha, encouraged by a progressive, Christian Church, began volunteering with a day care that served Black families, as well as helping to register individuals to vote. She moved to Michigan for a short time, and moved back to North Central Florida in 1971. She shortly became a mother. During her early time as a mother, she helped to lead a 4H group. Her co-leader was Black, and while she was in this role with 4H, she stressed the importance of diversity by vocalizing the need to get children of color involved in the program, not just white children.

Samantha was presented with Peggy McIntosh’s “Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” by her college age daughter. When presented with this article, she struggled with accepting the message the article presented for a long time. It took many times for Samantha to absorb and accept the idea of white privilege. After this, she seemed to move from working towards diversity, to working towards better race relations, including understanding white privilege.

After this experience, Samantha worked within her church to begin a coalition focused on antiracism, in which she helped to lead. This experience leads to present day work in both formal and informal settings. At this time she attempted to help head up a task force focusing on race, but the congregation resisted and the task force did not take off.

During more recent times, Samantha had a disheartening experience working in a low-income, predominantly Black neighborhood in 2005 when she helped to start an after-
school program. In this experience, a woman of color who was the president of the neighborhood association, did not feel she was being included. This led to a program with Black individuals in leadership roles taking over the after-school program.

Unfortunately, this experience caused feelings of frustration and sadness, and led Samantha to feel as though she backtracked for a time, while she worked through her own understanding of what had taken place. Although this experience was challenging, it led Samantha to think about how she would feel if the situation was reversed. It also led to holding back in spaces focusing on race, which she feels is tied to the experience, but should be tied to her awareness of privilege. This is challenging because she feels as though, because of her privilege, she has so much to contribute. More recently, she began volunteering with the after-school program again.

**Participant 2**

Janice infuses anti-racist activism into many facets of her life. Formally, Janice infuses social and racial justice through her pursuit of her PhD and her teaching at the college level. She is also involved in a social justice group at her church. Janice informally does activism work surrounding racial justice through her interactions on social media and conversations with family and friends in which she answers questions and calls out racist language and speech. Janice is preparing to use her PhD in the future to provide support to groups working to improve the ways in which Black History is being taught in North Central Florida, as well as working with her church to promote and support the effort to provide sanctuary to those impacted by the new administrations’ policies. When asked why she does this work, Janice stated that “it doesn’t feel like I have a choice, the only other option would be denial.”

Events in Janice’s childhood did not have a large impact on where she is today. She grew up in a predominantly white area, and went to mostly white schools. What Janice does note is that her father’s rebellious and anti-establishment mentality impacted her immensely. While her father did not necessarily share the same political leanings and focus on social issues, he did rebel against his very conservative, Catholic family when he was young and moved away from the traditions and norms he grew up with. He grew his hair long, did not go to college, and ran away with his girlfriend, who would become Janice’s mother. The value of standing up for what you believe in, despite possible social repercussions, was ingrained into Janice from an early age.

In adolescence and high school, Janice took to two individuals who were different from most of her peers. The town in which she grew up in was beginning to bus students of color in from other areas and a new Black girl who was very good at basketball was bussed to Janice’s school. While Janice grappled with her possible motivations for befriending the girl (fetishizing differences, helping the less fortunate, or just wanting to be friends) she noted that there was something about the situation, and the difference between herself and the new girl that felt off. Janice also befriended another girl who was a recent immigrant learning English. While Janice attempted to uncover her adolescent self’s motivation for befriending these girls, she also noted how they may not
have stood out so much in her memory, had she experienced more exposure to people different from her. Janice also noted that listening to Michael Jackson’s music throughout her childhood may have been impactful due to the nature of many of his songs focusing on race, poverty, and race relations.

Janice noted that the biggest influencer, for her, was her experience of taking her first women’s studies class in college in 2004. Through her anti-establishment mentality, learned from her father to some extent, Janice was open to taking a women’s studies course when it fit her schedule and she needed another elective. Janice noted that it was not the concept of feminism that drew her to taking this class, “but doing something edgy”. She enjoyed dissecting patriarchy as a power structure, and this experience opened the door for her to learn about intersectionality, race and eventually white privilege. This experience led her to where she is today in terms of her activism, particularly activism focused on race and anti-racism.

**Participant 3**

Becca currently is involved in multiple women-centered organizations, as well as environmental rights organizations. After the election of Donald Trump, she became involved with a fledgling organization focused on human and environmental rights, with racial justice included in the focus.

Becca was born in 1932 in Pennsylvania. When she was in fourth grade, she had her first experience with a Black person. This person was a little girl who sat in front of her “a real person, who just happened to be Black.” Becca notes this was a time when she was able to make a personal connection to someone who was Black, something that hadn’t happened up until that point. Around the same time, Becca developed a stutter and was bullied for most of her adolescent and young adult years for it.

When she was in her early 20’s Becca moved to North Central Florida, where segregation was legal and alive and well. She noted that she would purposefully let her children drink from the “colored” water fountains, or walk through the “colored” entry to get into the bakery. A bit later, she started taking classes at UF where she read “The Autobiography of Malcolm X” and got involved in the Student Group for Equal Rights. Through this experience with higher education she took classes on education, history, political science and sociology. All of which she felt impacted her worldview.

After graduation, Becca became a librarian at a local college. During the roughly 30 years of work there, Becca delved more into activism. She got involved in ERA activities, ran for school board, and got involved in a women’s for equal rights organization. She was involved in picketing and protests for the ERA movement, and at one point, in 1963, was arrested in Ocala for picketing.

Becca mentions her “fog lifting” as an important spiritual moment when she realized that we are all cousins, and we are all the same. She was driving and there was a thick coat
of fog on the road, and as the fog lifted it broke into square pieces like a checkerboard, these thoughts clicked into her head.

After this experience, she continues to pursue environmental and social justice issues through her various clubs and organizations she is involved in now.

**Participant 4**
Currently, Tiffany is not particularly involved in any local activism. She is involved in a progressive, local church that does engage in activism. Tiffany has only lived in North Central Florida for five years, and no longer drives, therefore she is not as active as she used to be.

Tiffany grew up in Tennessee on a farm with her brother and parents. Her first recollection of race was visiting the home of one of the three Black families who worked on the family farm. She remembers seeing the family and thinking “How strange; so many live in these small houses and we live in a huge house, and we are only four people.” Besides being aware of slavery from school, this was one of the first times she became aware of the differences for Black and white people.

Later on in her life, Tiffany married her now ex-husband, a Jewish man (who later converted to Christianity for his own safety) who had survived the Holocaust. He had been liberated when he was 18 years old, after being held in a concentration camp for 3-4 years. Her parents were upset with the marriage, and Tiffany remembers her uncle, who owned a pool that had a sign “No Blacks, No Jews.” The experience of marrying her husband exposed and made Tiffany more aware of racism.

Tiffany also recalls the first time she hugged a Black man. While walking home from work one day, she ran into one of her coworkers, an African-American man who had always been friendly, and they said hello and hugged one another, as friends. This memory stands out vividly to Tiffany.

While teaching (still during segregation), later in life, there was a situation where some white male students broke into and vandalized the Black school nearby. The principle later announced, to the whole school, that the boys had “degraded themselves,” not by breaking in or vandalizing the school, but by going into an all-Black school. Tiffany was not comfortable with this, and immediately recognized it as racism.

Tiffany, later on in life, from the encouragement of her brother, began reaching out to the children of the Black people who worked and lived on her Father’s farm. She also reached out to a Black woman with a last name that was connected to her family. Due to the possibility of the woman’s family having been owned by Tiffany’s family in the past. She mentions talking to these individuals a couple of times a year as a way of “reconciling” the racism of the past.
Sherry is a high school Sociology, History and Psychology teacher. She uses her platform as a teacher to participate in anti-racism and racial justice activism by infusing her teaching and the assignments she gives out to help her students think about race and social issues. One way she does this is by assigning a project that focuses on encouraging activism where the students find something they are passionate about and work to create a plan to make it happen.

Sherry was born in the 1950’s in a Midwestern town that was predominantly white. She grew up middle class and did not interact with many people of color. Her parents and the church (a Christian church) she grew up in helped to inspire a need to be kind to others and that all humans are equal. Her parents, while not exposing Sherry to any particular social justice issue, encouraged her to always be kind to Black people, and to not see those who are poorer as less than. This focus on accepting and being kind to all people, Sherry feels, was a starting point to her journey of infusing her teaching with social justice issues.

After high school, Sherry married and had her three children. Sherry felt this time during her early twenties was incredibly important. Instead of feeling as though she needed to “perfect” her children, she felt a strong need to make the world a better place for them. This is the time Sherry switched from her childhood church to a progressive church involved in social justice activism, a church she felt (and feels) has a strong focus on not just being a good person (as her childhood church did) but on actively making the world a better place.

Sherry and her family moved to Berkeley while her husband finished his education. This move exposed Sherry and her children to a number of international people, and her children developed friendships with Russian and Korean children.

The family moved again, this time to North Central Florida. Sherry pursued her Master's and got her teaching degree and began teaching at a local high school in 1989. During the first five years, Sherry was a debate teacher and primarily worked with white kids who came from middle class backgrounds. Around 1995, Sherry was assigned another class, the “low readers” class. This class was made up of low performing students and were primarily impoverished Black children. The difference Sherry saw from her debate class, to her low readers class was shocking. She describes her debate students as “empowered” and said they would come to her if they ever felt she graded them unfairly. This contrasted starkly with her low reader students who Sherry described as already succumbing to “learned helplessness” and who would accept low grades without a question.

While Sherry had been using the debate class she taught as a way to bring up challenging issues with students from the start of her teaching career, she began extending this to her other classes and within the school. She began attending different racial justice discussion groups and reading Southern Poverty Law Center articles, and through this avenue learned of a national program with the goal of getting kids of
different races and ethnicities to get to know one another. With the support of other teachers, and the students, this program became an annual event until 2008, when President Obama was elected, at which point many of the kids felt they did not need the program any longer. Sherry did not feel this way, but listened to the kids. Sherry is planning to bring this event back next year, due to the rising racial tension of the country. Sherry continues to use her platform as a teacher as a way to get her students to think about challenging issues. Sherry plans to continue this until she retires in two years, after which she plans to get involved in other ways within the community.

Participant 6

Matilda currently is pursuing her doctorate. Through this experience she teaches a class that aims to help elementary teachers effectively teach students with diverse identities. Matilda also is involved in a community of practice that focuses on infusing social justice into teaching. She has written an op-ed and writes letters to legislators on topics she is passionate about. Education is one of her specific passions, and she focuses much of her activism on the charter school issue.

Matilda grew up in Polk County, Fl. The county was segregated noticeably between white individuals and Black individuals and she remembers her family making disparaging racial comments that unsettle her as a child. Her middle school had a magnet program, and while the school was mostly Black, the magnet program was mostly white. Matilda also had an experience in middle school where she had a Black boyfriend, and when her parents found out she was immediately told she had to end the relationship. Her friends in high school, while not necessarily aware of racial issues, were critical of authority and diverse.

In college, Matilda was a history major and was interested in the Civil Rights Movement and other social movements of the 60’s. After graduating from college, she taught at a title 1 school that was mostly Hispanic. This was where Matilda felt she truly became educated on systemic racism, and her passion against charter schools was born.

When Matilda was 25, she moved to Brooklyn and was the only white person living in her area. Her students were Black, but were culturally Caribbean. This was where Matilda was exposed to identities of Blackness outside of the White/Black binary. After this experience, she taught at her own high school and was exposed to another example of segregation in schools as she taught FCAT retakes as well as an honors class.

From here, Matilda went back to school to pursue her doctorate and was exposed to a critical pedagogy class, which gave her the language she needed to explain her past experiences within education. This experience in higher education opened her up to her current experiences.
LIST OF REFERENCES


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Lauren Pearson-Dawe received her Associates of Arts degree from Santa Fe College in psychology. From here she went on to receive her Bachelor of Science from the University of Florida in Family, Youth and Community Sciences. Her experience working in a non-profit with children who were impacted by intimate partner violence spurred her interest in social hierarchies, and particularly race and class.