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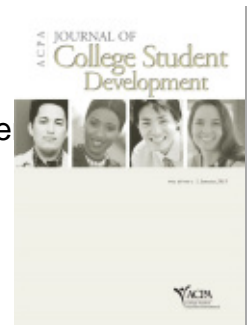
Toward a Model of Racial Justice Ally Development

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This paper explores the experiences of White college students as they make sense of their race and their roles in racial justice movements. Findings from two separate but related qualitative studies, when viewed together, result in an exploratory model of racial justice ally development. Racial justice allies are White students who actively work against the system of oppression that maintains their power. The model presented in this paper explores how college affects the development of racial justice allies, which may allow student affairs professionals to more effectively encourage this type of development.

Bringing about racial justice will occur only when White racial justice allies take action that upsets the status quo—the dominant ideology and culture maintaining racial inequality (Bergerson, 2003; Goodman, 2001). Since the status quo can be maintained consciously through active support of racial inequality or unconsciously through a lack of action toward racial equality, failure to take action to upset the status quo maintains the dominant ideology of racial inequality. Thus, racial justice allies must translate attitudes into action if the status quo is to change. While research indicates attending college affects students' political orientations, attitudes about race, and beliefs in social activism (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), we know little about how White students translate attitudes into actions related to racial justice. This paper explores the relationships between White students' college experiences, students' sense of White-ness, and their development as racial justice allies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Two broad areas of the literature are important to this study. First, we examine the theoretical underpinnings of social justice ally development, particularly the development of social justice allies during college. Since little has been written specifically about *racial* justice ally development, we ground our understanding in the broader category of *social* justice ally development. We also review the empirical research related to how college affects racial justice and related attitudes, drawing heavily on the research conducted at the University of Michigan in preparation for Affirmative Action cases. Together, these two literature bases informed our research design and data analysis.

Social Justice Ally Development Theories

Racial justice ally work is one facet of the larger concept of social justice ally work. Therefore, if social justice allies are "members of dominant social groups (e.g., men, Whites, heterosexuals) working to end the system of oppression that gives them greater privilege and power based upon their social group mem-

bership" (Broido, 2000, p. 3), racial justice allies are Whites who are actively working to end racism and racial oppression.

Although much has been written about social justice ally development, this literature tends to be a-theoretical, not empirically grounded or based on populations other than college students (Broido & Reason, 2005). At this time, only Broido's (2000) study has explored specifically how college experiences affect the development of social justice allies. Although Broido included racial justice allies in her sample, the purpose of her study was to explore the broader concept of social justice ally development. Therefore, Broido's study serves as a foundation and is a useful lens to understand racial justice ally development in college.

Broido's Model. Broido (2000) undertook a phenomenological study of six White, heterosexual students, who met a definition of social justice ally; they were identified by their visible action in favor of justice on behalf of social groups to which they did not personally belong. Her purpose was to examine how the students understood their development as allies during college, their ally identities, and their experiences doing ally work. Based on her interviews with these students, Broido presented a model of social justice ally development in college.

According to Broido (2000), "ally development begins in precollege attitudes, grows through experiences in college, and results in an ability and willingness to act as an ally. From there chance and recruitment are necessary for ally behavior . . ." (p. 14). The college experiences that most influenced ally development included the acquisition of information about social justice issues, the students' abilities to make meaning from this information, and the students' confidence in their knowledge and abilities. For most allies

in Broido's study active recruitment or "a random, lucky event" (p. 13) was needed to initiate their involvement in social justice action. Only one respondent reported that the first social justice action taken was self-initiated. Broido's respondents also pointed to leadership roles, such as student newspaper reporter or resident assistant, as opportunities to become involved in social justice movements.

Models Specific to Racial Justice Ally Development. While Broido's (2000) model provided the foundation for our study, models directly addressing White racial justice allies also informed our thinking. Only a few such models currently exist in the literature; most are not developmental in their perspective, nor directly related to college students' experiences. These weaknesses notwithstanding, the models highlight common experiences and characteristics of racial justice allies and warranted consideration in planning our study.

Stokes Brown (2002) presented life history narratives of four White racial justice allies. Although she found few commonalities in their experiences that might inform the development of more allies, she did note several common personal characteristics among allies. The allies she interviewed reported a high degree of moral courage, high levels of energy, good health, and an unusual sense of optimism for change were essential to their persistence as racial justice allies. Similarly, Stokes Brown highlighted the importance of social support given by a like-minded community made up of significant others and colleagues.

O'Brien (2001) interviewed 30 White antiracists, defined as "someone who 'daily vigilantly resists becoming reinvested in White supremacy'" (p. 6). She explored the role of race, social support networks, and empathy in the lives of these racial justice allies. The allies

O'Brien interviewed rejected a colorblind worldview in favor of recognizing the role of race in society. This recognition of race must include a sense of "Whiteness" that incorporates an understanding of power and privilege. O'Brien and others (e.g., Giroux, 1997; Thompson, 1999) use the term Whiteness to convey the dynamic, socially constructed (non-essentialist) understanding of what it means for an individual to be White in America.

Bishop (2002) proposed a six-step framework to understand the development of racial justice allies. This framework illustrates a progression from a cognitive understanding of oppression and recognizing connections between different forms of oppressions to consciousness-raising and ally action-taking. Bishop's model focuses attention on the difficulties associated with an ally identity and the need for allies to locate support. Although her model makes intuitive sense and adds to our understanding of the ally development process, Bishop's work appears to be primarily anecdotal, with little empirical support. Further, it does not focus specifically on college students and their experiences, so use of this model with college students must be tentative and circumspect.

While not directly applicable to college students and our study, these models provide an understanding of the characteristics of racial justice allies. Each reinforces the importance of reflecting upon and individually redefining what it means to be White. Incorporating a "privilege-cognizant" (Bailey, 1998, p. 27) sense of Whiteness is essential to maintaining a racial justice ally identity. The narratives of these racial justice allies also reveal the difficulty inherent in working for racial justice and the need for continued support from like-minded others.

Influence of College Experiences on Racial Justice Ally Development

The theories and models explored above provide a framework for understanding how particular experiences fit together to foster the growth of racial justice allies. In this section we summarize the literature related to specific college experiences that influence racial justice ally development. Although little has been written about the effect of college experiences on racial justice ally development specifically, an extensive literature base examines concepts related to racial justice ally development. Research examining the relationships between college experiences and such outcomes as students' perceptions of the importance of social action engagement (Hurtado, Engberg, & Ponjuan, 2003), social awareness development (Greene & Kamimura, 2003), and the development of a "pluralistic orientation (i.e., the ability to see the world from another's perspective; tolerance for difference; openness to having one's views challenged; ability to work cooperatively with diverse others; and ability to discuss controversial issues)" (Engberg, Meader, & Hurtado, 2003, pp. 3-4) are particularly appropriate for our purposes.

The research in this area suggests that colleges and universities can positively influence racial justice ally development by providing opportunities for quality interactions with diverse peers as well as curricular and co-curricular education related to racial diversity (Milem, 2003). Chang (1999) defined quality interactions as those encouraging serious discussion of social issues. Institutions can influence racial justice outcomes through residence hall arrangements (Pike, 2000), study groups (Hurtado, Meader, Ziskin, Kamimura, & Greene, 2002), and courses or workshops (Hurtado et al., 2003) that provide a safe environment to explore

diversity issues and allow for healthy conflict between individuals.

Summary

Although the literature reviewed suggests that college affects racial justice ally development, little empirical evidence directly connects college experiences and racial justice ally development. While Broido's (2000) study connects college experiences with the development of social justice allies, we do not know how college experiences specifically affect racial justice ally development. We therefore undertook this study to explore the effects of college experiences on the development of racial justice allies.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

This paper reports the initial findings of two related and concurrent pilot studies. Although the studies were conceived and designed independently, themes emerging from both converged. When considered together the themes emerging from both studies allow us to begin building a model of racial justice ally development.

Qualitative Methodology

The "goodness" of qualitative research must be judged based upon several criteria, including connections between researchers' epistemology, theory, methodology, and methods (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002). Both studies employed qualitative methodology, using constructivist assumptions about an individual's lived experiences. Constructivism holds that knowledge of the world (reality) is a reflection of how experiences are interpreted by individuals and is congruent with an understanding of "race" as a socially constructed concept (Bailey, 1998) to which individuals ascribe their own meaning.

A grounded theory methodology drove the selection of interviews as the primary method of data collection. Framed by constructivist assumptions and a grounded theory methodology, data analysis focused on the meaning respondents made from their experiences during college. We were particularly interested in the relationships respondents constructed between their experiences and their racial justice ally development. We explored these relationships with the purpose of developing "an abstract analytical schema" (Creswell, 1998, p. 56) of racial justice ally development, in the grounded theory tradition.

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework combining an understanding of the social construction of race, cognitive development theory, and college impact models guided these studies. We recognize race as a social construct that encompasses cultural, social, and political aspects (Clark & O'Donnell, 1999. We use "Whiteness" to represent respondents' understanding of what it means to be White in contemporary society. Whiteness includes an articulation of "how their own identities have been shaped within a broader racist culture" (Giroux, 1997, p. 314) and the responsibilities Whites assume because they live in a society that privileges them based on their racial features. We enter the research assuming that Whiteness must be reconstructed to include a cognizance of power and privilege if Whites are to become racial justice allies (Bailey, 1998; Giroux; O'Brien, 2001).

The development of racial attitudes and multicultural awareness are cognitive processes (King & Shuford, 1996); therefore, an understanding of cognitive development during college framed this study. Most cognitive development theorists agree that

individuals move from a dualistic, egocentric worldview toward a more complex, relativistic, and socio-centric view (Evans, Forney, & Guido-Dibrito, 1998). King and Shuford and King and Howard-Hamilton (2003) concluded that multicultural competence requires higher-order, cognitively complex reasoning skills that are more closely associated with upper-division students. We entered our research assuming that many cognitive skills necessary to developing racial justice allies—reflection, perspective-taking, empathy—were similarly higher-order cognitive skills and were likely related to age and experiences of students. "Those [students] further along in the educational process are more likely to be able to make reasoned judgments about controversial issues" (King & Shuford, p. 163), like racial justice attitudes and race-conscious policies.

Because both of our studies explored the effects of college experiences on students' understanding of Whiteness and development of racial justice ally attitudes, the research design drew upon previous "college impact" literature. Based largely on Astin's (1993) Input-Environment-Output model for understanding student change, researchers have identified four sources of influence on college students' change: (a) pre-college characteristics, (b) the institutional context, (c) academic experiences, and (d) co-curricular experiences (Flowers & Pascarella, 1999; Terenzini, Springer, Pascarella, & Nora, 1995). Both studies assumed the outcomes under consideration are a function of the complex interactions between these four sources of influence; we therefore intentionally set out to collect data related to each of these factors.

The First-Year Study

Using purposive, convenience sampling techniques early in the fall semester 2003 we recruited into our study 11 first-year students who identified as White. Five students were enrolled in a sociology course on race relations (Group One); a comparison group of six students were enrolled in a large introductory education course (Group Two). All first-year students who volunteered to participate in this study were women; all were enrolled in a large predominately White public institution (PWI). Each student was interviewed three times throughout the academic year to explore if, and how, their understanding of Whiteness changed.

The women in Group One lived in a residential facility dedicated to undeclared majors. This facility was also intentionally multicultural, with some programmatic efforts made by residence hall staff to encourage a multicultural perspective. None of the women in Group Two lived in an intentionally multicultural living environment, although most lived in campus residential facilities. Although the lack of gender diversity in our sample is a limitation, the different living environments allows us to explore how residential programming, and informal relationships, interacted with coursework to influence racial justice ally development.

The Ally Study

For this study a purposive, snowball sampling technique was used to identify upper-division, White undergraduate students who were participating in identifiable racial justice activities. The students were involved in many types of racial justice action, including active exploration of racial justice issues in a specifically-designed seminar course, leading student groups related to social justice issues, and using positions within student government to forward racial justice agendas. Student affairs administrators and specific faculty members recommended students who met the

criteria for inclusion. Fifteen White students, 12 women and 3 men, from the same PWI as the First-Year study, were interviewed for approximately 60 minutes each. The purpose of this study was to explore what curricular and co-curricular experiences had been influential in their development as racial justice allies and how students made sense of their development.

The Setting

Both studies took place at a research institution enrolling approximately 40,000 students. Approximately 84% of undergraduate students identify as White and 74% are in-state students. During the scope of the studies, the university experienced a highly publicized incident in which a leader of a student organization posted racially offensive pictures of a Halloween party to his personal website. The pictures included several students dressed in offensive costumes, including a Ku Klux Klan robe and blackface. The postings resulted in a greater focus on issues of race relations on campus, including regional news coverage. Questions about the incident and students' reactions were incorporated into interviews for these studies.

The setting of a qualitative study also comprises the researchers. Recognizing the social identities of those completing the research, and understanding how those identities influence the data collection and interpretation, is essential when considering the quality of a qualitative research project (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002). The researchers included a White, male assistant professor and two female doctoral students—one White and one African American. All researchers were part of the Higher Education program at the university where the study took place. None of the study participants had formal power relationships with the researchers, although we must acknowledge the power inherent in age,

status (faculty/student), and racial differences.

Data Analysis

Three investigators used in vivo coding independently to develop initial themes, met regularly to discuss emergent themes, and employed consensus-building techniques to arrive at a shared understanding. The investigators used both interpretive and inductive techniques (Mishler, 1986; Strauss, 1987); interpretive analysis looks for themes within a single transcript, while inductive analysis examines themes across transcripts. A collaborative, constant-comparative technique allowed for emerging themes to be elaborated and confirmed in the data (Creswell, 1998). Researchers ended this phase of the data collection and analysis when a point of saturation was met.

The use of multiple investigators working independently should increase the trustworthiness of the final themes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). We used member checks with several respondents to further ensure trustworthiness of the themes. Researchers also maintained reflexive journals that allowed for an audit trail (Lincoln & Guba) and the introspection necessary to ensure "goodness" in qualitative research (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002, p. 449).

INITIAL FINDINGS

Themes related to the pre-college and college influences on students' sense of Whiteness and racial justice attitudes emerged from the interview data of both studies. When examined together, these themes begin to reveal a possible model of racial justice ally development, especially when viewed with a cognitive development perspective.

Whiteness

As expected, students in our studies exhibited a continuum of attitudes about race and racial

justice, exhibiting no personal exploration to exhibiting both personal exploration and commitment. For many students, particularly those younger students without coursework on race relations, White was only "the color of my skin." No personal or academic exploration had been completed. These students also demonstrated an egocentric, dualistic world-view—unable to articulate the effects of race in society or their daily lives.

Other first-year students, particularly those in the race relations course, appeared to have begun some exploration of Whiteness, although few demonstrated any commitment to an understanding of race. Jenna (all names are pseudonyms) exemplified this struggle. In our first interview, she stated that White was "just my skin color. That's all it really means to me." By the third interview, she exhibited greater reflection on her race although she admitted to not having formulated any conclusions as of yet:

> I still have no idea what it means. A whole semester on White cultural development and I have not a clue what being White means. . . . And actually it started with me not even thinking about it. Then I was like well I guess White is having White skin. And then I just got to everything that is like anything like White guilt and White privilege and all that stuff. Now here I am going I don't know what the hell White culture is. Not a clue I'll tell you.

Although frustrated, Jenna acknowledged that her struggle was a sign of progress when she said, "I think it is a step forward because now I at least know that it's something."

Upper-division student allies from the Ally Study often conceptualized Whiteness in terms of relationships with other people. These students articulated an understanding of the role that power and privilege played both historically and in their current relationships with people of color. They also exhibited commitment to positive racial justice attitudes. When asked about how she understood being White, for example, Sarah, an experienced racial justice ally, stated,

> I guess it's just probably through studying issues about race, I think. Because, I mean, the color of my skin only has meaning because we live in a society that has put meaning on it. I can't exactly trace it . . . . I guess with White privilege, it's just that my skin color gives me the ability to have a certain level of social, political, economic power, whereas I can walk into a store with two friends of color, and chances are they're going to be followed, and I'm not. It puts me in a situation where an employer is most likely, more likely to think that I'm competent or truthful or whatever.

Not only had she reflected upon her race, Sara also articulated how White privilege affects her daily life.

Commitment to taking racial justice action based upon this type of reflection was also evident in many of the racial justice allies we interviewed. April, for example, con-textualized her work as an ally in terms of actively resisting the power and privilege associated with being White in the United States:

> I'm proud to be White and be standing up for social justice. I'm proud to be White because I think that the most dominating force is Whites because they are superior in our country, they're dominant, not superior, I shouldn't say superior, dominating our country. And a lot of people think they're superior. So I think the best way to overcome that is through the majority, which is us. So I'm proud to be White and be able to use my Whiteness to advocate social justice and multiculturalism.

Although struggling with the language to express it, April has committed to a racial justice ally role based upon her understanding of the power and privilege associated with Whiteness in our society.

Influences on Whiteness

Several themes emerged from the transcripts related to experiences influential in the development of students' sense of Whiteness. As one would expect, students were influenced by different experiences, but several consistencies were apparent in the students who demonstrated more reflection upon their sense of Whiteness. These consistencies included pre-college experiences that encouraged early reflection upon race and racial issues, college coursework on race relations, and co-curricular experiences that involved more frequent interracial interactions during college.

Pre-College Experiences. First-year students who had pre-college experience with structural diversity demonstrated more developed understandings of Whiteness than students from more homogenous backgrounds. Although most of our respondents were from predominantly White high schools, those who articulated greater diversity within their friendship groups were more apt to have reflected upon race and racial issues. Similarly, students with intimate interracial interactions, such as having a person of color in the family or interracial dating experiences, reflected more upon Whiteness.

Several students also reflected upon times in which they were numerical minorities (the only White person in a group) as very powerful influences on their White racial attitudes. Jane, a first-year student whose mother was a teacher at a racially diverse alternative school, accompanied her mother to work often. Although her experiences at her mother's school did not seem to influence her at the time, she appeared to begin reflecting upon her experiences later:

> I think it was, I mean, one of the most interesting things to me was that when I was there I honestly, I forgot, I completely forgot [about racial differences]. . . . I didn't even realize until later whenever I sat down I thought about it and I was like wow I really was one of three White people.

A particularly strong theme emerged from the racial justice allies in the Ally Study who discussed the influence of their parents on the development of their racial justice attitudes. These respondents described their parents as "liberal," "open-minded," or "progressive." Parents were influential through conversations about race and racial issues. Parents also provided diverse experiences for their children through intentional exposure to diverse others. Sarah's parents enrolled her in a progressive school where the

> basic philosophy is that all people are equal, so the school went to extreme efforts to ensure that, or at least attempt to ensure that all students were being treated equally. . . . It was sort of a very interesting mix of students because there was a lot of wealthier suburban kids from that area, like White kids. But then there was [sic] also students from inner cities in Pennsylvania who were on scholarship.

Anthony did not describe his parents as liberals, but indicated they were influential in his development nonetheless. He credited his parents' focus on learning and critical thinking for instilling a curiosity that was foundational to his racial justice attitudes.

> I come from a very conservative White family, so [racial justice] wasn't really something, I mean my parents are very open, but my dad grew up in a very 1960s White blue collar family, and Black people weren't accepted. . . . I don't think you necessarily need to have liberal hippy

parents in order to become a liberal hippy. In many cases, I think you have the opposite effect . . . my parents taught me how to learn, not what to learn. They taught me how to get stuff, not what to get. They let me kind of do that on my own. They never forced me into a situation, or you know, this is the way it is. They were very good about that. And I think that curiosity and that way of doing things, of wanting to know more and getting your arms around society was what put me in the situation where when that door opened [to racial justice work], I wanted to go out and see what it was.

College Experiences—Coursework. Coursework related to race, particularly coursework focused on race relations, positively influenced a student's sense of Whiteness. First-year students not in a race relations course rarely reflected on what it meant to be White or the influence of race in society. None of these students indicated an intention to pursue academic study of race or racial issues while in college.

Many, but not all, first-year students in the race relations course discussed the influence of the course on their Whiteness, actively constructing their understanding of Whiteness based on course content and experiences. Olivia, for example, discussed how she had become more sensitive to racial issues since taking the race relations course:

> My roommate will be just sitting around and something would come on the TV where it'd be like, be racist . . . [and I'd say], well I learned this in soc class. . . . I think that I've, I felt that I was always the type of person that would always observe things and was good at observing things, but since I came up here and in this class alone I step back and start realizing things . . . I mean, I personally get more privileges because I'm White, never really realized it until, you know,

just little things until now. Like, it opened my eyes a lot.

On the other hand, Katie does not ascribe much of her developing sense of Whiteness to the race relations course, but she indicates the course helped her understand some racial issues:

> I think it's just more exposure [to diversity]. I don't think that [the sociology course] had anything to do with it. I think I would have come to that conclusion without the class, but I think with the class I was more aware of the struggles of other people and you know, the struggles of White people. More just the connections and the history behind it. But I don't think it made me more aware.

Interestingly, and not by design, all of the students who were identified as active racial justice allies for the Ally Study had taken the same race relations course at some point during their program of study. As one respondent reflected, the professor of the course "helped me a lot to understand how my Whiteness sort of fits in all of that, and how it's okay to be someone who's White who talks about race, which is often a hard thing for White students to get over."

Other courses, even those that met the diversity requirement for general education at this university, did not seem to have the same influence that the race relations course had on the students' understanding of Whiteness. As Elizabeth, an experienced ally stated,

> Well, I had to take that GI [General Intercultural] course that you have to take, and I took for it cultural anthropology, and I took a Jewish studies class, and I took a geography class, and they were all GI's . . . . But I didn't really get opened up to diversity by any of those classes that I took . . . . So I don't think it was that much of a help at all.

Several respondents pointed to the direct confrontation of racial issues in the race relations course, as well as the teaching style of the professor, as the reasons for its influence. As one student said, "The professor, he just puts it out there. He wants to step on your feet because he wants to put the issues in your face where you can't just ignore them. I think that's really good."

College Experiences—Co-Curricular. Students who applied the course content to co-curricular experiences reported powerful racial attitude changes. First-year students in the race relations course, who also lived in diverse residence halls, reported reflecting upon their Whiteness often. These reflections were particularly apparent for students who reported having discussions about course topics with peers outside of class, particularly with peers of color. The narratives of upper-division students who readily recalled situations in which they used course content to understand cross-racial interactions supported this finding. The more students reported reflecting upon their own race in such situations, the more change/refinement of racial attitudes they reported. One respondent from the Ally Study indicated that living in a diverse environment during her first year was important:

> I think it was just probably in terms of the [diverse residence hall], it was just a real relaxed experience. That's where we lived. That was our home. And I think more so, if people get here, and they're just surrounded by all people of their race or ethnicity or religion, that that's just what they cling to, and they're afraid, once they cling to those people, to get out of those boundaries, where if you get here, and as soon as they are here, you are exposed to everything, then you're more apt to be comfortable with that the entire time you're here. So, I think it's really important, because I can't say that if I lived in [the same diverse hall] this year,

that I would have the same experience . . . freshman year, we all knew everyone just through programs, like floor socials, all of that, and everyone was supposed to go to the programs.

Our findings support previous research (Chang, 1999) indicating that while structural diversity is necessary, high-quality interracial interactions are essential for powerful multicultural learning to occur. Students who had a roommate or close friend of a different race were more apt to discuss or reflect upon the role of their race in daily interactions. As one ally respondent, April, said of her interactions with diverse friends,

> A lot of my friends are Black, so I know about the issues. . . . Yeah, we talk about anything and everything. When it comes to race, we're so comfortable about it, and we talk about it all the time. So, it's kind of given me a good avenue to see where certain things come from, like where some stereotypes come from because they kind of stereotype them themselves just as much as White people stereotype them about things about themselves also.

Anthony talking about an African American friend similarly stated, "I learn so much from him individually, because we've been such good friends for such a long time."

Students who were able to recall situations in which they were numerical minorities while in college were more apt to have reflected upon their Whiteness. For first-year students, this "minority experience" often occurred within the context of friendship groups and focused only on race. Jenna discussed a situation in which her roommate "jokingly" invited her to attend a regional gathering of African American college students and then quickly rescinded the invitation.

> So in that instance I kind of felt like a minority . . . I mean I would have gone

down there to Help Stop the Hate Week. . . . It was just like she kind of said it 'cause they joke around and tell me that I, I fit in with the Black kids. So then she said, then she's like well no, you're not Black. So you can't come. All right so maybe I don't fit in with Black kids.

Her experience as a "minority" in this instance caused her to reflect upon how race interferes with her relationships, and where she fits as a White person in a diverse group.

Upper-division allies also spoke of "minority experiences" with regard to race, but were able to translate other "minority experiences" (particularly experiences as sexual minorities). April recalled an experience as a "racial minority":

But I also, when I was really involved with Black Caucus, I was usually the only White person involved, so there was a lot of jokes about me being the token White person, and I had to get to a point where I could understand my position in that group and see that, yes, I was a White person, but I was also a person that was educated about people of color issues and could still contribute on a level, and I could not have survived on a committee that was making important, big decisions as the only White person about race if I didn't just go in with the attitude that people weren't going to always assume that what I said was the White girl thing to say.

Another respondent from the Ally Study translated his experience as a "sexual minority" in order to understand race:

The summer after my freshman year, I worked for Disney. For the first time in my life I was involved in the theater so for the first time in my life I was surrounded by a very high percentage of homosexual population . . . I was among a very small minority that were straight, so it was just the way it was. And I met

these phenomenal people that were gay, and it just had never occurred to me that what I had said before might have been, like "Oh, that's so gay," or "Don't be a faggot," that type of stuff became, "Oh, wow, this is somebody that I care about, and they're hurt by it." I think it was almost an unconscious thing. I just became more aware through the experiences that I had. So that was one way. I think that probably opened the door to my racial sensitivity, through sexual identity. . . . When I went to Disney that next summer, I learned a lot about who I was.

The ability to apply understanding from one context to understand another demonstrates a higher order cognitive complexity one might expect in upper-division college students (Evans et al., 1998).

Our findings support the understanding that college can provide rich opportunities for White students to reflect upon their racial position in society, however White students may need to be actively challenged to do so. Katie, a first-year student, for instance, discussed the ease with which she could avoid dealing with racial issues in the classroom:

I wouldn't avoid a course because of it. But I don't think that I would specifically choose another course with race issues. I kind of got enough of it. I don't know. Like after a whole semester I was kind of sick of hearing about it. And it seemed like it's making a bigger deal . . . and I'm kind of sick of it.

Katie's quotation also underscores the obvious: Racial justice ally development, as with all developmental processes, is a complicated process to which students will react idiosyncratically. Although many students found the race relations course transformational, Katie had grown weary of the topic because of the course.

Jaclyn, also a first-year student, went further then Katie: "I put myself in situations

where I feel more comfortable . . . so if I'm going to put myself in a situation with people that I feel more comfortable with and that's usually of the same race as I am." Institutions must actively challenge White students to move beyond their comfort zones to reflect upon the role of race in their lives. This challenge takes place in the situations like those described above and results in changes/ growth in White students' racial awareness.

Racial Justice Attitudes and Actions

Students who reflected upon and committed to a "privilege-cognizant" (Bailey, 1998, p. 27) sense of Whiteness also reported taking more racial justice actions. The students who took racial justice actions did so at intensity levels commensurate with their understanding of their own Whiteness and confidence levels. Students who had just begun to explore issues of Whiteness often took actions at individual levels. These students, for example, would discuss social justice issues with their parents and friends in contexts that were relatively safe.

O'Brien (2001) found respondents using similar strategies in her study, calling this "strategic confrontation—choosing battles" (p. 70). O'Brien also noted this strategy came from a less-developed understanding of White privilege, as few of those employing it were able to articulate the privileged position that allowed them to "choose their battles." In this manner, respondents in our study paralleled those respondents in the O'Brien study.

Students in the Ally Study took action at both the campus level and the societal level. One student wrote legislation supporting diversity in the university's student government, for example. Two students were performing action at the university level and beyond. Each was a leader of a student group, actively involved in visible campus-wide movements to support racial equity. Both

planned to continue (and broaden) their involvement beyond graduation, making career decisions related to social justice issues. These two students also demonstrated the most reflection upon their racial identity and commitment to racial justice attitudes.

Invitation and Opportunity. No first-year students moved past an individual level of racial justice action. In fact, most first-year students did not report taking any actions that could be considered racial justice action by our definition, even during a particularly public and painful racial incident that occurred on campus while this study was in progress. These students indicated that they were not "invited" to participate in any of the public responses to this incident by someone with whom they were close. The need for an invitation to participate in racial justice action supports Broido's (2000) finding in a previous study of social justice allies.

Several students in the Ally Study indicated that a formal student leadership role served as the opportunity they needed to begin their racial justice actions. As Elizabeth said,

> Being involved and making yourself involved opens you up to so much more, and I think that's really what helped me get involved. . . . I think getting into student government . . . really opened me up. And you have a lot of access to people when you're in student government, because before, I couldn't really do anything by myself, or I didn't think I could do anything myself. I probably could have if I tried, but now there's so many other people that want to do this, too, and so that's really what helped all of us working together.

Similarly, Anthony cited his role in student government as charging him with the "responsibility" to become involved. For several students in our study, formal leadership roles provided the opportunity, responsibility, and

in many ways, the permission to become involved in racial justice work.

Support and White Racial Justice Role Models. Elizabeth's preceding narrative also highlights the importance of finding a group of like-minded others from which allies can draw support. Broido (2000), Tatum (1997/2003), and O'Brien (2001) all write of the importance of like-minded others in providing and interpreting information (Broido) and maintaining racial justice action in spite of obstacles and challenges (O'Brien; Tatum). Elizabeth believed her role within student government gave her more power to enact change than if she were working independently. She also points to the synergy created when a group of people are working toward a common goal.

Anthony discussed the importance of one support person/role model after a particularly painful racial incident that caused him to question his role as ally:

> I was lost for the first time. I thought I knew what was right and what was wrong, and now I had no idea, because here was this person that just [verbally] assaulted me . . . because I was White. So, I went to Nancy, who has probably been one of . . . my biggest mentors since I've been here . . . and we talked about it. She's a White cracker like me, so I've always gone to her when it comes to something like this, and we chat, and she's like, you know, if you have the ability to step outside of the box and you have the ability to step away and see the big picture, which I do, then what's valuable from this is that is the way that you solve this. And I'm like, because I'm a mess of nerves, how do I make this better? How do you solve this problem? What do we do as White people to be allies, and how can you do that? And her advice was when you can step outside and take it, and just say, okay, not do anything, calm.

Nancy, Anthony's mentor, provided him both advice in dealing with this particularly disturbing situation as a supportive racial justice ally and the perspective he needed to calm his nerves.

Support was also important for younger students just beginning to reflect upon Whiteness. Jenna, a first-year student in the race relations course, talked about going to the course professor outside of class or a high school friend for support: "A lot of times if it's about race or something like that I talk with [the professor] or I have a friend who goes to [another university] and she's biracial. So a lot of stuff she'll understand." The professor serves as a White racial role model for Jenna, while her high school friend likely provides her a safe peer who will understand the issues. It appears Jenna may also look to her peer as an authority based solely on her biracial status.

MOVING TOWARD A MODEL OF RACIAL JUSTICE ALLY DEVELOPMENT

Viewed together these findings begin to build a possible model of racial justice ally development. The model examines the influence of pre-college characteristics, curricular and co-curricular experiences, and cognitive complexity in the reconstructing Whiteness. This emerging model demonstrates the role of Whiteness in decisions to take racial justice ally actions and at what "level" these actions will manifest (Figure 1).

Students enter college with existing understanding of Whiteness and racial justice attitudes, albeit often unexamined and unexplored. Students also have experiences related to the structural diversity in their high schools, the level of positive interaction with diverse others, and possible "minority" experiences from which they create their

understanding of the role of race, including Whiteness, in society. As we heard from students in our study, parental influence on pre-college racial justice attitudes appears to be strong.

During college the most salient influences on the exploration and reconstruction of Whiteness for respondents in our study appear to be coursework specifically related to race relations, "minority" experiences, and high-quality interracial relationships. It also seems clear that students must have the cognitive ability to make meaning from these experiences, to process the reflection on race that is required to reconstruct Whiteness, and to translate the feelings associated with "minority" experiences from one situation to another.

Students in our study who exhibited more reflection on Whiteness also participated in more, and "higher level," racial justice actions, such as leading campus groups. Although no causal connection should be drawn, a relation-ship seems clear. Students who exhibited little reflection on race had little understanding of Whiteness beyond skin color and took no racial justice action. First-year students in the race relations course appeared to reflect more on Whiteness then students not in the course and were more apt to take individual level racial justice actions particularly in "safe" environments or when invited. Finally, those students in the Ally Study actively recon-structed their sense of Whiteness and exhibited the most involvement in racial justice actions.

Such a developmental model may provide guidance about how to communicate more effectively about issues of race with students at various levels of cognitive complexity (Evans et al., 1998; King & Howard-Hamilton, 2003; King & Shuford, 1996). A more informed understanding of the interactions between collegiate experiences, a student's sense of Whiteness, and racial justice actions may allow higher education professionals to more
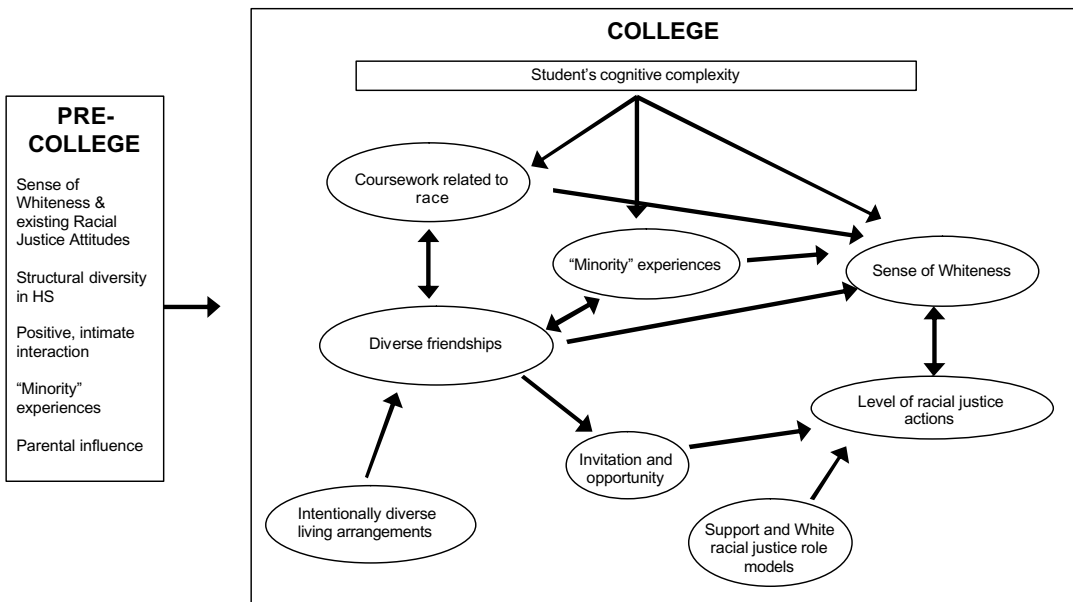

FIGURE 1. Preliminary Model of Students' Racial Justice Ally Development Process

purposefully plan interventions designed to encourage White students toward racial justice ally behaviors. The inclusion of Whiteness in our understanding of interventions will likely result in the development of differential interventions targeted to the levels of understanding exhibited by students. With a greater understanding of the interaction between these three variables, we can provide the appropriate levels of challenge and support for students in order to most effectively engage them.

Limitations and Delimitations of Findings

The research findings and resulting model must be understood in light of certain limitations and applied in delimited manners. First, the reader must recognize these results come from a pilot study with a limited number of participants at one institution. Future research will be needed, including a larger sample of respondents from multiple institutions, in order to confirm the initial findings presented above.

As with all qualitative research based on constructivist assumptions, generalizing the findings of this study is neither appropriate, nor our goal. The convenience sampling technique resulted in an over-sampling of women, which must be noted. The narratives were constructed and understood within a specific context and must not be transferred to other contexts without due caution. The narratives and resulting model, however, can be used to inspire similar understandings in different institutional contexts. Thick description of methodology and findings included in this manuscript should assist readers in transferring findings to other institutional contexts.

Finally, although the findings of our research resulted in a developmental understanding of racial justice allies, this develop-

mental progression should be viewed as tentative until further longitudinal research can confirm these findings. One of our studies, the First-Year Study, was longitudinal in nature, with three interviews conducted over the period of one academic year. The Ally Study, however, consisted of one data collection point in which respondents reflected upon their ally development. Although the current findings support the developmental progression of racial justice ally attitudes and actions, longer research relationships are required before the finding related to the developmental progression should be considered trustworthy.

IMPLICATIONS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

These limitations notwithstanding, the findings of this research have notable implications for higher education and student affairs professionals.

Support for Structural Diversity and Diverse Living Situations

Our findings continue to reinforce the importance of a diverse student body and high-quality interactions across social identity groups. Intimate interactions with diverse others are likely catalysts for White students to begin reflecting upon their racial identity and attitudes. These types of interactions are more likely to occur in student populations that have a substantial level of racial diversity (Milem, 2003) and in situations where relationships lend themselves to discussions about racial and/or social issues (Chang, 1999). Our respondents found these types of relationships most often in roommate pairings, although others forged intimate relationships outside of their living arrangements (e.g., interracial dating, close friendships).

Develop and Advocate for Coursework on Race Relations

The course many of our respondents had in common addressed issues specific to race relations in the United States and seemed to exert a strong influence on the students' understandings of Whiteness and racial justice. The influence of this particular course was in sharp contrast to other "general intercultural" or "diversity" courses our respondents had taken, owing partly to the instructor of the race relations course and partly to the direct confrontation and examination of Whiteness. Many students appreciated the direct teaching style of the professor—"He wants to step on your feet because he wants to put the issues in your face where you can't just ignore them." These students also appreciated the specific connections between privilege, oppression, and Whiteness made in the course. The professor, who was White, also served as a White racial justice role model for many of the students. These three characteristics combined to make a powerful learning experience for many of the students in our studies.

Encourage Reflection and Exploration of Whiteness

Beyond coursework, higher education and student affairs professionals should encourage students to reflect upon and explore the role of Whiteness in their daily lives. Although for many of our respondents this occurred naturally because of diverse friendships or "minority" experiences, research has shown that intentional interventions around issues of race can encourage similar outcomes (Palmer, 2000). Finally, higher education professionals should reflect upon their own race and the role race plays in their daily lives, while encouraging reflection and exploration of race in their individual interactions with students.

White professionals who assume a racial justice ally identity can model their understanding of Whiteness by sharing their process with their students.

Provide Invitations and Opportunities for Action

The findings of this study and Broido's (2000) earlier study reveal that most White students need encouragement to take their initial racial justice action. This encouragement takes many forms, including direct invitations, class assignments, and formal leadership roles. Higher education professionals, including faculty, can invite students to act upon their racial justice attitudes when appropriate. Our findings specifically indicate that we should see all formal student leadership roles (e.g., student body president) as opportunities for racial justice actions, especially when students recognize the responsibility of their office. As Anthony reminded us, as student body president, "I really felt . . . like all who were involved were my constituents. . . . So, it was my job [to take action]."

CONCLUSION

This research presents the initial findings of two pilot studies related to the influence of college on the development of racial justice allies. Viewing the findings from a developmental perspective provides insight into how students change during college and how Whiteness relates to racial justice action. The resulting model offers many possible avenues through which higher education professionals can influence reflection upon Whiteness and encourage racial justice actions.

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