EXPLORING RACE-TALK AT A CHRISTIAN COLLEGE: A CASE STUDY

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Abstract: Research suggests that the cultural homogeneity of Christian college campuses presents challenges for people of color to navigate. White cultural norms influence attitudes about race. The way people at an institution talk about race reflects the institution's campus racial climate. The purpose of this study was to explore how members of a Christian college, associated with a formal process of reviewing racism on campus, talk about race. This case study, conducted at a small, private, Christian university was about the relationship between race-talk (Sue, 2005), campus racial climate (Hurtado et al., 1998) as well as identifying religious forms of race-talk. Through observations and interviews, participants dialogued about race in order to create change on their campus. Results from the study indicate that administrators, staff, faculty, and students described a culture where silence about race perpetuated racism and where participants wanted to talk about Whiteness as a system of oppression. Implications for research, theory, and practice are discussed, including ways in which members of colleges can participate in sense-making process to discuss racism on their campus.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In 2012, George Zimmerman was acquitted in the shooting death of Trayvon Martin, a Black teen walking through Zimmerman's neighborhood. In 2013, following the death of Mr. Martin and the subsequent court decision, three Black, female organizers, Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi, created a movement called Black Lives Matter that cultivated national interest in the violence inflicted on Black communities by police and the justice system (Black Lives Matter, 2020). The central aim of Black Lives Matter is to ideologically and politically raise awareness about patterns of oppression where White people and systems target Black people. The phrase Black Lives Matter is an affirmation of the humanity of Black people. Following its creation, people in the movement organized to bring attention to events between police and Black citizens in Ferguson, Missouri; Baltimore, Maryland; Tulsa, Oklahoma; and cities across the United States (Friedersdorf, 2015). In the Spring of 2015, fraternity partygoers at the University of Oklahoma were recorded singing a racist song on a bus on their way to an event. White fraternity members sang, "There will never be a [racial slur] in SAE. You can hang them from a tree, but they'll never sign with me" (ABC, 2015). Other members taught the song at a national fraternity event; it became an institutionalized part of the new member education process for that fraternity (Svrluga, 2015).

Christian colleges are not immune to racist behavior. In November of 2016, a White student at Abilene Christian University in west Texas, posted a Snapchat video of herself wearing black makeup with enlarged red lips, saying on the video, "I'm a strong Black woman." The caption on the snapchat video read, "This is why Black lives matter exists" (Farmer, 2016). That afternoon, the president of the university issued a letter to students, parents, faculty, and staff telling them the administration had expelled the students involved in the social media post from the university.

In March of 2018, five White, Walla Walla University students posted a Snapchat video of themselves with their faces painted Black with the caption on the post that said, "Wakanda" referring to a fictional, African country in a Marvel movie. The film was the first movie in the Marvel series with a predominantly Black cast. The president of Walla Walla spoke the next week to the university to condemn racism on the campus (Gleaner, 2018). In response to Black Lives Matter movement, White people across the U.S. began using the phrase "All lives matter" and "Blue Lives Matter" to counter the movement. In a 2016 study by the Barna group, only 13% of evangelicals (n = 1,000) noted supporting the message of the Black Lives Matter movement (Lee, 2016). At the same time, John Piper, a prominent White, evangelical pastor, encouraged White evangelicals to pause before saying "All" or "Blue lives matter." He said that it is obvious that all lives matter, but that responding in such a way minimizes what Black Lives Matter advocates are saying (Lee, 2016).

In the spring of 2020, the world watched George Floyd die under the knee of a police officer in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Since then, the nation has witnessed a new "national movement to protest systemic racism in American life" (Carlson & Sorrell, 2020). In response, colleges and universities, in addition to corporations across the country, have

sought to reassure their communities that the lives of people of color matter and to demonstrate their commitment to diversity and inclusion through videos, statements, and social media posts. Because of a global health pandemic related to COVID-19, colleges and universities across the United States may have been shielded from responding to calls for change in relation to systemic racism. As the Fall 2020 semester began and in-person instructions resumed, colleges faced greater pressure to change systemic racist issues in their institutions. College and university communities may no longer be watching to see how their institutions act but, instead, as Johnathan Flowers, a Black professor, wrote in an article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (2020), "We will see through empty promises of diversity and... we will expect and demand meaningful change" (p. 1). This dissertation focuses on how people who are involved in a formal process to respond to calls for change related to racism at a Christian college talk about race.

The purpose of higher education is both to educate students for employment and to develop citizens for public good (Geiger, 2011). Because the workplace and society are diverse, learning outcomes should reflect the intersection of diversity and learning. Colleges and universities engage in dialogue intended to prepare students to enter society as citizens who can critically think about social, economic, and civic issues from diverse perspectives (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2020). Society benefits from questioned, dominant paradigms that have historically perpetuated systemic oppression and impede diverse discourse. In some instances, such as the events at the University of Oklahoma, Abilene Christian University, and Walla Walla, as noted above, higher education reflects society. However, higher education has an impetus not to just reflect culture, but to challenge and change culture. The Truman Commission on Higher Education (1947) argued,

in fact, that one of its main outcomes was that the purpose of higher education was a fuller realization of democracy.

Predominantly White institutions (PWIs) have increased efforts to recruit students of color in the last 30 years, but these students continue to struggle with discrimination, the lack of a welcoming campus climate, structural oppression, and insufficient numbers of faculty of color (Kelly et al, 2017). Incidents like the ones at the University of Oklahoma, Abilene Christian University, and Walla Walla University are symptoms of the conditions in PWI environments that isolate and exclude people of color. Out of these conditions, institutions have formed barriers to success and rising attrition rates among African American students (Love, 2009) increasing the necessity to create environments that make students of color feel welcome.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2015), the four-year graduation rate of African American students at all four-year, non-profit, post-secondary institutions in 2011 was 29.7% compared to 56.4% of White students. The six-year graduation rate for African American students at four-year institutions was 44.7% compared to 68.3% of White students. The report also found that African American students are leaving colleges and universities at higher rates than their White counterparts. Predominantly White institutions are particularly vulnerable to high attrition rates among African American students.

Evangelical Christian colleges, which are primarily PWIs, make up a particular subset of private PWIs, enrolling almost a quarter of students at religiously affiliated, private institutions (CCCU, 2018). Diversity for many Christians and their institutions is rooted in their belief in a concept of an *Imago Dei*, that all people are made in the image of God and

that there is therefore a biblical mandate to engage diversity collectively, however defined. The Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) considers their institutions to be positioned to lead and model initiatives on diversity matters (Hoogstra, 2017), but few have made a clear commitment to improving their campus racial climates (Paredes-Collins, 2009). Despite the growth of racial diversity on Christian college campuses, they remain overwhelmingly White. Although researchers have conducted a considerable amount of research on the topic of campus racial climate over three decades (most recently, Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado, et al., 2015; Kuh & Umbach, 2005; Solórzano, et al., 2000), little research has attended to how race is talked about (Sue, 2015) at Christian colleges. Given the racial homogeneity of Christian colleges more needs to be understood about how race-talk shapes the culture. Further, race is central to the development of American religious and educational spaces. Both spaces intersect at Christian colleges and we need to understand more about race in the Christian college context.

Key Concepts: Campus Racial Climate and Race-Talk

The underlying assumption of this study is this: campus racial climate and race-talk (Hurtado et al., 1997, 1998; Sue, 2015) are important factors in understanding race on a college campus. Understanding this study requires specific discussion of each concept to clarify the terms I use to frame the study. Therefore, I will outline my thinking on these two key concepts.

Campus Racial Climate

Campus climate in its simplest terms refers to the ways in which members of an institution experience a particular cultural environment and those members' attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors that influence the campus environment (Hurtado, et al., 2008).

The primary goal of campus climate research is to consider the experiences of the constituencies on college campuses and for practitioners to use that information to make decisions on policy and practice (Hart & Fellabaum, 2008). Campus racial climate (CRC) represents a multi-dimensional construction of racial diversity that extends beyond campus demographics to include the quality and type of inter-racial interactions, perceptions of experiences with discrimination, and the history of racism on a campus (Hurtado, 1992; 2007). "The Campus Racial Climate: Context of Conflict" (Hurtado, 1992) is one of the most widely referenced studies examining the topic of race on campus. Hurtado, through a longitudinal study of college students (n=10,640) found that students of color perceived substantial racial conflict on their predominantly White campuses. Hurtado found not just one element, but that historical, contemporary, structural, interpersonal, and institutional elements all worked to produce racial tension. Campus members' racialized experiences are reflected in these sociocultural elements. Hurtado (1992) determined that capturing the racialized experiences of students on college campuses must go beyond identifying the racial composition of a campus. It is in this more complex sense that I apply Hurtado's definition of campus racial climate.

Nearly 30 years after Hurtado's original study in 1992, a growing body of research includes a variety of issues including sexuality, politics, gender, social class, immigrant status, ability, and spirituality in the examination of campus climate (Coulter & Rankin, 2018; Hachey & McCallen, 2018; Soria & Bultmann, 2018; Stebleton et. al, 2014). Scholars vary in their conceptions as to which features constitute campus climate research. Some focus primarily on current patterns of student interactions (Peterson & Spencer, 1990; Rankin & Reason, 2005). Others consider historical elements that influence climate (Hurtado, 1998).

Some researchers emphasize student experiences (Cress & Sax, 1998), while others include the experiences of students, faculty, and staff (Rankin & Reason, 2005). A primary way that researchers examine race in institutions is through the study of campus racial climate.

The rather broad intention of this study is to develop a greater understanding of the sociocultural aspects of race in the Christian college context. Stake (1995), discussing qualitative approaches to research, argues that researchers must move beyond the broad and select issues that "force attention to complexity and contextuality" (p. 16). Campus racial climate provides a conceptual structure to examine the *contextuality* of race in the college setting. Hurtado (1992) identified four dimensions of campus racial climate: the *structural dimension* (compositional diversity of students, faculty, and staff), the *behavioral dimension* (refers to the type and quality of interactions between racial groups), the *psychological dimension* (perceptions of racial tension, discrimination, and prejudice), and the *historical legacy of inclusion/exclusion* of various race groups (history of discrimination). Though there are four distinct dimensions, together they represent a holistic understanding of sociocultural meaning. I utilize these dimensions to get a sense of the context of racialized experiences at a Christian college. However, I move beyond Hurtado's work to examine the conflictual issues about race in the Christian college context, specifically how members of a Christian college community talk about. I will set up the context through CRC paradigm and then hone in on race-talk.

Race-Talk

This dissertation emphasizes the nature of talking about race in a Christian college. By emphasizing the process of race-talk, I intentionally connect this phenomenon to its context, conceptually examined with campus racial climate as the structure. In Derald Wing

Sue's (2015) book, *Race-Talk and the Conspiracy of Silence: Understanding and Facilitating Difficult Dialogues on Race*, he aims to uncover reasons why race-talk is so difficult in American Society. Through 10 years of observation and research in classrooms, diversity workshops, and training seminars for employees, he highlights the challenges that occur when people and organizations try to talk about race or what happens when they do not talk about race. It is this sense that I employ Sue's definition of race-talk as the "psychology of racial dialogues" (p. 21). The primary purpose of the book is (1) to discuss the reasons race-talk is difficult, (2) uncover the "hidden rules" that govern race-talk, (3) show the negative consequences of not talking about race (4) illuminate the benefits of successful dialogue about race, and (5) put forth solutions for profitable race conversations. Sue argues race-talk is so difficult is because it is filled with "strong powerful emotions, misunderstandings, accusations, and negative outcomes" that serve to polarize people (Sue, 2015, p. ix). The powerful emotions point to more than just opposing viewpoints, but are a symptom of "a clash of racial realities" (Sue, 2015, p. 6). Sue argues that people of color feel shut off from talking about racial issues amidst the differential power dynamics that exist between Whites and people of color. I use the term person of color or people of color to describe people who, through common experiences of racism, are not considered White (Jackson, 2006).

Sue uncovers common problems and barriers that undermine successful conversations about race. The barriers largely center around various tactics that White people use to avoid the discomfort of talking about race and then how they shut down race-talk. Sue argues that Whites fear they may misspeak, or make statements that may be used as evidence that they are racist, but also, they fear confronting White privilege or taking responsibility to end

racism. As a result of these fears, Whites dilute the conversations about race or deny them all together. Sue gives some examples of the ways Whites shut down race-talk by denying racism or deflecting the issues in the dialogue. For example, a White person says, "I'm not biased because I have a Chinese sister-in-law." (p. 134). Sue gave another example of deflection, a White person saying, "I believe the most qualified person should get the job" (p. 134). These strategies allow a person to hide or justify prejudice and are difficult to expose. Sue says, who would argue that hiring the most qualified is not prudent? Thus, it shifts the misconception of bias or prejudice to the listener. In another strategy, according to Sue, Whites deflect by portraying people of color as those to blame for racism. White people claim reverse racism or claim that people of color are also racist, by saying things like, "People of color keep playing the race card" or by asking, "Why does everything always have to be about race?" (p. 136). Sue argues that these approaches to deflection and denial are "games of verbal jujitsu used by dominant group members to portray and redefine White talk as silenced" (p. 138). People in higher education utilize a value set that suppresses race-talk.

Sue also discusses the rules or the White norms that White people use to control the race narrative Whites employ and silence the counternarrative of people of color. One of those norms is that White people tend to assume that the truth is backed by the objective, fact-driven, rational, and empirical. However, race-talk is subjective, experiential, highly-emotional, and relies on narrative. The ground rules that govern dialogue and thought produce conditions that challenge meaningful discussions about race. Sue argues that patterns of race-talk in higher education follow academic protocol that make dialogue about race intellectual and distant. However, White people outside of higher education use the rational

discourse norm to discredit opinions and personal anecdote as a legitimate source of truth (Bell, 1997). Patterns of race-talk for people of color reveal that it is highly personal and is about sharing stories of lived experiences. Because patterns of talk in other sectors of society silence talk about race, people of color will tend to avoid them in new situations. For Sue, the tension in how dialogue occurs is a result of different racial realities in which Whites and people of color perceive racial realities different from one another. Some Whites believe the influential social norm that race does not matter. Sue's concepts about race-talk serve as powerful tools to analyze the barriers that prevent progress toward reducing racial tension in higher education. In Christian higher education however, some additional factors may serve as barriers to productive race-talk. Connected, campus racial climate and race-talk, serve as an entry point in understanding the sociocultural elements that reflect racialized experiences at a Christian college.

Problem Statement

Race is central to the dynamics of American educational spaces and scholars have written extensively about race in higher education (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado, 1992; Rankin & Reason, 2005). A large body of evidence supports that positive educational, social, and interpersonal outcomes are related to students' exposure to racial diversity (Bowman et al., 2011; Loes et al., 2012; Saenz et al., 2007). Students who are engaged in diverse environments are more likely to be open and tolerant of others from different ethnic and racial backgrounds (Mayhew et al., 2016). In Christian colleges, students with exposure to diversity, especially to cross-race, peer to peer interactions, exhibit gains in social awareness outcomes (Schreiner & Kim, 2011). PWIs, recognizing the necessity to diversify their student populations to facilitate growth in social awareness, in turn, has a positive effect on

the greater community. As Christian colleges in the United States (most of which are PWIs) exhibit gains in racial diversity, administrators have developed initiatives to attend to equity on their campuses (George Fox, 2020; Messiah University, 2020). Though little research has been conducted at Christian colleges related to race (Absher, 2009; Paredes-Collins & Collins, 2011) scholars have provided some insight through their findings on the barriers for people of color on Christian college campuses (Cleek, 2017; Paredes-Collins, 2014).

However, having a racially diverse compositional mix of students does not mean that a campus is equitable (Cha & Jun, 2020; Hurtado, 1992). Research demonstrates that students of color report more negative perceptions of campus racial climate than their White peers (Hurtado, 2012; Jacoby, 2015). Students of color often feel isolated and unwelcome at PWIs due to incidents of racial stereotyping, discrimination, and racism (Harwood, 2012). White students report more positive perceptions of campus racial climate; and, racial diversity is still more likely to produce growth in student outcomes for White students than for students from historically marginalized racial backgrounds (Rankin & Reason, 2005; Schreiner & Kim, 2011). Though Christian colleges are becoming more racially diverse, all students still engage seldom with those from different races (Yancey, 2010) and the cultural homogeneity of Christian college campuses may present challenges that are of greater complexity for students of color to navigate.

The way the students, faculty and staff of a Christian college talk and do not talk about race may influence each one's perceptions of campus racial climate. Despite increased focus on racial diversity strategies, students of color continue to perceive campus racial climates as negative suggesting entrenched ideas are at work to maintain racist systems. Research conducted outside of higher education shows that White evangelicals use cultural

tools embedded in religious beliefs to unknowingly continue systems of oppression that are against Biblical teachings (Emerson & Smith, 2000). Cultural norms influence attitudes about race and some scholars argue White people continually establish new ways of reestablishing racial inequality (Alexander, 2020; Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Tatum, 2003). Additionally, some scholars suggest that research should evaluate campus racial climate at Christian colleges to understand the perpetuation of White norms as ways of excluding people of color (Collins & Jun, 2017). It may be that in conversations centered around race, participants speak past each other or do not engage in conversations about race at all (Sue, 2015). Further research is needed to understand the relationship between how members of a Christian college talk about race and perceptions of campus racial climate.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to explore how members of a Christian college, associated with a formal process of reviewing racism on campus, talk about race.

Research Questions

The exploration of race-talk was shaped by the following research questions:

1. How do members involved in a formal process to review racism on a Christian College campus talk about race?

Sub Questions:

2. How do students, staff, faculty, and administrators describe their participation in a review of racism on campus?

3. How do patterns of race-talk exhibited by constituent groups (students, staff, faculty, and administrators) reflect the campus racial climate of a university community?

4. What religiously-embedded forms of race-talk do members of a Christian college use during a review of racism on campus?

Design Overview

This study was positioned in a constructionist epistemology with an interpretivist theoretical perspective. A constructionist epistemology posits that we develop meaning as we interact with the world (Crotty, 1998). Further, the interpretivist assumptions are that the aim of research is to understand, meaning is bound by time, context, and culture, and that people construct meaning in all of their historical, cultural, and political experiences, including language (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). For this study, I chose a qualitative design to explore the relationship between how different members of a Christian college talk about race and their perceptions of campus racial climate.

The population consisted of select students, staff, faculty, and administrators from one Christian college in the United States. Case study methodology (Stake, 1995) is utilized to examine the phenomenon. Case study researchers give detailed consideration to a particular situation in a specific context, about a group, over a period of time. Sources of data for this study included observations, interviews with participants, documents and artifacts, and a research journal. A more detailed description of the design for this study is provided in chapter three.

Significance of the Study

The study of race in higher education is vast. However, a gap exists in the research regarding the way people talk about race at Christian colleges. The significance of this study addresses three important areas: significance to the body of research literature, significance to theory, and significance related to practice.

Research

Researchers have studied campus racial climate in higher education for decades (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado, 1992; Hurtado, et al., 1998; Quaye, et al., 2015). Only in the last decade have researchers begun to study campus racial climate on Christian college campuses (Cleek, 2017; Kim, 2016; Parades-Collins, 2014). The primary concern of recent studies is to find variables linked to negative perceptions of campus racial climate that create risks for students of color at Christian colleges. These include sense of belonging, experiences with microagression and discrimination, White norms, and student satisfaction of religious practices by different race groups. Further, gaps exist between different race groups' perspectives about experiences related to race on college campuses.

Scholars recommend that with the changing demographic in Christian colleges, researchers should study not only whether differences in perceptions and experiences with race exist, but also how the conversations are shaped and by whom. The outcomes of this study built on current literature which demonstrates that different race groups experience race in different ways; that how race is talked about at Christian colleges may be a barrier to moving conversations about systemic racism forward. The findings of this study offer insights into the relationship between how the people in particular institutional community talk about race and their perceptions of campus racial climate. Second, findings enhance knowledge about the factors that contribute to perceptions of campus racial climate at Christian colleges and the cultural tools that members of Christian colleges employ when talking about race. In addition to contributing to the understanding of stakeholders' perceptions of racial conflict, the study expands theories of race and identity. The next section considers the relevance of the study for theory.

Theory

Researchers have studied theories on race and identity (Bell, 1997; Delgado & Stefanic, 2001; Helms, 1995; Johnson, 2018). A few researchers have studied how race is talked about by members of evangelical communities (Emerson & Smith, 2000; Tranby & Hartmann, 2008) but very little research exists about how race is talked about at Christian colleges. The exploration of how race is talked about adds to the understanding of White identity theories (Helms, 1995) viewed through the lens of a Christian college. Additionally, the findings adds to the database of counter-narratives that illuminate the experiences of people of color that race-talk involves (Sue, 2015). Sue's (2015) theoretical concept of race-talk provides readers with an understanding about the patterns and practices of race-talk in education. This study provides situational examples that add to or create tension for how Sue conceptualizes race-talk. Finally, the study might help readers understand additional layers of power that Johnson (2018) theorizes. The exploration of race-talk on a Christian college campus is relevant to existing research literature and theory, but is also critical to better understanding practices at Christian college campuses.

Practice

The recent rise in interest in the national conversation centered around race may require colleges and universities to make changes. Many institutions are issuing statements or otherwise taking public stances against racism. Some are considering changing names of buildings or removing monuments that memorialize White supremacy. However, discussions about race on Christian college campuses are not new and incidents of discrimination have been well documented. Indeed, such incidents have long been barriers to reducing racial tension on campuses. Despite evidence of racism at Christian colleges (Longman, 2017),

studies conducted outside of higher education reveal that White evangelicals tend to dismiss any critical claims about systemic racial disparity (Emerson & Smith, 2000; Tranby & Hartmann, 2008). Mike Pence, a devout evangelical Christian, in response to nation-wide protests during his term as Vice President of the United States, stated that "talk of institutional bias, or racism" is the cause of division in the country (Orr, 2020).

Thus, understanding the sociocultural aspects of race at Christian colleges is significant to practice in higher education. Findings may help administrators understand how the process of talking about race works and does not work. The study may help practitioners identify problem areas in making progress to help address systemic racism and help students, faculty, and staff of color feel safe and welcome at their institutions. Conversely, findings highlight positive progress in conversations about race and give decision makers a powerful tool to implement practices that move them forward. Finally, this knowledge and extension of the work may extend to society, in particular evangelical churches that could reflect first, then change the way they operate to be more inclusive and promote more diverse communities.

Chapter Summary

Chapter I introduced the study, significant concepts, its place in the research, and potential significance of the study. With the rise in interest in talking about race in American society, intersections of religious talk and race-talk in Christian colleges is an important exploration. As the literature demonstrates in Chapter Two, perceptions of campus racial climate differ between races as White students tend to perceive more positive racial climates at their institutions than their peers of Color. How race-talk happens at Christian colleges has not received enough attention. This dissertation utilized Case Study methodology (Stake,

1995) and explored the relationship between race-talk and perceptions of campus climate at a Christian college. The findings add to the body of research, theory, and practice.

Chapter II serves as a review of the literature providing further information about the broader concerns for the topic of race in higher education and at evangelical, Christian colleges and universities. It begins with an overview of the history of Christian colleges and their place in higher education. The chapter more thoroughly explores campus racial climate as a model for studying race in higher education. Further, because of a lack of literature related to higher education, Chapter II explores White, evangelical perspectives on race outside of higher education. Chapter III provides a detailed description of the design, including the setting, the participants, and aspects of the design that allowed me to explore how people on a Christian college campus talked about race. In Chapter IV, I present a description of the case, the participants, and the setting. Chapter V, provides themes that resulted from analyzing the data and a presentation of the findings of the study. Finally, in Chapter VI, I present a discussion of the findings, address delimitations, and implications for research, theory, and practice. Because of the complex nature of race-talk for the college I studied and the many layers of data that appeared in their process of review of racism, I found that presenting a final chapter about change and race-talk helped situate the phenomenon.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Education in a diverse setting prepares students to become citizens who can engage a complex and diverse society (Mayhew et al., 2016). Colleges provide opportunities for diverse experiences in the classroom through diverse curriculum, outside of the classroom through educational programs, and in general through peer interactions with students of different races and ethnicities. Diversity is multidimensional, and involves intersection of identities (Crenshaw, 1989). However, this study will focus on race. Measuring experiences related to race is a widely explored topic in research and scholars have written about race in higher education for the past three decades (Harper & Hurtado, 2011; Quaye & Harper, 2015; Tate IV, 1997). Primarily, scholars demonstrate that college students experience their college environments in different ways (Denson & Chang, 2009; Patton et al., 2015). Notably, students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds report dissimilar racial experiences (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Students of color tend to report their campus racial climates as racist, hostile, and isolating (Rankin & Reason, 2005; Quaye, et al., 2015) while White students tend to report high levels of satisfaction and researchers conclude that White students are unaware of the issues that students of color face (Harwood, et al., 2012; Modica, 2012).

Though researchers identify the disparate perceptions of race-related issues, few researchers examine the process of talking about race (Pollock, 2004).

How students, faculty, and staff at a university talk about race impacts the institution's policies, practices, and ultimately how its members experience their campus. The use of racial categories is one aspect of race-talk. Racial categories are a social reality that have resulted in stratified orders around which systems of inequality have been developed (Johnson, 2018). However, racial categories have also contributed to building cultural identity, friendships, and romantic relationships (Tatum, 2003; Pollock, 2004). Both scholars and members of universities who make up college campuses increasingly find themselves questioning the appropriateness of describing people and issues in racial terms (Sue, 2015). Sue (2015) argues that race-talk is about the processes that occur when people, planned and spontaneously, engage in difficult dialogues on race. Some fear being labeled as a racist, so they have adopted the belief that not talking about race is the best practice. Others argue that not talking about race perpetuates privilege and systemic oppression. Race does matter (Longman, 2017) but examinations of race-talk are unclear about when race matters and to whom it matters. Race-talk tension may be evident at Christian colleges and universities where the compositional makeup of institutions is mostly White and where researchers have suggested that White culture and conservative theology influence individuals' understanding of racism (Cleek, 2017; Emerson & Smith, 2000; Paredes-Collins, 2014). Low compositional diversity and White evangelical attitudes on race, that largely dismiss systemic racism, are two forces scholars suggest maintain racial inequality in Christian higher education (Cha & Jun, 2020; Collins & Jun, 2017). Though Christian

colleges have developed initiatives to improve experiences for people of color, hegemonic forces may perpetuate systems of inequity.

This dissertation, about the intersection of the practice of dialoguing about race and campus racial climate, is situated in the predominantly White, Christian college context. Therefore, I draw on three bodies of literature to guide this research: the history of Christian colleges related to racial diversity, research about campus racial climate, and race-talk.

What is the Christian College?

To understand Christian colleges and demonstrate the value of exploring the experiences of students in Christian colleges, it is essential to review the history of denominational colleges, the legacy of historical exclusion for people of color in higher education, and how Christian colleges are situated in the present-day higher education landscape. In this section, I develop a portrait of Christian colleges to illuminate the issues related to racial diversity and to contextualize the culture of this study's participants.

Early Denominational Colleges and the Shift Toward Secularism

The early colonists in the United States created colleges as close arms of their local churches and those colleges served integral functions in local governments. Harvard, Yale, and William and Mary were rooted in Puritan and Christian Reformation ideals and their founding documents all speak of the aim to educate ministers of whom most were young White men (Geiger, 2011, 2014). Other institutions, like Columbia and Princeton, also had strong, religious connections (Thelin, 2007). During the colonial period, church leaders in nearly every colony established at least one college to serve their denomination, including a Presbyterian college in New Jersey, a Baptist College in Rhode Island, an Anglican college in Pennsylvania, and a Congregationalist college in New Hampshire. In the middle of the

19th century, a large growth in new denominational colleges occurred and existing denominational college attendance grew 80 percent each decade in the 1820s and 1830s (Geiger, 2014). Unlike their predecessors, new colleges established oversight boards composed of as many lay members as ministers, and the colonial colleges ceased to be connected as tightly to their denominational roots (Geiger, 2014).

Though attendance was on the rise at denominational colleges, Harvard and others both departed from their denominational roots and shifted from their tightly organized curriculum designed to educate ministers. Harvard's 21st president, Charles W. Eliot, introduced the elective system in 1884, ended the requirement of compulsory chapel in 1886, and broadened Harvard's research arm (Keller & Keller, 2007). Eliot's intention was not to be hostile toward religion; even so, "the effects of his leadership expanded science and diminished the classics and religion" (Adrian, 2003, p. 22). In the 19th century, Harvard was no longer strictly a denominational college. At the same time the University of Virginia, the first public institution formed in 1819, established the first university without ties to a denomination. These shifts toward secularization created tension in higher education, some of which is reflected in the Yale Report (1828). In the Yale Report, faculty at Yale College defended the classical curriculum against the rapid advancement of an expanded secular curriculum. However, Yale too would leave its denominational origins and in the 19th century open its school of medicine, law school, scientific school, and school of fine arts (Geiger, 2014).

The Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862, which enabled the federal government to set aside federal lands to establish colleges to teach agriculture and mechanics, additionally contributed to the abandonment of the historical university's sectarian alliance. Public higher

education significantly grew at the end of the 19th century and through the 20th century and the elite denominational colleges moved away from their religious roots (Thelin, 2007). Even so, citizens of the United States outside of the colonies established a proliferation of denominational colleges, though they primarily served White students (Geiger, 2011).

Higher Education Growth for Whom?

From 1850 to 1920, women of varied racial groups and African American students began to attend higher education in greater numbers than had been able to attend in the previous 200 years of higher education in the U.S. In 1890, there were 100,000 men in postsecondary education, accounting for 64% of the college student population. The proportion of female students attending higher education institutions grew from 56,000 women (36% of total higher education enrollment) mostly in single-sex colleges in 1890 to 280,000 (47% total enrollment) by 1920 (Geiger, 2014; Snyder, 1993). Black student growth in some part resulted from two events. The first, the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1890, forced states to provide equal access to higher education opportunities for students of color. The second, *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling (1896) issued the "separate but equal" doctrine allowing states to develop dual systems of higher education establishing Black colleges separate from states' White colleges. Many of the Historical Black College and Universities in the U.S. that exist today began as a result of states establishing Jim Crow colleges (Brown, 2004). While Black students clearly benefited from the increasing number of Black higher education institutions, there was still a great disparity in the number of institutions that were serving Black students in comparison to White students. Out of almost 20,000 degrees conferred in the 1890s, only 1,336 degrees were conferred to Black students (Haynes, 2006). Although Black student graduate numbers multiplied six times from the 1880, when only 215 degrees

were conferred, to 1920 there were still few Black students in the American higher education system. Between the World Wars, higher education transitioned from elite to mass education and elite institutions initiated selective admissions practices, in some cases the application of social criteria to their admission, to exclude unwanted student populations (Geiger, 2011).

Rapid growth of access to higher education for students of color did not begin until the 1950s. *Sipuel v. Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma* (1948) a case brought by a Black woman, activist, and teacher who wanted to attend higher education in Oklahoma, ended segregation in higher education and was a precursor to *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). The Civil Rights Act of 1964 gave the federal government the legal ability to restrict federal funds to schools that were segregated; nonetheless many universities continued to do so, especially in southern states (Geiger, 2014). So pervasive were overt racist policies, five states ignored the federal governments' request to implement a desegregation plan into the 1970s. After the implementation of the Civil Rights Act and subsequent desegregation in higher education, enrollment of students of color at predominantly White institutions (PWI) increased, which had a negative effect on Black student enrollment at historically Black colleges and universities (Brown, 2004). Additionally, low retention of Black students at predominantly White institutions persisted (Haynes, 2006). Enrollment after World War II and into 1975, higher education experienced its largest growth in enrollment and in the development of new institutions. Growth in public education, land-grant institutions, desegregation, and increased federal funding for students are hallmarks of the first three quarters of the 20th century (Geiger, 2011).

The Council for Christian Colleges and Universities

Despite the secularization of higher education, many schools founded by church leaders maintained their denominational allegiances. In 1976, the Christian College Consortium, a group of 13 Protestant colleges and universities from across the United States established the Christian College Coalition, now known as the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU). Out of this coalition, the CCCU formed to support the distinct evangelical missions of institutions affiliated with various denominations and to represent the interests of these institutions to policy-makers in Washington D.C. (CCCU, 2018). The coalition began with 38 participating four-year institutions and in 2023, had grown to 185-member institutions representing 3.6 million alumni. To be included in CCCU membership, colleges and universities must meet six criteria:

1. Christian mission: Institutions must demonstrate commitments to integrating the Bible into the classroom, cultivating Christian values, and sharing those values to others.
2. Good accreditation standing: Institutions must be in good standing with a regional accreditation body.
3. Annual dues: Institutions pay annual membership fees that differ according to institutional size.
4. Fiscal responsibility: Institutions must use ethical budgeting, operating, and fundraising practices.
5. Like-minded employment policies: Institutions hire only persons who affirm Christian faith.

6. Christian distinction: Institutions beliefs must align with CCCU advocacy positions that sometimes change, but might include reconciliation, advocacy for the marginalized, and advancement of religious freedom.

The CCCU's purpose is to support like-minded, private religious institutions and ensure their viability in the higher education landscape through professional development, marketing, and advocacy.

CCCU Mission and Principles

The CCCU mission is "to advance the cause of Christ-centered higher education and to help our institutions transform lives by faithfully relating scholarship and service to biblical truth" (CCCU, 2018). The core of the CCCU's educational mission hinges on three tenets: integrating biblical teaching into academics, fostering Christian spiritual formation in their students, and sending graduates into the workforce and into communities to make a difference. CCCU-member institutions share a common commitment to a set of core values rooted in Judeo-Christian religious traditions: to the integration of faith and learning, the spiritual formation of their students, and view the academic disciplines as an avenue to change the world.

CCCU Demographics

CCCU member institutions enroll 466,000 students in the United States and employ 75,000 faculty and staff (CCCU, 2019). In the 12 years between 2003 and 2015, CCCU enrollment grew by 18% (Powell & Boyington, 2017). Some argue the lower average tuition compared to non-sectarian, private institutions is a factor in the growth (Powell & Boyington, 2017; Rine & Guthrie, 2016). Others argue a shift toward online education is a major

contributing factor for increased student enrollment, with the two largest Christian colleges, Grand Canyon University and Liberty University, leading the way (Clark, 2018).

Compositional diversity of students, faculty, and staff at CCCU member schools remains largely White; however, CCCU schools have seen an increase in racial diversity similar to trends in the general higher education sector. U.S. colleges experienced growth in the number of students, faculty, and staff of color through the beginning of the 21st century. The National Center for Education Statistics (2019) shows that the percentage of total Fall enrollment for students of color at all types of institutions grew over the almost two decades between 2000 and 2017. In 2000, enrollment for students of color was 38% of the student population. In 2017, the most recent year of national postsecondary education statistics, 47% of students enrolled at all higher education institutions identified as non-White (not including international students), a 9% increase in one decade. The growth in non-White student attendance in Christian colleges can be misleading as public 4-year institutions have historically had a higher percentage of students of color than private 4-year, and Christian colleges that remain predominantly White. In the same decade, the average enrollment of students of color at Christian colleges increased 10%, but began at only 18% of all enrolled students at Christian colleges and increased to an average of 28% (Menjares, 2018).

However, when compared to non-sectarian institutions, instead of the national average, Christian colleges are diversifying, in terms of percentages, more quickly than their non-sectarian counterparts (Rine & Guthrie, 2016). Christian colleges' Asian and Hispanic student populations increased by 16% and 38% respectively in comparison to an increase of only 8% and 26% compared to non-sectarian private, non-profit institutions (NCES, 2019). A 2012 study concluded that African American students, once admitted, were the most likely of

all students of color to enroll in CCCU institutions (Confer & Mamiseishvili, 2012). Though students of color are attending Christian colleges at an increased rate, the composition of faculty and staff of color remains low.

Faculty and Staff of Color

Students at Christian colleges report that they hold interactions with faculty in high regard. CCCU seniors were more likely than peers at other institutions to rate their interactions with faculty, staff, and academic advisors as excellent or good (NACUBO, 2018; Nelson et al., 2018). At an average faculty to student ratio of 17 to 1, students at Christian colleges presumably have a higher rate of personal interactions with faculty. In 2017, across all full-time degree-granting postsecondary institutions, faculty of color made up 24% of all faculty. The two largest minority groups, Asian/Pacific Islander and African American, made up 9% and 5.5% respectively of all full-time faculty (NCES, 2019). However, the proportion of faculty of color at CCCU schools is approximately half the national average. In 2017, only 11% of full-time faculty at Christian colleges were from racially diverse backgrounds (Menjares, 2017). Asian/Pacific Islanders accounted for 4% of all full-time faculty, followed by African Americans at 3.5%, and Hispanic or Latino accounted for 2% of all faculty (Menjares, 2017).

Christian colleges that thrive on high levels of faculty, staff, and student interaction, lack opportunities for students of color to engage in same-race relationships with faculty and staff. Further, students, faculty, and staff of color feel isolated at Christian colleges (Longman, 2017) with only a few that have developed published plans to make their institutions more racially inclusive. As Christian colleges strive to improve compositional racial diversity, institutions' intentional priorities for promoting diversity vary.

Racial Diversity Initiatives of the CCCU

Universities across the U.S. devote resources to develop multicultural engagement that includes institution-wide diversity initiatives, diversity courses, racial awareness programming, and service-learning about social justice and racial issues (Bok, 2006; Parades-Collins, 2009; Hurtado, 2006). Both the CCCU as a consortium and individual member-institutions show varying levels of commitment to diversity. Some institutions may have programs or offices dedicated to promoting diversity education that work to improve the experiences of historically underrepresented populations. Additionally, individual institutions show varying levels of awareness or commitment to exploring the racialized environments that exist within their campus communities.

The CCCU has hosted conferences to discuss racial diversity; however, the CCCU lacks a general commitment, as well as guided efforts, to promote diversity initiatives in its member institutions. In 2017, Shirley Hoogstra, president of the CCCU, wrote that "The 'Excellence Imperative,' . . . the CCCU diversity work, has been at the forefront of [her] presidency. This 'imperative' also distinguishes our mission and positions us to respond to those around us" (p. 5). Its website highlights the Robert and Susan Andringa Award for Advancing Racial Harmony, given to a CCCU member institution that displays achievement "making progress in the area of diversity, racial harmony, and reconciliation" (CCCU, 2019, p. 1). The award was given between 2000-2013 and beginning in 2015 the funding for the award has been used to support diversity initiatives, for example a Multi-Ethnic Leadership Institute. In the 2019-2020 CCCU Annual Report, the CCCU highlighted three initiatives:

1. A new "Commission on Diversity and Inclusion"
2. The third annual CCCU Diversity Conference

3. A project that produced a book called *Diversity Matters* (Longman, 2017).

First, the CCCU leadership appointed a group of volunteers that work at CCCU institutions across the nation to participate serve in advisory roles to campuses related to diversity initiatives. The annual report is unclear how the commission connects to individual institutions. Second, in 2019, the CCCU planned its third diversity conference that took place at George Fox University. According to the annual report, the purpose of the conference was to engage in dialogue about research and best practices related to diversity initiatives in CCCU institutions.

In the 2017 CCCU annual report and again in the 2019 annual report, the CCCU highlighted its Multi-Ethnic Leadership Institute that hosted 23 emerging leaders of color in order to train them for future senior leadership positions in higher education. In coordination with the institute, the CCCU raised money for the publication of a book on diversity called *Diversity Matters: Race, Ethnicity, and the Future of Christian Higher Education* (Longman, 2017). The volume includes autoethnographies written by professionals of color, White professionals, and administrators sharing their experiences in Christian colleges. They discuss issues about their own identities as employees of Christian colleges, reasons for attraction, retention, and attrition as administrators of color, and about curricular and co-curricular initiatives that advance racial diversity. The volume serves as an accessible collection of stories of minority leaders around Christian colleges, leveraging 29 multi-ethnic voices that may have been silenced otherwise (Chen, 2017). The volume is also a resource for higher-education scholars interested in studying Christian higher education. One of its most powerful contributions for researchers is Longman's generous list of resources located in the back of the volume. However, the authors often talk in broad racial categories, using

descriptors such as *Blacks*, *Asians*, or *Latinos*. This approach of grouping experiences in aggregated racial groups limits the authors' ability to produce knowledge about the complexity and diversity within and between racial groups (Jeong, 2017). It may also prevent readers from getting the depth of knowledge that intersectional analysis could produce. If the CCCU believes diversity is important, what shows is an anemic effort to make diversity and inclusion an actual priority.

Enrolling almost half a million students, Christian colleges serve a niche of college students in the higher education landscape. Emerging from the shift toward secular, public and private higher education, Christian colleges maintain their value by committing to the integration of Christian faith and learning in the college experience. Over the previous decade, Christian colleges have grown faster than public and private non-religious colleges, both overall, adding a greater number of historically underrepresented students. At the same time, Christian colleges are still relatively homogenous and it is unclear how individual institutions are developing plans or ways of talking about race to make their campuses more inclusive. The trend toward engagement in diversity and inclusion by more institutions is a response to several factors, in particular low satisfaction by students of color attending Christian colleges, and national attention toward racial injustice in many areas of society. Christian colleges are becoming increasingly racially diverse, yet students of color still report the psychological effects of isolation and hostile campus environments (Parades-Collins, 2013; Yancey, 2010). Recent research that illuminates the perceptions of students about campus racial climate at four-year institutions writ large helps contextualize how race impacts the Christian college.

Campus Racial Climate

What Hurtado (1992) discovered in her study on racial conflict was that many initiatives were implemented in the 1970s and 1980s to reduce racial division on college campuses. Some initiatives included increasing the number of minority faculty and improving racial minority student participation in student activities. Yet, racial tension was still very high. Among the most salient findings of her study was that one in four respondents perceived substantial racial conflict on their campuses. She found that administrators and policy makers were not examining the quality of their non-White students' experiences. Research for the next twenty five years substantiated that institutions were increasing their compositional diversity, but negative racial experiences still occurred (Allen et al., 2006; Steele, 1995). As a result of marginally effective initiatives campus racial climate became a tool to examine the quality of racialized experiences on college campuses.

The architects of campus racial climate (CRC; Hurtado et al., 1998) provided "vehicles that translate higher education research into thoughtful policies" and a framework useful to design inclusive, "comfortable, diverse environments for learning and socializing that facilitate the intellectual and social development of all students" (p. 280). Hurtado (1992) and Hurtado et al., (1997, 1998) aimed to expand research on racial climate to investigate the significance of the perceived environment (e.g. students' perceptions of the campus environment), where previous research primarily included measures of institutional characteristics (e.g. size, type, racial composition). Hurtado et al.'s (1998) study primarily established that a multitude of external and internal influences affect campus racial climate on college campuses. The peer reviewed literature about CRC centers around three categories: (1) studies that show the positive impacts of campuses that facilitate cross-racial

interaction, (2) racial and ethnic minority students reporting environments that maintain prejudicial and racist treatment, and (3) White peoples' perceptions of CRC that are more positive than their peers of color. Presented below is a description of the findings within each category. As the study aimed to explore how race-talk reflects campus racial climate at a Christian college, the following sections will discuss research on campus climate centered on race in the literature at large, public institutions and then in the Christian college context.

Positive Educational Benefit for Racial Diversity

Research related to the educational benefits of racial diversity consistently demonstrates its value for students on college campuses (Ford, 2012; Loes, Pascarella, & Umbach, 2012; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Roksa et al., 2017). A large body of evidence supports that exposure to racial diversity is positively related to a range of student outcomes: less racial isolation and positive personal growth for students of color (Saenz et al., 2007), purpose in life, increased civic engagement (Bowman et al., 2011), and increases in students' attentiveness to advancing racial equality (Mayhew et al., 2016). Students who interact both formally and informally with peers outside of their race-group benefit cognitively, psychosocially, and interpersonally (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). A review of 25 years of research indicates that going to college increases students' exposure to racial diversity and awareness of racial attitudes, while lowering their negative stereotypes, improves openness and tolerance (Mayhew et al., 2016; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Loes et al., (2012) studied the effects of exposure to diversity topics in the classroom (classroom diversity) and participation in diversity-oriented discussions with peers (interactional diversity) on 1,354 freshmen from 19 colleges. They found that interactions with students from different races and diversity workshops had a positive influence on the

development of critical thinking skills for those students. Significantly, participating in classroom and interactional diversity had the most influence on students who were the least academically prepared when they entered college. Loes et al.'s findings are consistent with research on interaction with diverse peers (Gurin et al., 2002); taken together, this body of research suggests that engaging with diversity issues requires a measure of complex thinking that promotes the development of critical thinking skills. Loes et al. also found the net effects of diversity experiences on cognitive growth occurred in White students more significantly than their non-White peers. The novel exposure for White students, who came to college from primarily White secondary schools, may have provided opportunities to interact with a substantial number of peers of color for the first time (Loes et al., 2012).

For example, findings from Schreiner and Kim's study (2011) conducted at 25 predominantly White CCCU institutions demonstrated that students from Christian colleges (n = 3,051) experienced the greatest change from entrance through graduation in three college outcome measures: social awareness, racial understanding, and participation in community service. In the study, the researchers sought to identify campus learning experiences that were the most predictive of gains in certain outcomes at CCCU institutions compared to non-religious, private institutions. The most predictive college experience variables that led to gains in social awareness outcomes were cross-race interactions, faculty support, and enrollment in ethnic studies courses. Even though CCCU students were more likely than peers at private, non-religious institutions to exhibit gains in social awareness as a result of interaction with peers of color, students (primarily White) reported less interracial peer interaction than their peers at non-sectarian institutions. Results were disproportionately skewed toward White students because respondents were mostly White (88.7%). While the

value of deliberate efforts to create racially diverse campuses has been empirically proven (Harper & Quaye, 2007; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Rankin & Reason, 2005), students of color report that they must navigate negative cultural environments on their college campuses (Harwood, et al., 2012).

Perceptions of Students from Historically Minoritized Groups about CRC

The second category of findings provide some insight into what students of color experience related to race on their campuses. Researchers contributing to this body of work call attention to participant-reported experiences of isolation, differential experience with access to resources, including lower levels of access to same-race relationships, stereotyping, and microaggression (Museus, 2011; Love, 2009).

One way in which scholars have explored negative racial experiences is through the concept of microaggressions (Pérez Huber & Solorzano, 2014; Pierce, 1970). Microaggressions is a term that refers to commonplace, often invisible, environmental, verbal, or behavioral indignities. Microagressions manifest through negative stereotypes or insensitive comments, but can also be observed in behaviors such as people of color not being selected by White students for study groups. Microagressions are rooted in beliefs about race in the assumptions that members of majority racial groups make, and the subtle ways White people deal with race. Through 11 focus groups of students from historically minoritized backgrounds living in residence halls on campus (n = 81), Harwood, et al. (2012) identified over 400 instances where students reported experiencing racial microaggressions. The researchers explained that the hidden costs paid by students of color when receiving both overt and subtle forms of microaggressions have a significant negative effect on the students'

college experiences. For example, a participant in the study described her response to feelings of disproportionate challenges to her perspectives in class:

> They didn't want to listen to what we had to say. One time I did say it in a class: "Do you know how difficult it is for me to be here right now? … I'm not used to being in a class with white people ganging up on me. It makes me not want to talk in class" (p. 1253).

She reported that she wanted to remain silent in class because of the number of challenges that her White peers presented without even knowing they outnumbered her.

Harwood et al.'s findings are consistent with research that makes clear the often understated and invisible nature of racial microaggressions that makes it difficult for students of color to raise awareness of microaggressions' harm (Ng, et al., 2007). Students of color who experience racial microaggressions feel alienated and the emotional effects that result from daily experiences with stereotypes and microaggressions negatively impact the wellbeing of students of color (Ong et al., 2013; Solorazano et al., 2000). The evidence reveals that the racial experiences of students of color often result in environments that are isolating and have harmful effects. In addition to research that demonstrates the negative perceptions of people of color, researchers have consistently found that students of color and their White peers view their campus racial climates differently.

White Students' Perceptions of Campus Racial Climate

In the findings from the third category, researchers consistently demonstrate that students of color and their White peers view CRC in different ways. White students tend to report more positive perceptions of CRC and White students are unaware of their minority peers' negative perceptions of CRC (Rankin & Reason, 2005). Though interaction with

students of different races and participation in ethnic studies courses are likely to produce growth in students, diverse experiences on PWIs still mostly benefit White students and White students tend to report higher levels of satisfaction related to CRC. Students of color experience racially hostile campus environments more often than their White peers, and have a negative perception of campus racial climate, while White students report more positive perceptions of CRC (Harper et al., 2011; Locks, et al., 2008; Park, 2009;). Additionally, students of color are more conscious of the dimensions of campus racial climate than their White peers (Helms et al., 1998; King & Ford, 2003).

In one study, Rankin and Reason (2005) explored how students of different racial backgrounds (n = 15,356) experienced their campus climates and found a stark contrast between the perceptions of White students and students of color. Students of color reported more experiences of harassment and reported that their campuses were more hostile and less welcoming. White students reported lower levels of negative racial experiences and were unaware of the negative perceptions that students of color reported.

Similarly, Harper and Hurtado (2007) conducted one of the first studies to examine CRC among students of a variety of races. The researchers conducted a multi-campus qualitative study of racial climates at five predominantly White campuses. To protect anonymity, they did not discuss each campus' contextually unique challenges with race and racism. Researchers conducted focus groups with 278 students, organized in racially homogenous groups, with the purpose of understanding different perceptions of campus climate by race, descriptions of prejudicial treatment by minority students, and positive benefits associated with campuses that facilitated cross-racial interaction. Nine themes emerged from the data:

1. There is incongruence between the value White campus administrators place on issues of race and the actions they take to address these issues;
2. Talking about race was avoided inside and outside of the classroom;
3. Students self-reported racial segregation in a variety of spaces;
4. Social satisfaction was stratified by race with White and Asian students reporting the highest levels of satisfaction and Black students across all campuses reporting the lowest levels of satisfaction;
5. At each institution, Black students could identify ways in which that institution reflected a reputation and legacy of racism;
6. White students recognized that students of color participate less but overestimated levels of satisfaction about racial tension reported by students of color.
7. Across sites, there was no shared cultural ownership. Black participants noted a "pervasiveness of Whiteness" at their institutions "inconsistent with institutional claims of inclusiveness" (p. 18);
8. Staff reported awareness of segregation and disadvantages they witnessed, but were afraid to report their concerns for fear of retaliation by White bosses and colleagues;
9. In at each site, students reported that during the qualitative study this was the first time anyone had asked them about their experiences related to race on their campuses.

As indicated in the findings, racial realities were recognized by people of color more often than White people and systems of racism remained unaddressed continuing to marginalize students of color. Some participants reported that their institutions ignored questions of

minority student engagement and satisfaction, never having asked about the experiences of students of color at their institutions. Other participants reported that their institutions had conducted climate research, but saw no change in the perpetuation of racism at their institutions. What is unclear in the research is how the process of gathering campus climate research and then talking about race on a college campus impacts the ability to make transformational change.

Despite the growth of diversity on Christian college campuses, they remain overwhelmingly White. Christian college campuses that initiate intentional efforts to promote racial diversity are significantly more likely to achieve growth in student learning outcomes, but primarily for White students (Schreiner & Kim, 2011). Moreover, research suggests that negative racial experiences mitigate the positive outcomes, especially for students of color. One important implication of the research summarized here is the recognition that students of color are impacted by diversity experiences on campus in far more complex ways than their White peers (Harwood et al., 2012; Jacoby, 2015).

Hurtado (1992) suggests that, despite increased commitments to promoting racial diversity strategies, the racial realities made transparent through the voices of people of color in higher education demonstrate unexamined and perhaps firmly entrenched ideas which maintain a system of racism. The notion that higher education institutions have increasingly focused their efforts on promoting racial diversity, yet the systems of racism continue to persist evoked two questions for Hurtado. First, she asked in which learning environments racial tension was most probable. One of the study's central findings was that racial tension may be more prevalent in environments exhibiting a lack of concern for individualized attention to students, namely in larger public institutions. However, within the realm of CRC,

a good deal has changed in the span of 30 years since Hurtado first conducted her research. In 2019, following protests at Princeton University to remove Woodrow Wilson's name from the campus because of his segregationist views, the university formed a diversity task force and hired its first Dean of Diversity and Inclusion (Princeton University, 2019).

Following the death of George Floyd in March of 2020, many students, faculty, staff, and alumni demanded that their colleges respond to racial tension on their campuses (Carlson & Sorrel, 2020). Therefore, rather than accepting her findings as still applicable, scholars and practitioners would be well served to lift up individualized attention to students as a point for exploration on 21st century college campuses. Second, Hurtado (1992) asked what forces were at work to preserve inequalities. She argued that institutions, and particularly the dominant groups within institutions, operated according to "embedded ideologies" (p. 544) that often work to preserve unequal social relationships among individuals from different racial backgrounds. Hurtado asserts that the dominant group imposes certain attitudes regarding race that manifest overtly and covertly. Campus racial climate as a theoretical construct will serve as a heuristic device used to examine the different elements that members of a campus community experience.

Four Dimensions of Campus Racial Climate

Research teams led by Sylvia Hurtado, and later her colleagues, are credited as the architects of the framework for studying campus racial climate (Hurtado, 1992, 1994; Hurtado, et al., 1998, 1999; Milem et al., 2005). Hurtado's initial premise was that higher education institutions were primarily concerned with increasing the number of diverse students enrolled on their campuses, but that research lacked a framework for university decision-makers to understand the racial experiences of students. Hurtado (1992, 1994) and

Hurtado, et al. (1998, 1999) identified four dimensions for inquiry into the internal forces influencing institutional campus racial climate: *structural diversity* (diversity of students, faculty, and staff), the *behavioral dimension* (refers to the type and quality of interactions between racial groups), the *psychological dimension* (perceptions of racial tension, discrimination, and prejudice), and the *historical legacy of inclusion/exclusion* of various race groups (history of discrimination).

Compositional Diversity

Hurtado et al. (1998, 1999) operationalized the definition of structural diversity as the distribution of students by race and its effects on the campus climate. Structural diversity may also include the presence or absence of racially diverse faculty and staff. The authors argued that environments with a high proportion of White students create barriers for student learning in diverse groups. For example, Love (2009) found that students of color reported feelings of loneliness and perceived that they had fewer opportunities to interact with peers and with faculty because of low structural diversity among students and faculty.

In a recent study Nguyen et al. (2018) found that non-White students who represented the largest race group at a university grappled to overcome the assumption that they did not have racialized experiences because they belonged to the structural majority. The researchers interviewed 16 students who identified as Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) and found that these participants perceived that they did not have access to faculty and administrators who could "better understand the demographic of campus" (p. 490). Nguyen et al. also found that though the large number of AAPI students (n = 26,933, or 33.5% of undergraduate students) was what initially attracted participants to the institution, AAPI is a broad race group that includes many ethnic groups. So, despite a large structural

representation on campus, AAPI students in this study reported lower sense of belonging than their White peers. This finding suggests that students' ethnic identity may be more salient than membership in a larger, more diverse racial category such as AAPI or "Hispanic/Latinx." Simple race groups may demonstrate structural diversity; however, Hurtado et al. (1997, 1998) consider structural diversity primarily to point out that understanding campus racial climate and improving diversity must move beyond the structural dimension. Examining all four dimensions together make this point.

Behavioral Dimension

Hurtado et al.'s (1998, 1999) definition of the behavioral dimension of CRC centers on three ideas: (1) Social interactions do occur; (2) Cross-race and intra-race interactions occur between members of an institution; and (3) The quality and nature of those interactions matter. By foregrounding regular social interactions among students of different racial backgrounds, Hurtado and colleagues countered a depiction of self-segregation and poor race relations presented by Beverly Tatum (1997) in *Why Are all the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria.* In fact, current findings at the time of Hurtado et al.'s (1998, 1999) work suggested that students who participate in deliberate programs focused on racial diversity exhibited increased interest in cross-race activities (Mitchell & Dell, 1992), had more frequent cross-race interactions (Hurtado, Dey, & Trevino, 1994), and in general demonstrated greater levels of social involvement on their college campuses (Gilliard, 1996).

Research conducted more recently suggests there are a number of factors that affect the behavioral dimension of campus racial climate. Three themes emerge in the literature related to the behavioral dimension: (1) cross-race interaction is positively correlated to a

number of educational, moral, and cognitive effects (Denson & Chang, 2015; Hurtado, Mayhew, & Engberg, 2012; Loes et al., 2012;Mayhew, 2016; ; Smith et al., 2010), (2) cross-race relations positively nurture White students to a greater degree than their non-White peers (Smith et al., 2010; Loes, et al., 2012), and (3) diverse curriculum and programming designed to promote conversations about race increase opportunities for cross-race relations and have a positive impact on attitudes about race (Bowman et al., 2011; Mayhew, 2016).

Cross-Race Relationships. Perhaps the most cited factor that positively affects CRC is positive cross-race relationships (Denson & Chang, 2015; Johnson et al., 2007; Smith et al., 2010; Strayhorn, 2008). Researchers examine quality and quantity of cross-race interactions. In Strayhorn's (2008) study of Black and White male college students at PWIs (n = 531) cross-race relationships significantly contributed to positive perceptions of CRC for college students. Both Black and White students that socialized more often with peers of a different race reported higher levels of sense of belonging, a reflection of the extent to which a student feels connected to their campus. Denson and Chang (2015) studied the quality of cross-race interactions of 14,161 undergraduate students in 92 colleges through surveys administered upon matriculation and graduation from college. They found that the quality of cross-race interactions is as important as the number of interactions. Quality cross-race interactions positively influenced participants' academic self-concept (students' beliefs about their potential and confidence in the academic environment) and social agency (a measure of students' perceived importance toward political and social involvement). Strayhorn and Denson and Chang demonstrate that both quality and quantity of cross-race relationships in college positively impact college students' experiences while still in college.

Smith, Ray, Wood, Bauer, and Abraham (2010) examined the effects of more or less exposure to diverse experiences for students at a PWI. The researchers hypothesized that cross-group friendships and diverse curriculum would promote growth in multi-cultural competency and civic engagement in students after graduation and found that previous exposure to cross-race relationships correlated to growth in openness to diversity. They sent a questionnaire to graduates five years after completing a degree and found that participants who had been involved in cross-race relationships during college self-reported more openness to diversity and less negative stereotyping five years later. Smith et al. (2010) concluded that institutions should 'disrupt students' natural inclination to create homogeneous friendship networks" (p. 400). Though cross-race interaction is correlated to positive perceptions of CRC, some studies suggest cross-race interaction is more significant for some racial groups than others. For example, in a study of first year students of a variety of races, Johnson et al., (2007) found that interactions with students from a variety of race groups was only significant for Latino students. This suggests that other factors may work to mitigate the positive perceptions of CRC due to cross-race interaction. Research at non-faith-based institutions reveals that participation in similar spiritual activities may form social capital between race groups (Park & Bowman, 2015). However, religious affiliation may form a structural barrier for cross-race interaction given the racially homogenous groups religious people form, underscoring the significant influence race and spiritual practices have on CRC at Christian colleges (Park, 2012; Park & Bowman, 2015).

Divergent Impact. Findings in the research literature show that cross-race relationships have a positive impact on students, however, evidence indicates cross-race relationships do not impact different race groups equally. In a study measuring academic

performance and self-esteem of African American students (n = 687), Cokley (2003) found that African American students attending PWIs reported lower self-esteem and lower academic performance than African American students attending historically Black colleges and universities. Although Cokley hypothesized that Black students would feel highly motivated in predominantly Black environments, he found that having academic relationships with Black faculty proved to be more impactful than learning in a predominantly Black community. Loes, et al. (2012) studied critical thinking development of students exposed to interactional diversity and found that diverse peer to peer relationships positively impacted first-year White students, but had a slightly negative effect for students of color. Approximately 80% of the White participants in Loes, et al.'s study reported attending secondary schools that were mostly White. In contrast only 30% of students of color reported attending secondary schools of mostly students of color. Thus, for a majority of their White participants, the researchers found that their participants' first year of college was the first opportunity they interacted with students from different racial and cultural backgrounds (Loes et al., 2012). Examining how the social interactions impact people differently is critical to uncovering the nuances of racial experiences that occur on college campuses.

Diverse Curriculum. While diversity programs inside and outside of the classroom have not fully reduced racial tension on campuses, such initiatives have created greater understanding of society's different cultures (Bok, 2006). One study followed 416 students into their mid-30s to determine if college engagement with racial and cultural diversity in curriculum had an impact on their lives after college. The researchers found that there was positive personal growth, growth in purpose in life, recognition of racism and increased

volunteer work after college for students with more interaction with diverse curriculum in college (Bowman et. al., 2011).

The behavioral dimension builds on the idea that studying structural diversity (racial makeup of an institution) is an insufficient way of interpreting the problem of inequality. Greater structural diversity may result in an increased number of cross-race interactions, but not positive perceptions of CRC (Pike & Kuh, 2006). Positive cross-race interactions correlate to positive perceptions of CRC, but not for all students. The psychological dimension provides an added way of examining the campus climate and demonstrates mitigating factors of positive CRC.

Psychological Dimension

The psychological dimension of CRC refers to perceptions and experiences of racial conflict and racial discrimination on campuses (Hurtado et al., 1998). Negative experiences due to microaggression, stereotypes, and discrimination mitigate positive perceptions of CRC. Consistent with research in the behavioral dimension, results differ among majority and minority race groups related to the psychological dimension (Hausmann et al., 2009; Hornsby et. al., 2017; Museus, 2011). Two themes emerged from studies that examined the psychological dimension: research that explores stereotypes that correlate to feelings of isolation; and sense of belonging.

Stereotyping. First, research indicates that stereotyping along racial and/or ethnic lines produces a hostile campus environment that produces feelings of isolation and results in negative perception of CRC (Hornsby et al., 2017; Love, 2009). Students from historically minoritized backgrounds who participated in a study conducted by Hornsby and colleagues reported more instances of negative stereotyping than their White peers. In this study of 13

institutions, the researchers found that even when students of color maintained positive cross-race interactions with other students, negative stereotyping resulted in lower levels of positive perceptions of CRC. Where hostile environments exist, where stereotypes and microaggressions are maintained, negative CRC results regardless of positive cross-race relationships as a mitigating factor (Dancy, 2010; Domingue, 2015; Love, 2009; Patton et al., 2015; Quaye, et al., 2015). Love (2009) found that predominantly White institutions perpetuated conditions where racial stereotypes persisted, students of color felt alienated and lonely, and students reported feeling that their institutions were unwelcoming. All factors correlated to participants' negative perceptions of campus racial climate. As a result of hostile environments, minority students combat stereotypes in different ways. Black and Latino students may feel they have to prove they are academically capable because of negative racial stereotypes that position them as inferior (Fries-Britt & Turner, 200; Quaye, et al., 2015). Whereas, Asian American students may feel pressure to meet the "model minority myth" (Suzuki, 1977) stereotypes perpetuated through the characteristics of meekness and high achievement (Quaye, et al., 2015).

Sense of belonging. The second way in which researchers discuss the psychological dimension of campus racial climate is through the concept sense of belonging. Sense of belonging is generally conceptualized as belonging to a group or an environment and feeling as though one matters in that group (McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Strayhorn, 2019). Sense of belonging on college campuses has been measured in a variety of ways and can be understood to mean social support, connectedness, or "the experience of mattering or feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to the campus community" or its members (Strayhorn, 2019, p. 4). Hurtado and Carter (1997) were among the first to connect

CRC and sense of belonging by asserting that the psychological connections students feel, or do not feel, toward the people and the environment on their campuses are a measure of their sense of belonging. These connections are influenced by people's perceptions of the campus climate that inhibit or facilitate connections to those groups.

Ncube, et al. (2018) and Young (2013) compared factors that contribute to psychological perceptions of CRC. Both found that sense of belonging was more strongly related to perceptions of campus racial climate than factors like academic experiences. Ncube et al. (2018) delivered a survey to 34,506 students at eight research universities. The purpose of the study was to examine how distinct student populations report sense of belonging. Alternatively, Young conducted focus groups interviewing 51 African American students at small (under 10,000) Christian colleges in order to explore undergraduate students' descriptions of sense of belonging. Notably, African American men reported the lowest levels of sense of belonging in both studies. As research on sense of belonging is still emerging, results are mixed. Research is clear that the lived experience on college campuses for people of color and White people differ. The psychological dimension demonstrates a variety of factors that impact perceptions of campus racial climate, many that contribute to a negative perception of campus racial climate. More recent studies have found that additional factors related to the psychological dimension like financial conditions (Bruch, et al., 2018), classroom experiences (Trolian & Parker III, 2017), and White hostility (Santa-Ramirez, 2018) contribute to negative perceptions of the campus racial climate by students of color.

Historical Legacy of Inclusion/Exclusion

The fourth dimension refers to the policies, practices, and patterns that are embedded in a "culture of a historically segregated environment" (Hurtado et al., 1998, p. 282). An

institution's historical legacy of exclusion can have consequences for present-day students of color and Hurtado et al. (1998, 1999) argue that an institution's success in supporting students of color may depend on its initial response to desegregation. The barriers for students of color may not be existing policies, but instead inherent practices and patterns that limit opportunities for students and obstruct equality (Bowen, et al., 2005). Title VI of the Civil Rights Act (1964) protects students from discrimination on the basis of race and national origin. However, patterns show that minority students are overrepresented in community colleges and for-profit institutions, the two sectors with the lowest completion rates and highest loan default rates (Ma & Baun, 2016). Likewise, colleges may maintain programs that cater to White middle-class cultural norms, rather than being inclusive of historically underrepresented student cultures.

Race categorization still stratifies students in college (Sacks, 2007) and students experience the residual effects of racism inside and outside of the classroom (Walker-DeVose et al., 2019). White norms, low compositional diversity, and a variety of forces that shape students' experiences, preparation and access before they get to college stem from the vestiges of historical segregation and exclusion. Harper and Hurtado (2007) found that, at predominantly White institutions they studied, the institutions had a reputation for being racist and that the negative campus climates were well known. Black community members discussed the climate on and off campus in negative ways. The student participants commented on a "pervasiveness of Whiteness" at their institutions "inconsistent with institutional claims of inclusiveness" (Harper & Hurtado, 2007, p. 18).

In a study of African American men at predominantly White institutions participants perceived that their institutions should support affirmative action efforts to show a

commitment to practices that are culturally sensitive when hiring faculty, staff, and administrators. One participant in the study expressed "how seeing the majority of African Americans in janitorial capacities does nothing for his perception of an equitable campus community" (Dancy, 2010, p. 29). Walker-DeVose et al. (2019) interviewed 18 students at a public institution in Georgia and found that students perceived their racialized experiences in diverging ways. White students in the study reported they were aware that not many African American students were visible in Greek letter organizations or participants in co-curricular spaces in the campus community. White research participants explained disproportionate participation by African American students in co-curricular opportunities as primarily due to preferences. Black students, however, reported systems of racism that, as a result of historical racism in the South and their college, kept them out of historically White Greek letter organizations. Walker-DeVose et al. argued that White students held color-blind ideologies that failed to identify racial conflict and inequality. Hurtado et. al. (1998) contend that by identifying student populations that have historically been underrepresented and examine practices maintained to disproportionately benefit one group, institutions can prepare to address systemic racism.

Hurtado et al.'s (1998) framework for studying CRC through the lenses of structure, behavior, psychology, and history is important to the development of a holistic examination of experiences. These dimensions of CRC are interrelated and influence each other (Hurtado et al., 1998). For example, the psychological dimension may moderate the behavioral dimension (Denson & Chang, 2015). Campus racial climate as a conceptual framework is designed for institutions to understand perceptions across their campus communities. The purpose of utilizing CRC research on campuses is to identify factors that would nourish

welcoming, supportive environments as well as identify barriers that inhibit such work. An abundance of literature exists about the myriad of factors contributing to negative CRC, and more is still being discovered about how students experience their colleges in racialized terms. College campuses have increasingly become more racially and ethnically diverse and researchers have identified factors that contribute to positive and negative perceptions of CRC; however, research on CRC – as well as the popular press covering higher education and social relations in the United States today (Princeton University, 2019; Ware, 2017) reveals that racial conflict still exists. For example, Lawrence Ware, (2017) a faculty member at Oklahoma State University, and Black Baptist minister in Oklahoma, authored an op-ed in the New York Times "renouncing his ordination in the Southern Baptist Convention" (para, 1). In the article, Ware wrote that he thought members of the Southern Baptist Convention - the largest protestant denomination in the United States - may not intentionally be racist, but that by ignoring the voices of people of color they are complicit in White supremacy. Observing the SBC members' complicity in racism by supporting Donald Trump's policies and the alt-right spurred Ware to leave the organization. Despite the increasing racial diversity of the SBC, having grown from 400 Black churches in 2012 to over 4,000 Black churches five years later (Roach, 2017), racial tension persists. This may also be true on Christian college campuses where little research exists related to CRC.

Campus Racial Climate at Christian Colleges

The majority of researchers studying campus racial climate have done so at non-faith-based institutions, creating a gap in the literature on CRC within the CCCU (Cleek, 2017; Paredes-Collins, 2013). CCCU institutional environments are demarcated by missions committed to spiritual formation through the integration of faith and learning. Despite

incorporating various forms of diversity initiatives and policies, such as programs through multicultural or intercultural offices, policies on diverse recruitment and hiring practices, CCCU institutions fall behind their non-sectarian contemporaries in diversity efforts (Paredes-Collins, 2013). The relative lack of diversity in these colleges and universities leads some to suggest that CCCU institutions are not welcoming to students, faculty, and administrators of color and give little option for people of color who wish to pursue their education or career at a faith-based institution (Paredes-Collins, 2009). The problems experienced by people of color in a denomination writ large, as Ware (2017) describes about the Southern Baptist Convention, could conceivably be expected for students of color on campuses affiliated with the same denomination.

Research for CRC at Christian colleges centers largely on two themes: the existence and impact of White norms (Parades-Collins & Collins, 2011; Yancey, 2010; Young, 2013) and the intersection of campus racial climate, spirituality, and sense of belonging (Cleek, 2017; Kim et al., 2016; Longman, 2017; Parades-Collins, 2014; Young, 2013). Although White norms, sense of belonging, and CRC have been widely investigated in higher education (Dancy, 2010; Harper et al., 2011; Harper & Hurtado, 2007) there has been very little research related to these phenomena at Christian colleges. This may be in part because Christian colleges tend to be behind in issues related to diversity.

White Norms at Christian Colleges

White norms come into view at CCCUs appearing through traditions, policies, and cultural practices. For example, many CCCU institutions use chapel, often a weekly, communal gathering for spiritual emphasis, as a vehicle for spiritual development. If this

experience reflects the mechanism of the dominant racial and ethnic culture for spiritual practice it has shown to isolate underrepresented students (Young, 2013).

Students of Color. Very few studies examine White norms and their effects on members of Christian colleges. The research that has been conducted among Christian colleges about White norms cluster on the experiences of faculty and staff (Longman, 2017), and pay little attention to the experiences of students. Furthermore, few researchers have investigated how White norms at Christian colleges affect students of color. Recent research shows that scholars are interested in how White religious norms impact Christian colleges (Parades-Collins, 2013). In the only qualitative study related to CRC about students at Christian colleges, Young (2013) conducted group interviews with African-American students at three CCCU institutions in the western United States. Participants reported that they felt unwelcome at their Christian colleges because the spiritual practices reflected the traditions of the dominant, White church culture and not the minority church culture. The aforementioned environments most negatively impacted students who chose their Christian college expressly for the opportunity to experience a positive spiritual environment. The dissonance between Black students' expectations of spiritual growth opportunities and the cultural realities of religious experiences resulted in negative experiences for Black students. Young (2013) is successful at investigating some personal experiences of students of color through the comparative case study. However, Young only interviews African American students, limiting the potential nuances that may exist between distinct race groups.

To compare the religious commitment of White and non-White students, Parades-Collins and Collins (2011) found that White students' practices of religion dominated Christian colleges' cultures to the detriment of non-White students. The researchers

examined CIRP data from 3,238 student respondents attending evangelical institutions. They concluded that White students reported higher levels of religious commitment than non-White students. The results related to students of color were somewhat limited due to low response rates from non-White students and the researchers' inability to compare students from distinct racial categories.

Staff and Faculty of Color. As discussed previously, one of the most recent publications about race in Christian colleges is the book *Diversity Matters* (Longman, 2017). In the collection, White and non-White administrators write about their racialized experiences working at Christian colleges. In one of the chapters, Ash et al. (2017a) argues that the White narrative has been dominant in higher education research and that recognizing White normalization is a "necessary part of the solution to racial discord" (p. 159). In another chapter, a Black administrator wrote about being comfortable with his ethnicity, but also "working in an environment that was primarily Anglo," something he had to consistently navigate (Sisco, 2017, p. 153). For Ash et al. and Sisco, White normalization was a present part of the cultural reality that exists in Christian colleges. While this body of research has made an important move toward establishing some understanding the existence and impact of White cultural norms at Christian colleges, scholars have not examined the diverging experiences of White norms related to White and non-White students at Christian colleges.

Ash, et al. (2017a) succeeded in identifying a cultural norm in Christian colleges and showing how White faculty and administrators resist other White colleagues who are active in anti-racist activism. Longman (2017) equally presents evidence that faculty and administrators of color experience adverse effects related to White norms. Taken together, the extant research begs a series of questions about experiences of White students or students

of color identified as anti-racist activists, or how students of color experience White normalization. Some researchers suggest that research should evaluate campus racial climates at Christian colleges to understand not only what people of color experience, but also to understand the structures of oppression and exclusion that exist because of Whiteness (Collins & Jun, 2017). Religiously embedded White norms may inhibit the natural and intentional talk about race at a Christian college intended to further discussion about improving racism. Such a gap highlights the need for more inquiry about how people of color experience White norms at Christian colleges and how people at a Christian college talk about race.

Campus Racial Climate, Spirituality, and Sense of Belonging in Christian Colleges

Race alone does not influence campus racial climate and diversity in higher education. Interacting social constructs converge that affect CRC (Park, 2015). Though the preponderance of research scholars have conducted on this topic examine experiences at non-faith-based colleges, a few studies have been carried out within the CCCU (Parades-Collins, 2014; Cleek, 2017). Research conducted at CCCU member institutions related to race connects religious practices and CRC. The terminology used in presenting related research findings is ambiguous. Researchers use terms like *religious* and *spiritual* in converging ways. Though some researchers may stick with one term, in literature researchers tend to measure faith practices in two constructs: as "formalized, institutional, and doctrinal" practices, or as "personal, subjective, and individual emotive expression" (Cleek, 2017, p. 35). Given the limited number of studies and the interchangeable ways the terms appear, I will use *spirituality* to refer to both constructs. Spiritual formation, for many Christian colleges, is the accumulated product of experiences students gain while attending.

Paredes-Collins (2014) is the first researcher to explore sense of belonging and spirituality at Christian colleges. She examined the relationship between spirituality and sense of belonging among 2,860 college seniors at 21 different CCCU institutions. Students of color who reported higher levels of spirituality reported a higher sense of belonging; however, paths to spirituality differed between the groups. Student satisfaction emerged as the primary predictor of spirituality for White students and sense of belonging, the feeling of being a part of the campus community, proved to be the greatest predictor of spirituality for students of color (Parades-Collins, 2014). As a result, higher levels of spirituality turned into higher levels of student satisfaction. However, students who had a strong sense of spirituality may have felt a strong sense of belonging because the college culture already valued their spirituality.

Faith Fit

Researchers studying CRC, sense of belonging, and spirituality have primarily investigated the conditions that impede and facilitate spirituality (Dancy, 2010, Parades-Collins, 2014). Few have examined "faith fit." Faith fit is the various ways that cultural religious norms match with institutional religious practices and how the practices contribute to sense of belonging. Cleek (2017) explore the significance of a variety of variables, among distinct racial groups, that might contribute to sense of belonging Cleek examined the relationship between race/ethnicity, faith fit, sense of belonging, and perceptions of CRC. Cleek surveyed students (n = 1,352) at six Christian colleges giving them questions about campus racial climate, sense of belonging, faith identity, and centrality of religious practice. Consistent with other literature, he found that students of color at the Christian colleges experienced a lower sense of belonging and held more negative perceptions of campus racial

climate than White students. Students of color especially reported feeling more racial pressure, increased experiences of racial tension, and reported higher levels of racism from faculty. Conversely, he found that White students felt more comfortable with the dominant White, college culture than did students of color. Further White students did not perceive their culture as problematic.

Related to faith fit, White students had better faith fit than students of color and lack of faith fit contributed to negative perceptions of CRC for students of color. In the most important finding, however, Cleek (2017) found that though faith was important, other factors related to CRC were more important to students' sense of belonging. The perception of CRC played a much bigger role in sense of belonging for students of color and White students at Christian colleges than faith fit. This study identifies perceptions of CRC as the greatest predictor of sense of belonging for students of color. The implication of this study is that however valuable spiritual formation and faith fit at Christian colleges may be, improving perceptions of campus racial climate would have a meaningful impact on sense of belonging for students of color. Perhaps gaps exist in negative perceptions of CRC at Christian colleges and how spirituality plays a role in CRC. There may be a sense that "evangelical" or "Christian" is analogous to a broad racial identity that works against racial inclusivity. In the next section of this chapter, I turn to evidence that how White evangelicals talk about race, in colleges and generally, works to maintain systems of racism

Students attending Christian colleges are increasingly racially diverse. However, students of color and White students have contrasting experiences evidenced by perceptions of campus racial climate and varying levels of sense of belonging. Researchers and administrators at Christian colleges may face a unique set of challenges in examining

hierarchical systems of racism, given their histories and the complexity that embedded religious ideologies present. Though little research exists about how members of Christian colleges talk about race, research about evangelicals and about how race-talk occurs in higher education contextualizes this study. The next section explores research about race-talk.

Race-Talk

The Christian church has ignored conversations related to issues of race and the Christian college reflects that neglect (Emerson & Smith, 2000). At CCCU and other denominational institutions, it is likely that White social and religious culture is dominant (Tranby & Hartmann, 2008). In her book *Why Are all the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria*, Beverly Tatum (1997) notes how the religious and social traditions of White people contribute to the negative experiences of people of color. Tatum writes that in society, "internalized Whiteness" is presented as the norm reflecting prejudice against people of color (p. 35). Tatum described how when she begins a class or workshop she asks participants to describe themselves ethnically. During this exercise one of her students responded, "I'm just normal!" (p. 93). This White student had not considered her membership in her own racial group. The implication of not examining racial norms in society is that the norms assume superiority and inferiority. For example, a White woman's straight hair may be seen as more beautiful than Black woman's natural hair reflecting and furthering racial hierarchies in appearance.

Tatum describes the experience of students of color at predominantly White campuses: "life is stressful...White students and faculty frequently underestimate the power and presence of the overt and covert manifestations of racism on campus" (p. 77). Janet Helms (1990) in her theory of Black and White racial identity development offers one

possible explanation for the stress students of color experience: there is, Helms suggests, a psychological cost for the normalization of Whiteness evidenced by Tatum's (1997) student who describes her White identity as "just normal." To say that one's identity is *normal* is also to suggest that some particular characteristic is superior. In the subtle pretense of the presumed superiority of White identity, people of color constantly receive messages reinforcing their own inferiority; the emotional and psychological work of resisting these messages also falls almost solely on the very people who are receiving them. Given the demographic make-up of Christian colleges and the White norms saturating the culture, the questions that frame this study continue to emerge: How do people at a Christian college talk about race? How does that talk reflect racial inequity on campus? Research conducted by Sue (2015) explores concepts of race-talk that foreground the research questions of this study. Three themes exist in the literature about race-talk and are discussed in the next sections: the characteristics of race-talk, how "color blindness" silences race-talk, and how Whites and people of color perceive race-talk differently.

Characteristics of Race-Talk

When race-talk occurs in the educational setting it is filled with tense, highly powerful emotions, that make people feel uncomfortable (Sue et al, 2010). First, researchers observe defensiveness, anger, anxiety, and fear. In turn, the conversations become unproductive. Some dialogue results in silence or incoherent conversations as the tense emotions create a difficulty in articulating one's feelings (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). Others become elevated, eliciting personal attacks (Willow, 2008). Second, as participants share their worldviews, many reported that they felt others were challenging their perspectives and

placing them in defensive positions (Sue, 2013). Instead of an exchange of ideas where talking and listening occurs, participants simply double down on their positions.

Third, in attempts to control racial dialogue, behaviors that attempt to avoid, dilute, or change the topic dilute the conversation on race (Pasque, et al. 2013). Pasque et al. (2013) interviewed 66 faculty members at one public university about how they approach race-talk in their classrooms. Through semi-structured interviews they found that faculty approach racial conflict in a variety of ways. Faculty who could not identify conflict, shut down race conversations attempting to minimize conflict by avoiding it, and controlled conflict through silence. However, some faculty chose to use race conflict as learning opportunities. They found that some faculty facilitated conversations about race after they emerged in the classroom. Others engaged students proactively in race conversations by including them in the course design. The authors concluded that faculty who were active in engaging in race conversations were more productive in overcoming the obstacles present in race-talk. Findings suggest that the inability of participants and facilitators to navigate the intense emotions and differences in worldviews result in silence or major conflict. Additionally, factors working against productive racial dialogue differ between people of color and White people. A common worldview that appears in the literature that facilitators and participants must navigate is the belief that race does not matter and that people should be judged by their character, not the color of their skin (Sue, 2015).

How Color Blindness Silences Race-Talk

By intentionally or unintentionally ignoring race, color blindness shuts down racial dialogue. One who is colorblind holds the belief that people should be viewed with no consideration of their racial or ethnic identity, the rationale being that this belief makes

racism disappear. However, for many scholars, colorblind racial attitudes of White people reinforce institutional systems of advantage and normalizes Whiteness (Gordon, 2005, Helms, 1995; Tatum; 1997; Bonilla-Silva, 2006). In Bonilla-Silva's (2006) study, derived from interviews of 140 students self-identified as Black or White, he explores the contradiction between White colorblindness and systems of inequality that rely on the use of race to be maintained. He found that White's use statements like "the past is the past" or "I did not own slaves" serve as support for non-racial or post-racial thinking as the notions ignore current policies that maintain White supremacy (Bonilla-Silva, 2006, p. 77). Color blindness denies racialized experiences of people of color, the existence of the privilege Whites experience, makes invisible structural inequalities, and sustains social hierarchies by providing explanations of innocence.

Gordon (2005) examined various strategies that she used in her own fieldwork data of the North Carolina A+ Schools Program. In her paper she shared ways that she and others maneuver around race-talk to protect White privilege. She identified five logics or strategies that masked power differences that exist because of skin color: colorblindness, selective attribution, avoidance, containment, and Whitewashing. In her research she found that she utilized one or all of these tactics to distance herself from White privilege. For Gordon, Whiteness became more present in her strategies to avoid dialogue or analysis with race in a prominent position.

According to Sue, color blindness furthers several myths about racial realities. First, statements like "we are all the same under the skin" espouses a race-neutral society that is aspirational and the strategy, though well intentioned, minimizes injustices that are a present reality. Second, color blindness perpetuates the myth that people are all the same. In other

words, color blindness, by stressing our biological commonalities, diminishes society's differential treatment of people from different races. Because race-talk threatens White's notion of innocence in racism, color blindness is used to hide racial realities. As a result, Sue says that poor or no race-talk results in a tense, social climate in which people of color and White people prefer not to discuss race with each other. Some researchers

Diverging Perceptions of Race-Talk

Similar to results about diverging perceptions on campus racial climate, people of color and White people think differently about what happens in race-talk. In four studies, (Sue et al., 2009; Sue et al., 2010, 2011; Sue, Torino, et al., 2009) conducted four focus groups with students of color, White students, faculty of color, and White faculty. People of color in the focus groups reported that during race-talk, they had to manage their emotions and often decide how safe it was for them to open up about their experiences with race. Although White people were more often in control of the race conversation, they did not perceive they had power in racial dialogue. White people reported feeling afraid of being seen as racist and often felt unequipped to navigate race conversations. In turn, White people reported that they tended to often be more silent on the subject of race.

People of color in the focus groups perceived White's silence as a form of power. The researchers argue that silence allows White people to believe their own racial innocence. White people can be silent or superficial in race-talk because race is not an intimate part of who they are. The researchers argue that the racial identities of people of color are more salient to them, because of the negative consequences of those racial identities, and therefore more willing to talk about race. Thus, the challenges in race-talk maintain a dominant and subordinate narrative. Sue (2013) argues that a dominant, White, narrative in America

depicts racial progress, a fair and just society, equal opportunity, color-blindness, and the myth of meritocracy – the misbelief that inequity in society does not affect upward social mobility. Young (2013) showed that dominant cultures at Christian colleges, demonstrated in spiritual, academic, and racial experience, made students of color feel isolated and unwelcome. However, given the paucity of research on the beliefs of people within Christian colleges about race, research about how White evangelicals' talk about race serves as an important backdrop of how people in Christian colleges may think about race.

Race-Talk Among White Evangelicals

In a seminal comprehensive, qualitative study, Emerson and Smith (2000) document the prevalent beliefs about race of evangelical Christians in the United States. The purpose of the study is to explore how a system of beliefs held by evangelicals reinforce rather than reduce racism. Even though unequal outcomes across American society are well-documented, White evangelicals primarily view racial division as an individual problem instead of a structural one. Emerson and Smith conducted more than 2,000 phone surveys and 200 face-to-face interviews with evangelicals in 23 states. Though they interviewed people of a variety of races, Emerson and Smith primarily focused their analysis on the views of White evangelicals. They concluded that White evangelicals preserve racial inequalities and systematic oppression of people of color, not through active racism, but through embedded religious ideologies. White participants resisted notions of systems of oppression and refuted the existence of systems of advantage based on race. In the findings, the researchers identified three, what they called, "cultural tools" that White Christians use to form their attitudes on race: "accountable freewill individualism, relationism, and antistructuralism" (p. 76). Emerson and Smith also found that when White evangelicals spent

more time with people of color, they were less likely to uphold the above-mentioned belief system.

Individualism

Emerson and Smith (2000) found that White evangelicals were more likely to attribute racial conflict to individuals than to social problems. *Individualism* is rooted in the belief that "individuals exist independent of structures and institutions, have freewill, and are individually accountable for their own actions" (p. 76). Through this lens, White evangelicals attribute racism to White individuals who behave poorly and act out in racist ways toward people of color. Emerson and Smith argue that evangelicals are reluctant to explain race issues in structural terms. This does not mean that White evangelicals do not see disparity, for example in economic outcomes. Based on this research, Evangelicals however do not see economic inequalities as part of a race issue. Instead, evangelicals attribute economic disparity to the effort and hard work of individuals. According to Emerson and Smith, for evangelicals, race issues are a result of an overemphasis on groups. One participant responded to a question about who is responsible for race issues this way: "Yeah, it [systemic racism] groups 'em [African Americans] and now you gotta think of 'em as a group and judge them as a group instead of individually. I prefer looking at individuals" (p. 75). In turn, the authors say, White Christians are reluctant to support structural solutions to racial problems. Instead, Emerson and Smith said that White Christians are more likely to offer individual solutions to racial conflict, such as getting to know one's neighbor of a different racial or ethnic group. They conclude that White evangelicals use individualism to benignly explain and interpret racial conflict.

In another study, Ash et al., (2017b) studied the narratives of eight White administrators that were active in antiracism advocacy at Christian colleges. The participants reported that as they attempted to participate in antiracism advocacy, they experienced considerable resistance from their peers. Colleagues referenced speaking against racist practices as reason to question participants' commitment to their faith. The researchers initially thought their participants were interested in antiracist advocacy because of its impact on increased enrollment but found instead that participants pointed to their Christian faith as the motivation to make change in their institutions. The researchers concluded that White evangelicals at these institutions tended to understand racism as an individual rather than a systemic issue, and the researchers argue that Christian evangelicalism has an adverse relationship with racial justice, based in large part on a belief system that does not recognize systems of oppression. Ash et al., (2017b) suggest that White evangelicals utilize theologically informed individualism to fight against antiracism.

Relationism

Grounded in their findings Emerson and Smith (2000) argue that White evangelicals tend to believe racial conflict is perpetuated by ethnic/minority groups, the government, and political liberals who argue that systems of oppression exist. Instead, White evangelicals attribute racial conflict to poor interpersonal relationships. In the evangelical belief system, a relationship with God is central. The authors describe how for the evangelical, relationism originates from the notion that all humanity is immoral and that deliverance from immorality can only come through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It is a nonnegotiable belief and a tool that White evangelicals heavily utilize to resolve conflict. So, for White evangelicals, if people are unreconciled to God then they have improper interpersonal

relationships and make bad choices which result in racial conflict. When asked about race, White evangelical participants responded: "Its human nature to be a sinner," "We don't have a race problem, we have a sin problem," and "We don't love our neighbor as ourselves" as rationale for the existence of racism (Emerson & Smith, 2000, p. 78). Built on the cultural tool of individualism, viewing race issues through relationism, one ignores that discriminating perspectives and poor relationships are a result of social systems, such as laws, institutional policies and practices, or segregation. Emerson and Smith contend that White evangelicals assess racial issues as resulting from both individualism and imperfect personal relationships and, the authors argue, the social isolation of White evangelicals from people of color helps to reinforce the entrenchment of racialized systems.

Anti-structuralism

The final cultural tool offered by Emerson and Smith (2000) is *anti-structuralism*. Through their research, they describe the patterns that White evangelicals use to refute structural explanations for racial inequality. Essentially, non-White people make racial conflict an issue when it does not exist. Participants argue that social programs (e.g., welfare, food stamps, health care) cause reverse discrimination and individual Whites would not have a problem with individual Blacks if it were not for the benefits that Blacks receive. One of the questions on the survey asked "On average Blacks have worse jobs, income, and housing than white people (p. 94). Options of the multiple-choice question included lack of motivation, lack of educational opportunity, and discrimination. Among the White evangelicals 62% cited lack of motivation, compared to Black respondents of whom only 31% cited lack of motivation. In the 200 plus interviews, the researchers asked an open-ended form of the same question and found that most White evangelicals most often rejected

structural explanations of inequality. In the authors' estimation White evangelicals believe that structures, like the government, exist but only to threaten individualism. In the eyes of White evangelicals, Black people are "relationally dysfunctional, and sin...by relying on programs rather than themselves" (p. 102).

Though the study was primarily about perspectives of White evangelicals, Emerson and Smith compared White responses to those of people of color. People of color in the study saw race issues as complex, involving both actions of individuals and the larger society. For example, one African American participant was asked what he thought was the problem with racial issues. He answered, "It is not individual people, but Satan warping systems and people to harm one another" (p. 85). The divergent assessments of racial issues contribute to the lack of clarity in understanding the core of racism.

In one of the final chapters the authors examine the role of homogeneity in church congregations in the U.S. Emerson and Smith discuss two issues related to organized religion. First, they propose that homogenous White, Christian groups tend to be biased in their view of "ingroup" and "outgroup" members (p. 156). They argue that White people tend to overstate the similarities of ingroup members and differences between the ingroup and outgroup. They also argue that ingroup members tend assess themselves or those like them more positively and outgroup members more negatively. Finally, they contend that White people attribute positive behavior of ingroup members to internal attributes like intelligence, and negative behavior to external causes like poor behavior. Conversely, people who ascribe positive behavior of outgroup members to external causes like luck, and negative behaviors to internal attributes like lack of intelligence. Second, they argue that because people have so many churches from which to choose clergy cannot challenge congregations in racial issues.

Leaders are not likely to speak out because their congregants do not ask this of them. With the recent rise of civil rights discourse (Princeton University, 2019) more people may be asking institutions to answer to racism. The values that White evangelicals hold, as Emerson and Smith (2000) describe, may exist in Christian colleges and may contribute to the persistence of racism. What is unclear is how White evangelicals talk about race within their colleges impacts the climates of race within their institutions.

Not all researchers agree with Emerson and Smith (2000) about the degree to which theological beliefs influence the behavior of evangelical Christians, particularly in their social interactions with people of color. In a subsequent study Tranby and Hartmann (2008) intended to reexamine Emerson and Smith's (2000) data through a critical lens by comparing data from Emerson and Smith's study to data that included White responses outside of evangelicalism. Tranby and Hartmann stated that their purpose was to show that evangelical attitudes are not just well-intentioned but more deeply racialized because (1) they are a result of anti-blackness and (2) but that American individualism provides a way of discourse that normalizes cultural practices that maintain racial inequity in America. First Tranby and Hartman reexamine Emerson and Smith's data and then compare data from the American Mosaic Project (AMP). AMP is a multiyear research project gathering data on attitudes about politics and race in American culture. For this study Tranby and Hartman use data from a telephone survey (N = 2,081) conducted by the University of Wisconsin Survey Center.

Although Tranby and Hartman agree that Emerson and Smith (2000), by focusing on "tensions within evangelical discourse," have "opened the way to a... more profound critique" of racial tension in America, claim that what Emerson and Smith identified in cultural tools is not exclusively religious. Instead, they argue individualism, relationism, and

anti-structuralism are "at the heart of American (mis)understandings of race and racial inequalities" (p. 345). In other words, the participants in E&S's research responded as they did because of the influences of secular, rather than religious, beliefs. Tranby and Hartmann contend that a common national culture is important to White evangelicals and also that participants in Emerson and Smith's original study tend to reject racial categories because such categories destabilize the norms that construct White culture. In this analysis, Tranby and Hartman concluded that White protestants are less likely to believe that laws and institutions work against Blacks and that discrimination contributes to White advantage. Thus, Tranby and Hartmann conclude that White evangelicals' ideas about race are supported by commonly held stereotypes instead of theological beliefs. These conclusions align with those of other scholars, such as Tatum (1997), that Whites are more individualistic and less structural in explanations of racial inequality. Moving beyond the disagreement about the relative influence of theology or widely-accepted cultural norms, this body of scholarship can be taken as a whole to foreground the notion that core embedded belief systems are dominant conceptions that shape race and racial inequity in the United States. What remains unclear is how conceptions of race – not just by Whites, but by people of all races – shape campus culture in Christian colleges.

In another study, Modica (2012) wanted to examine to what extent a theological belief system proposed by Emerson and Smith (2000) impacted students' individualistic notions of race. Modica analyzed Blackboard responses to questions about race in her education classes at a denominational college in the northeastern United States. For some of the White students in the study, students reported that they did not talk about race as they grew up. For example, one responded this way: "I went to a Christian school, so we didn't

talk about race, since it was a public setting" (p. 40). Modica also found that many White participants adopted what she and other scholars term a *post-racial* (Bonilla-Silva, 2006) ideology, wherein White people express that all people are the same and that skin color is disregarded. Participants responded with statements such as "My parents taught me that God loves us no matter what;" and "There is only one race, the human race" (p. 40). These statements represent what scholars refer to as *colorblind racial attitude* (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Sue, 2015; Tatum, 1997).

Modica's (2012) students' constructions of race were consistent with those of peers from secular institutions (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). However, some of the students in Modica's study who espoused individualistic, anti-structural thinking, also reported that their religious beliefs pushed them to resist racism. Though she demonstrated similarities between students of religious institutions and the broader American society, she did not explore the role that theology, relative to social/cultural norms, influences how people think about race. In order to compare the two, Modica references both Emerson and Smith (2000) and Tranby and Hartmann (2008), but fails to explore the cultural language that may exist because of a particular theological belief system that influences race talk. The contradiction between antistructural thinking and a simultaneous resistance to racism highlights the existing tension between understanding how faith lenses influence race construction and how White evangelical students talk and think about race.

The research on White evangelical perspectives on race creates a compelling rationale for understanding how those on a Christian college campus conceptualize, talk about, and experience race. Further, a gap exists in the literature at the intersection between White evangelicals' perspectives on race in the United States and how those perspectives shape

Christian colleges. Emerson and Smith (2000) argue that although White evangelicals do not want racial inequality, they use cultural tools that perpetuate individual and structural inequalities inhibiting efforts to reconstruct an equitable system. Researchers need to examine more closely the embedded ideologies that may be present in Christian colleges and if or how that thought and discourse influence campus racial climate. For these reasons, it is increasingly important to investigate how race-talk shapes the experiences and expectations of students and other members of the campus community whose backgrounds reflect different race groups.

Summary of Literature Review

The research on race in higher education, including Christian colleges, shows that White students and students of color have different perceptions of the climate of their campuses. One factor that seems relevant is how people in an institution talk about and experience race. White evangelical attitudes toward race provide a lens at which to view the landscape of CCCU institutions and how both dominant and subordinate cultures exist in an institution. Although White evangelicals may share similar theological beliefs, challenges exist in how to understand racial identity and the racialized experience of people of color in Christian college environments. Though Emerson and Smith (2000) did not conduct their research in a college context, examples like the stories of Lawrence Ware and the Southern Baptist Convention's response tell us that one prominent evangelical denomination is dealing with racial identity as an element of spiritual community. We may assume the same about Christian colleges. The research about evangelical attitudes toward racism, though limited, creates uncertainty about how unequal racial systems persist at Christian colleges.

Race is central to the way in which people in the United States organize the social order and the fact that people of different racial identities and groups experience race in different ways (Johnson, 2018). In higher education, people have divergent experiences along racial lines as people of color report more negative experiences with campus racial climate than do whites (Hurtado, 2012; Jacoby, 2015;). Research within Christian higher education yields similar results in that people of color report negative perceptions of campus racial climate, isolation, and negative stereotypes (Kim, 2016; Parades-Collins, 2014). The few studies conducted at Christian colleges show that students of color have more negative views of campus racial climate and experience lower levels of sense of belonging on their campuses. These two phenomena are closely related to one another, according to empirical research conducted on campuses of all types. Additionally, the gap in the literature relates to the intersection of race and evangelical perspectives at CCCU institutions. Therefore, exploring the relationship between race-talk and perceptions of campus racial is needed in higher education research.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This dissertation explores the sociocultural aspects of race at a Christian college in the United States. In the study, I constructed a single-case study of a bounded system, or focus and extent of the research (Stake, 1995): one specific institution and the members of that institution. Data was collected to represent multiple perspectives that make up the context of this particular institution: interviews with students, faculty, and staff; observations; and documents and artifacts reflecting how a Christian college talks about race (Creswell, 2014; Stake, 1995, 2005, 2010).

Qualitative methodology offers methodological procedures tied to particular epistemologies and designs linked to this study. Therefore, I organize this chapter with the broad principles of qualitative inquiry in mind. In this chapter, I first address the rationale for using qualitative inquiry, followed by a discussion about the research paradigm, then bring attention to the philosophical considerations that undergird the methodological choices. The chapter describes the case study approach (Stake, 1995), followed by an outline of the research design and associated elements of the study, including a description of the case's site and participants, the questions that guide the study, and data gathering techniques. The chapter next includes a discussion of the plan for analysis and interpretation, the researcher's role in case study research, triangulation, and the write up of the case study report. Finally, the chapter concludes with ethical considerations, and limitations of the study. Overall, this chapter details the processes and philosophical choices made for research about race at a Christian college.

Qualitative Inquiry

The purpose of the qualitative research approach is to explore and understand "the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (Creswell, 2014, p. 4). For this dissertation, I employed a constructionist epistemological stance and an interpretivist theoretical position. Researchers argue that in constructionism meaning is "constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting" (Crotty, 1998, p. 43). Thus, constructionism is the view that knowledge is contingent on human interaction with other humans and the world in a social context (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Crotty, 1998). From a constructionist perspective, researchers do not discover knowledge, rather they gather, interpret, and construct knowledge.

Researchers hold that the interpretivist theoretical perspective is that humans construct and negotiate reality with cultures and within relationships to other people (Crotty, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Where positivists' aim in research is to explain and predict, interpretivists' goal is to understand. Interpretivists look for meaning that is bound by time, context, and culture (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Researchers utilize qualitative methods to present a "complex" and "holistic" picture of the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2014, p. 186). People of color continue to experience racism in their college communities. What the community does to understand that problem, how it talks about race, may be related to how people of color feel at their institutions. Further, there may be some embedded sociocultural aspects of race at Christian colleges that reveal how members of a dominant racial group maintain unwelcoming environments for people of color. People construct the meaning of race bound in all of their historical, cultural, and political experiences, including the ways race is present and absent in language (Sue, 2015). I aimed to explore the sociocultural aspects of race at a Christian college through an approach requiring the researcher's interaction with people bound in the Christian college's social/historical context; because researcher's meaning making should happen in the interaction with people, qualitative methods of inquiry were appropriate. In addition, this study proceeded from the understanding that *race* is a socially constructed concept, meaning that our culture, our experiences, our learning, and our context shapes our understanding of race (Hurtado et al., 1998; Sue, 2015).

Race identity can be both an individual characteristic and a group characteristic. Race is salient to how people experience the world because of its profound structural, cultural, institutional, historical, political, social, and economic history. From the perspective of

constructionism, one interacts with others as they respond through their historical and social lenses. Race can have positive and negative effects simultaneously. Race is fluid, relational, and dynamic. For most of United States history, race has been used to disenfranchise non-White groups. Race does have individual meaning and contributes to one's self-identity, but race is a socially constructed identity, designed and created by a dominant group (Tatum, 2000). It is socially constructed in that no biological factors contribute to the actual attributes associated with a particular race. An individual who identifies as Black in her community may feel proud of her identity (Oliver et al., 2017), but in a different context, she may be seen as a part of a group being treated and made to feel inferior because she is not White. Race is not simply an individual process through which someone comes to be known (Smith, 2015); rather, race is shaped by structural, cultural, institutional, social, and political factors. These factors are known in a particular place and time.

There is a continuing need to explore campus racial climate in context, and even fewer researchers have used qualitative methods to study campus racial climate at Christian colleges. Because of the nature of the inquiry, in order to understand the context, as well as participants' perspectives and descriptions of the setting make qualitative methods appropriate for the research. Rather than to discover a new, independent reality, the purpose of research is to construct a clearer reality first among those in the setting, then negotiated between the researched and the researcher (Stake, 1995). Through case study methodology, I constructed a holistic description of how one Christian college talked about race.

Research Design

Case study research facilitates the investigation of an issue in its context, gathering data from a variety of sources that include conducting interviews, making observations, and

collecting documents and artifacts to allow for exploration through a variety of lenses and units of analysis "bounded by time and activity" with flexibility and many data sources (Creswell, 2014, p. 14). Case study is the best method for this study because it aims to closely examine a unit of analysis such as a community, a group, an organization, individuals, a problem, or processes from a holistic perspective and then to describe the place for the reader by representing the data that is collected, understanding the data, and then representing it for the reader to interpret (Stake, 1995, 2005). The research is thus oriented to report an explanation of behavior through observation (etic), and a reflection of how people perceive, explain, categorize, and interpret their world (emic) (Stake, 1995). A feature characteristic of case study research is determining the boundaries of the case as the unit of analysis. Stake's (1995) view is that a case is "a specific, a complex, functioning thing" (p. 2). To prevent the study from an "explosion" of objectives, binding the case is necessary; but, Stake warns, binding it too tightly could prevent the researcher from the ability to collect data that will help understand the complexities of the case. The purpose and research questions help narrow the focus of the study.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to explore how members of a Christian colleges, associated with a formal process of reviewing racism on campus talk about race.

Research Questions

The exploration of race-talk was shaped by the following research questions:

1. How do members involved in a formal process to review racism on a Christian College campus talk about race?

Sub Questions:

2. How do students, staff, faculty, and administrators describe their participation in a review of racism on campus?

3. How do patterns of race-talk exhibited by constituent groups (students, staff, faculty, and administrators) reflect the campus racial climate of a university community?

4. What religiously-embedded forms of race-talk do members of a Christian college use during a review of racism on campus?

According to Baxter and Jack (2008) researchers should use case studies when the focus of the study is answering how and why questions; behavior cannot be manipulated; the context is relevant to the study; and the context and issue do not have clear boundaries between them. One way to describe context is a straightforward description of what the place looks like - the physical, the sociological aspects of a context. However, a purpose of case study research is to make evident what it feels like to be in a particular context. The purpose is also to go beyond just the setting and to explore a phenomenon in depth and detail with clear parameters. Therefore, in this study, developed a holistic description of the case - the issues and its context. The next section describes the context of the phenomenon in this study.

Sample

The interaction between the people, the issue of race, and its context exists in a particular location and with particular issues. Studying one Christian college narrowed the focus of the study. Stake (1995) emphasizes a methodological choice: “We do not study a

case primarily to understand other cases. Our first obligation is to understand this one case" (p. 4). The purpose of case study research is to maximize what one can learn. Studying race at a Christian college binds the study to a particular setting, and thereby narrows the focus. Stake (2010) proposes that researchers "take a single case to study, a case unique in some respects, and emphasize the nature of that particular case" (p. 19). To narrow the focus of the research to a particular issue, I examined race-talk at a Christian college as the college engaged in a formal review process of racism on campus. Both the setting and the context of the phenomenon are described below.

Setting

The focus of this dissertation was one private, four-year, Christian university: Southwest Christian University (pseudonym). Located in the Southwest region of the United States, in a highly residential area, Southwest Christian University (SCU) is a private, church-affiliated Christian university. The university has an enrollment of about 4,000 students in over 40 bachelors and graduate degree programs. SCU is a member of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) and is rooted in a Baptist tradition. SCU is a residential campus with 59% of its students living on campus and its student-faculty ratio is 18 to 1. In the Fall 2019 term, 53% of its students identified as White, 22 % of its students as Hispanics of any race, and 14% as Black or African American. Additionally, in 2018, for the first time in its history, 51% of SCU's first-time freshmen cohort consisted of domestic students of color.

The institution sits in a predominantly White town that is the county seat to several medium-size cities. In the spring and summer of 2020, the county judge facilitated an open forum to discuss a confederate statue that sits on the lawn of the county courthouse. SCU's

president spoke at the forum and offered to pay to have the statue removed from the site to another location. SCU does not have an office in the academic or student affairs areas dedicated to diversity and inclusion. There is not a chief diversity officer nor is there a multicultural office. In a search on its website, the Black Student Association and the Hispanic Student Association are two student organizations that represent students of color.

Context

After the killing of George Floyd in March of 2020, students, faculty, staff, and alumni called on colleges to address racism on their campuses, many of them using their online presence to ask colleges to respond. Christian colleges were among many to respond with statements of affirmation that Black and Brown lives matter and with promises to address racial justice on their campuses. George Fox University, in Oregon, announced its plans to improve police engagement and diversify its board of trustees. Two Black staff members at Calvin College, a Christian college in Michigan, wrote an open letter to administrators that their faculty, staff, and students of color were hurting, tired, and angry; and that silence from the university meant they were complicit in continuing racial injustices (Post & Banks, 2020). Student leaders at Gordon College, north of Boston, asked their administrators to make curriculum changes that would emphasize Black voices in the coursework. Gordon's administration responded with some changes, one of which included a newly required Black history course. Though Gordon's student composition has recently grown to be more racially diverse, its faculty and staff are still overwhelmingly White. People of color fear that their collaboration and dialogue with White folks at Christian colleges results in "inertia" (Post & Banks, 2020, p. 1). Self-examination, in response for greater inclusion and racial justice, is unclear throughout CCCU institutions.

In the summer of 2020, SCU administrators publicly announced a plan to study racism on its campus. The executive team hired a consulting firm specializing in racial reconciliation for Christian organizations to guide the review and follow the review with recommendations. In collaboration with the consulting firm, the executive team decided on several steps. First, In the Fall of 2020 the executive team delivered a climate survey to students, faculty, and staff related to racial issues. Second, the consulting firm conducted race-specific focus group interviews with four to five students each that identified as Black, Hispanic, Mixed-race, and White. Last, the firm conducted focus group interviews with race-specific faculty and staff. I do not know the racial composition of the faculty and staff focus groups. After the consulting firm compiled all of the data from their review, they presented a report to the executive leadership team. The executive team formed a special faculty and staff committee to dialogue about the consulting group's report and develop recommendations for the administration. Though the complete criteria for selection of the committee was unclear, SCU leadership selected people with the goal of making a racially diverse faculty, staff, and administrator committee. Through these steps, SCU participated in a formal process to explore racism on campus. SCU is an example of an organization trying to understand and deal with race problems on its campus in a public and formal way, not seen at other CCCU institutions at this time, prompting the appropriateness of studying race-talk in this context. I began gathering data at SCU by observing race-talk in the special committee, interviewing participants from the focus groups about how they describe the process, and through the draft and final documents that the special committee produced.

Using convenience sampling (Patton, 2015), I identified an institution with which I had access and one that was formally engaged in dialogues about race on campus. Standards

for case study research recommend choosing a case based, in part, on the opportunity to maximize the researcher's time engaging within the boundaries of that case; taking this approach may mean choosing the case within which the researcher has the most access to participants, documents and artifacts, and opportunities for participant observation (Stake, 2005). In this way, researchers conducting case study research can draw productively from ethnographic approaches. Rhoads (1995) similarly argues, "in conducting cultural research the ethnographer lives and works in the community for six months to a year" (p. 311). For almost 15 years I have been employed at several small, private, religious institutions working with students, faculty, and administrators at varying levels. I have had the opportunity in various settings to work with low-, mid-, and high-level administrators, undergraduate and graduate students, and faculty. Those experiences and relationships allowed me to immediately participate as a community member. SCU was chosen because I could "maximize" what can be learned and worked well as a "typical" case (Stake, 1995, p. 4), in that I had access to SCU at a time when the administrators at the university were formally beginning the process of talking about racism on campus.

I utilized purposeful sampling to identify potential interview participants who took part in the students and faculty/staff focus groups and the faculty/staff committee that represented a variety of the racial diversity at SCU (Patton, 2015). Because the purpose of this study was to study race-talk by members of a Christian college engaged in a formal process of talking about race, I selected participants from the groups mentioned above.

Data Collection

Stake (2010) explains that "naturalistic observation" is the primary mode of gathering data. However, when researchers cannot see for themselves, they ask others who have seen. Researchers search for the documents,

> but they favor a personal capture of the experience, so they can interpret it, recognize its contexts, puzzle the many meanings even while still there, and pass along an experiential, naturalistic account so that readers can participate in some of the same reflection (Stake, 2010, p. 32).

Therefore, case study researchers utilize multiple sources of data, in order to gain a holistic understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Stake, 1995). Guided by the research questions, race-talk (Emerson & Smith, 2000; Sue, 2015) and campus racial climate (Hurtado et al., 1998) served as entry points for understanding the race phenomenon on campus and served as heuristic devices that guided design decisions in gathering data, deciding on the parameters of the case, analyzing, and representing it. The data collection included observations, interviews, documents and artifacts, and a research journal kept during the project (Creswell, 2014). The next sections will first outline a framework that defines the dimensions of campus I explored and then describe data gathering techniques I used.

Campus Racial Climate

Stake (1995) directs that researchers can use a theoretical framework to guide the study, but warns that a rigid adherence to the framework may limit the inductive approach that is characteristic of qualitative case study research. He recommends a flexible design. Thus, I drew on Hurtado et al.'s (1997, 1998) framework of campus racial climate to orient the issues of race, but remained open to other elements that emerged, in this case theories of change. The CRC framework focuses on four dimensions of inquiry:

Hurtado and colleagues (1998, etc.) identify four dimensions of campus climate:

1. compositional diversity - the demographic distribution of a population by race;
2. behavior(s) within the campus community - the quantity and quality of cross-race and intra-race interactions;
3. individual and organizational psychology - the perceptions of racial conflict, racial tension, racial discrimination, and institutional efforts to promote diversity; and
4. legacy of inclusion/exclusion - the embedded practices, policies, and procedures of segregation.

Together, the dimensions of CRC produce defined areas of exploration for understanding the context of the case.

Compositional Diversity

Compositional diversity addresses the institutional demographic data at SCU. Christian colleges are predominantly White. Many Christian colleges are 70% White students or above (NCES, 2019). The composition of students at SCU is 53% White and 47% students of color. The largest groups of color are Hispanic students and Black students. In addition to describing the demographic data, the study explored participant's perceptions of the demographic make-up of SCU and how participants feel about their perceptions.

Behavior Within the Campus Community

The behavioral dimension of the study focuses on the social interactions among individuals and groups. Through observations, I observed race-talk in the formal settings designed to dialogue about racism on campus. I looked for how members of the committee interacted with each other and through interviews how they describe their interactions with

each other. I used interview questions and collected and analyzed other data in order to gain an understanding of the behavioral dimension where I could not observe.

Individual and Organizational Psychology

This dimension helped the study focus on the environment of SCU. The individual and organizational psychology dimension focuses the study on the perceptions of racial conflict, discrimination, bias, beliefs about inequality, and how racial attitudes differ between races. It also involved gathering data about individual's views of institutional responses to diversity.

Legacy of Inclusion/Exclusion Dimension

In this dimension, I looked for artifacts, documents, and stories that reflect the history of the institution as they relate to attitudes of non-people of color, race-related polices, and the components of how race manifests within the campus community. In case study research as in all qualitative inquiry, context is a central part of making a phenomenon understandable (Stake, 2006). Exploring the legacy of inclusion/exclusion for individuals and SCU was important in establishing the aspects of race in the sociocultural context of SCU.

Observations

Observations work to help researchers increase their understanding of the case (Stake, 1995) by letting the occasion of observation tell the story about an issue. In observation, a researcher can only look at a few aspects, so choices about observation must be made pertinent to the issues. Two issues drove observation in this study. First, as discussed above, the purpose of case study research is to describe what it is like to be in a particular setting, to

give the reader a "sense of being there" (Stake, 1995, p. 63). Observations were conducted in formal and social environments to observe how people of different races gathered, talked, organized themselves as interaction naturally occurred. The second issue is focused on observation pertinent to the issue (Stake, 1995). In this study, dialogue about race as a formal response to addressing racism on campus narrowed the case. In the Spring of 2020, SCU administrators appointed a special committee of faculty and staff to discuss recommendations from a self-study project. After IRB approval from both OSU and the research site, through nine months of observation, in the Spring, Summer, and Fall 2020 semesters, I observed the dialogue of the committee. For both issues, I utilized Emerson et al.'s (2011) model of writing fieldnotes to record the observation data.

Interviews

Where I could not observe, the individual interview allowed participants to voice a perspective that might be in the minority especially given the highly personal, and sometimes controversial, nature of perspectives about race. The unit of analysis were members of the university participating in the formal process of addressing racism on campus. In order to gather data about the university, and after OSU and research site IRB approval, I interviewed individual members of the university that participated in focus groups and were members of the committee. Individual interviews were conducted with each participant. I selected nine participants: four members from the faculty and staff committee, one Latina woman, one Black woman, one Black man, and one White man, all who had also participated in focus groups prior to the start of this study. I selected one student from each of the five student focus groups, one White male, one White female, one Asian female, one Hispanic male, and one Black female.

After interview participants were identified, I contacted them through email (Appendix A) to schedule an interview time. All participants were asked to review and sign a consent form at the time of their interview. Each participant was given an opportunity to select a pseudonym or one was selected for them. In addition, I omitted any identifying information in the transcripts. These processes protected the participants' identities and minimized the risk of jeopardizing participants' roles at SCU (Creswell, 2014). I recorded and transcribed each interview verbatim. Additionally, I provided a transcription to each participant to member-check (Creswell, 2014; Stake, 1995) for accuracy and meaning.

Semi-structured interviews with participants ranged from 50 to 90 minutes. The interviews focused on how participants perceived that race-talk was discussed at SCU. As I sat down with each interviewee I asked demographic questions to begin that included gender, degree (level or seeking), years at institutions, and race. Collecting this information helped maximize the variety of participants. I then proceeded with questions about racial experiences at SCU, turned to perceptions of campus racial climate and their experiences with talking about race through the campus self-evaluation. Follow-up questions probed for specific examples about what went well in the groups, what worked in the conversations, what did not work, and why particular events happened in the group. I used a semi-structured interview guide with suggestions for follow up questions to direct the interview (Appendix B). Questions about the participants' perspectives related to race-talk and campus racial climate produced helpful insights in identifying patterns, tension, and unique insights in the data.

Field Notes

The purpose of this part of the observation was to gather detailed description of the setting, the people, and the social patterns. During and after the observations, I wrote down in a systematic way what I learned and experienced from observation. In a notebook, during observation, I wrote down jottings (Emerson et al., 2011) about what I saw, heard, and what others said. Jottings are quick notes that make quick reference to key words or phrases to jog the memory of researchers when they write descriptions after an observation is over. Goals of the field notes were to record what was said, giving special attention to indigenous concerns and meanings instead of my own interpretations of people's motives and to the interactions of people and the social environment in detail (Emerson, et al., 2011). After each observation episode, I spent time writing a more descriptive account of what I observed based on the field notes. I used the following guide for the initial field note descriptions.

- What are people doing? What are they trying to accomplish?
- How do they do this? What specific means or strategies do they use?
- How do members talk about, characterize, and understand what is going on?
- What assumptions are they making?
- What do I see going on here? What do I learn from these notes?
- Why did I include them? (Emerson, 2011, p. 21).

The observation write-ups then become data for analysis and interpretation at a later time.

Documents and Artifacts

Baxter and Jack (2008) recommend gathering "documentation, archival records, interviews, physical artifacts, direct observations, and participant-observation" providing the researcher opportunities to identify common and unique patterns about a case (p. 554). Thus, I looked at documents produced by SCU to promote the university, public displays which

communicated the work that faculty and students were doing in departments, historical markers and signs, meeting minutes from committees, communication about the current process of evaluating racism on campus, and any other materials which might provide information about how race was imagined and discussed, whether overt or covert. These data sources provided context about how the university communicates about race; about what is important to the institution, and how those shaped the conversation of race on campus.

Research Journal

The nature of being a researcher is the separation of the researcher and the researched. Emerson et al. (2011) argue that the moment researchers begin collecting data they become separate from the researcher. Tension lies in the balance among gathering, developing, and interpreting the data. Indigenous (emic) meanings are still filtered through the understanding of the researcher. Participants' own words help the reader see how the researcher may have arrived at certain understandings, but the researcher still has a choice about what to present. Gathering data is fundamentally an interpretive process (Emerson et al., 2011; Stake, 1995).

I began a journal when I started this project and maintained it through the process (Creswell, 2014). The discipline of recording field notes, and research memos in the journal facilitated the creation of an audit trail of research decisions and courses of action (Stage & Manning, 2003). Additionally, the journal was a space for reflection for me to separate my experience from the experience of the members of the community. These entries involved the research directly and my experiences outside of the research that came to light because of the research. For example, observation at the grocery store is out of the bounds of the study because it does not fit in the research context. However, what I see or experience on a

Saturday morning at the local market may have impacted how I thought about and interpreted the data I collected. In sum, the journal was a tool for organizing thoughts and processes, but also for introspection, self-questioning, and self-understanding. Making entries helped me remember social, political, historical, and positional origins of my own perspective (Patton, 2015).

Data Management

I stored the observation notes, interview transcripts, summaries, documents, and artifacts in electronic document files in a password protected account. Only my doctoral advisor, OSU IRB (if requested), and I, as the primary researcher, had access to the data. The verbatim transcripts were kept in electronic document files in a password protected account in their original form. Paper documents were stored in file folders and then copies scanned and categorized in electronic folders. Field notes, observations, and research memos were documented in a bound journal along with personal reflections during the research process.

Analysis, Interpretation, and the Report

Stake (1995) asserts that researchers are the instruments in making interpretation. They play a subjective role in observing the contexts, the actions, or the phenomena. To find meaning in the data researchers find the patterns that exist. There may be times "when we find significant meaning in a single instance, but usually the important meanings will come from reappearance over and over" (p. 78). Stake (1995) points to two strategies researchers should utilize: (1) "categorical aggregation," organizing the data into categories to make the search for meaning manageable; and (2) "direct interpretation," through which researchers reach new meanings of the individual instances (p. 74). Stake argues that the ultimate purpose of case study research is to understand the case by watching it closely as one can and

by thinking as deeply as one can. The search for meaning is a search for repetition or consistency in behavior. Often, Stake argues, researchers will know patterns in advance, formed from the research questions, but sometimes patterns will emerge from emic issues. In Stake's (1995) flexible, emergent design, the researcher develops an inductive analysis process that unfolds from the unique data and setting of the case. A plan for analysis promotes accuracy and can organize what otherwise may be overwhelming. A plan also promotes trustworthiness in the findings. Sue's (2015) concepts of race-talk served as a foreground to understand what race-talk is about. I used a deductive analytical stance while being inductively open to other elements that emerged.

Race-talk

Sue (2015) examines 10 years of research about why race-talk is so difficult. Three concepts in Sue's work contextualize the issues that appeared in the data.

1. The characteristics of race-talk - the ways in which race-talk is deflected or denied in dialogue;
2. The ground rules of race-talk - the ways in which color blindness and other strategies are utilized that are barriers to productive race-talk; and
3. The different ways in which Whites and people of color talk about race, including the fears and anxieties that Whites and people of color feel when talking about race with one another.

Applying the conceptual tools was done without imposing a structure that limits the analysis.

Looking through the episodes of data, I searched for a sense of consistency within and between episodes. In case study research, data from multiple sources are not typically analyzed individually, but are a part of the whole analysis process. They can be used to see

where data diverge, to disprove a particular issue, but they are not taken separately from understanding the case (Stake, 1995). Patton (2015) presents three steps to moving from data collection to the case report. The first step is to assemble the raw data accumulated through the data collection process. This data included all of the information gathered about the participants and the context of the Christian college. The second step is to condense the raw data into a case record. This was done through identifying patterns and meanings that appeared repeatedly in the data. The patterns were organized by issue for further analysis.

The final step was to report the case. The case report was compiled and represented in a final report shaped to make the case comprehensible. The reader should come away with the experience of being alongside the researcher during the research process and should possess a deeper understanding of what someone in the particular case experienced (Stake, 1995). The report was shaped with these goals in mind and presented in chapters IV and V.

Ethical Consideration and Trustworthiness

Throughout the stages of the study, from data collection to analysis, ethical issues were present. Authors discuss the importance of addressing these issues and implement strategies to safeguard trustworthiness and promote validity in the study (Creswell, 2014, Stake, 1995). In this section, I will discuss potential threats to the trustworthiness of the study due to the participants, the researcher, and the study's design; and procedures that check for threats to trustworthiness are presented. This research is inherently intrusive as it involves interacting with people, but researching race, a topic that can be particularly slippery (Sue, 2013), presents several challenges.

One concern is that participants may have perceived that sharing sensitive information with the researcher could jeopardize one's position at the institution. Another

concern was that participants may not disclose information or that it may be inaccurate because of the researcher's identity. Several strategies were implemented to ensure that the data is not compromised and to ensure trustworthiness.

First, there is an obligation to respect individual participants' values, wishes, needs, and rights (Creswell, 2014). In this particular study, I wished to protect students' and employees' identities as the information they shared may be sensitive. In order to so, I used the following protocol: clearly articulated the research objectives, verbally and in writing; received written permission from each participant; receive approval from the Oklahoma State University and SCU Institutional Research Boards; present verbatim transcripts to participants for review; and assigned pseudonyms to participants as well as changing personal characteristics or details that may identify participants. These strategies ensured the centrality of the participants as well as promote trustworthiness that is threatened due to the effects on the participant or the challenges that participants presented as a product of being studied (Stage & Manning, 2003).

A second concern of trustworthiness was related to the researcher and my role in the research. From the conception of the research, I was concerned about issues of rapport as a White male studying race. Though gender is not a topic of this study, belonging to a dominant gender identity that has power in society and in evangelical traditions. Moje (2000) discussed the ways she examines her "embodied" power; power that is inherent in the structural relationships, and reinforced by her identity as a White, female researcher (p. 39). Gordon (2005) in discussions about White researchers studying race, is concerned with privilege and complicity in racist systems that may impact the process of studying race. As a White researcher collecting data and presenting analysis in a very specific context, I

acknowledge that race mattered throughout the process. Through the research journal I examined my own privilege and complicity in systems of racism and questioned ways that I may perpetuate them (Gordon, 2005). This provided a way for me to see how I was thinking about the research and examined ways that my embodied Whiteness impacts my interpretation of the data.

Researcher's Role

In qualitative research the researcher's impressions are the main source of data collection and analysis. Researchers must pay close attention to their own biases, values, and backgrounds that inform their collection and interpretation of data (Creswell, 2014). Stake (1995) warns researcher's to be careful to avoid misperceptions but that being value-neutral is not the purpose of qualitative research. Constructionist and interpretivist traditions prescribe that each researcher's and participant's interpretations in high regard and require a balance between them. Therefore, a careful reflection is necessary to maintain the balance.

In this section I will discuss my preconceptions, notions, and biases in relation to how a Christian college talks about race. This achieves credibility in two distinct ways. First, it will allow me to consider my own opinions that impact the process and consider what may impact my understanding of the phenomenon. Second, the discussion about my role as the researcher will allow the reader to better understand my subjectivity as I approached the project.

My personal and professional experiences have shaped my perspective of race in higher education. I am a cis gender, White male, who is married with children. This is important because part of what I understand about myself is that in almost every socially-constructed category, I am a member of the dominant group. I have worked at small,

predominantly White colleges for 18 years. For 16 years I served at two Christian colleges that are members of the CCCU as a student affairs administrator, first as a Resident Director, then in several roles in housing, residence life, student activities, and new student orientation. Most recently, I served as the Dean of Students at a private Christian college of 4,000 students. During my career, I have served on committees with predominantly white-identified faculty and staff colleagues who have struggled to decipher diverse issues and develop initiatives for diversity. I have seen boards of trustees that continue to be White and male.

In my work, I have witnessed, and been complicit in, the power dynamics in predominantly-White settings. I have talked to some people of color about their frustrations, their feelings of isolation, and the barriers they experience, that are characteristic of Christian colleges. Additionally, I have seen ways that White students, faculty, and staff have pushed back when questioned about the power at play as a result of their own Whiteness, and the influences of White supremacist culture on their institution. I have also perceived that some of the people of color with whom I have been in contact love their roles, relationships, and opportunities despite working in places that are isolating and discriminatory. In some of those places, White people have become great allies and confidants.

I love Christian colleges and the role they play in higher education. Integrating faith and learning is a worthwhile endeavor. However, I am troubled by the idea that evangelicalism and all that it represents in the United States of America, and in the world, is a poor representation of faith, Christians, the Christian college, and God. Evangelicalism has become known politically for bigotry, misogyny, protectionism, and racism (Pew Research Center, 2020). Though these may be fair judgements, the conflation of the Christian faith and

political practices of evangelicalism is a concerning notion. I believe that the Christian colleges help prepare graduates who are concerned for others with their faith as a foreground. This study is not intended to challenge the existence of the Christian college, but to examine the intricacies, including working against the homogeneity of the systems within them.

Second, I believe that racism is not comprised of individual acts of discrimination, but a system of oppression that keeps White people in power, both overtly and covertly. Similarly, I believe that many White people are unaware of the subtle ways they participate in racism, and that they adapt the ways they manage power. I believe that many White, Christians in higher education do not want to participate in racism because their belief system does not support them participating in racism. We, as White Christians, likely have gradually acquired learned racist behaviors that we hardly recognize. When we are made aware of those behaviors, we are quite often unclear of how to effectively change them. I see the opportunities to learn from people of color and to challenge and support White people in the exploration of these ideas. I am not yet skeptical about the impasse of challenging Whiteness in Christian higher education and believe there is viability for embracing and learning from diversity. There are times when I move more toward a critical theoretical perspective and other times when I do not believe power is actively at play. I believe this allows me to be open to understanding and interpreting the race issue from many sides.

Gordon (2005) warns that White researchers studying race should be reflexive about ways privilege is sustained, through data collection procedures and analysis. In particular she implored researchers to be reflexive about three practices: (1) maneuvering around race-talk when discomfort is present for the participant or researcher; (2) masking racial differences in order to maintain rapport with participants; and (3) using logic that avoids race attribution.

As discussed in the previous section, I kept a research journal to think through and write reflexively about these tendencies (Cabrera et al., 2016). This journal served as a piece of data and a way to triangulate the process of collecting and analyzing the data. Instead of attempting to eliminate interviewer influence, it is important to acknowledge that my race and its associated power does have influence in the research and analysis. Furthermore, I consulted my committee chair regularly through the process for critique. Through these practices I hoped to enhance the quality of the research and combat threats of trustworthiness related to the researcher (Stage & Manning, 2003).

Triangulation

In the research design, I utilized various data collection techniques. Stage and Manning (2003) argue that adding "unobtrusive measures to...a research design increases confidence in those data that may be similar even though they emerge from different measurement methods" (Stage & Manning, 2003, p. 65). Observation, collections of documents and artifacts increased validity by adding "non-reactive" methods of data collection that build upon what is known about the phenomena (Stage & Manning, p. 64).

Stake (1995) too suggests researchers triangulate methods to ensure trustworthiness in the study. Ultimately, Stake emphasizes meaning making through the interpretations of the researcher as the main source of collection and analysis. Stake suggests researchers follow these three questions as guidance:

1. Do we have it right?
2. Are we generating a comprehensive and accurate description of the case?
3. Are we developing the interpretations we want? (p. 107).

Multiple data sources triangulated sources of data for a more trustworthy understanding of the phenomenon. The use of member-checking, anonymity protocols, and reflexivity produced trustworthy processes for collection and analysis. These techniques were integral throughout each stage and enhanced the quality of the research.

Delimitations

A study that meets design criteria outlined in the previous sections has its limitations. This study is limited in size and scope, generalizability, in its data collections, and participants. The design choice for a single-site case study allows for face-to-face work with the problem in an immersive way. However, the choice limits the ability to compare against regions, or nuances in CRC among Christian colleges where perhaps race is situated differently in the Midwest, the northwest, or in the southeast parts of the United States. While there may be recognizable patterns, the institution is unique to its context.

Additionally, one of the ways I contained the parameters of the study is to limit the focus of the inquiry to race. Race is not lived out in unidimensional ways and intersectionality points to the multidimensional ways people experience identity. Comparative data was not sought to explain differences based on gender identity, sexuality, or ability. Age may be a factor in participants, for example, a faculty participant may be older than a student participant, but age as a contributing perspective will not be in focus. I analyzed the data openly looking for dimensions of race-talk that might be gendered or classed in emic ways, but race was the primary focus of the study.

Due to sampling procedures, participants may be identifiable because of their visibility on campus. They may be good informants about their own experiences, but also may be the most engaged members of the campus community because they were identified to

participate in the formal process to evaluate racism on campus. White administrators selected students for the focus groups from students that were known to them. Nonetheless, given the limitations, the findings can be useful for researchers and practitioners on other campuses.

The remaining chapters of this dissertation present a case study, exploring how race-talk happens at Southwestern Christian University (SCU). Using campus racial climate (Hurtado et al., 1998, 1999) as a heuristic tool and case study methodology (Stake, 1995) to explore the issue of this particular case, I collected data through observation, documents and artifacts, kept a research journal, and conducted interviews, to examine the complex functions of race on a Christian college campus. Chapter IV will include the case description. Chapter V includes themes and a discussion of findings. Finally, Chapter VI presents a discussion, conclusions, and recommendations including implications for theory, practice, and scholarship.

CHAPTER IV

DESCRIPTION OF THE CASE

In the last 30 years, predominantly White institutions (PWIs) have increased their recruitment of students of color, yet their campus racial environments are found to exclude people of color and are challenged with discrimination and structural oppression (Kelly et al., 2017). A large body of research supports the positive outcomes related to racial diversity (Bowman et al., 2011; Loes et al., 2012; Saenz et al., 2007). Evangelical Christian colleges, primarily PWIs and a subset of PWIs enroll half a million students and have increased their enrollment of students of color by almost 20% in the last decade (Menjares, 2018; NCES, 2019). Though the racial demographic of Christian colleges has become more diverse, researchers have found that students still engage in homogenous racial groups (Yancey, 2010), people of color at Christian colleges face a variety of barriers (Cleek, 2017; Paredes-Collins, 2014), and compositional diversity does not systems of oppression on college campuses (Cha & Jun, 2020; Hurtado, 1992). The ways students, faculty, and staff talk or do not talk about race may influence perceptions of campus racial climate.

This study intended to illuminate the relationship between how members of a Christian college in a self-study of racism talk about race and perceptions of campus racial climate. The key concepts of race-talk (Sue, 2015) and campus racial climate (Hurtado et al., 1998) helped define the context under exploration for this dissertation.

Beginning in 2020, Southwestern Christian University (SCU) participated in a self-study of racism on their campus. SCU administrators began the self-study by conducting a campus climate survey, followed by race-specific focus group interviews. SCU leadership them appointed a special committee directed to dialogue about the data from the campus climate survey, focus group results, and about race on SCU's campus. As SCU embarked on a process to enact change, ten administrators, faculty and staff met together over the course of nine months to talk about race on their campus. In their formal process to enact change related to racism on campus and as a result of their meetings, the committee developed a diversity document that included their beliefs about the campus racial climate at SCU and the actions that would improve conditions.

My first observation day at Southwest Christian University dawned a beautiful sunny day in April. There were no clouds, a slight breeze blowing, and people outside everywhere. The university seemed to be organized by areas – residential, academic, and social. Large Georgian-style red brick buildings filled the campus, many with large, white, elegant columns greeting those who crossed their thresholds. The campus was filled with people gathered in social spaces, walking from building to building, sitting on benches, and gathered on blankets on the lush, green, well-manicured lawns. Giant and seemingly old trees shaded sidewalks and sitting areas where people gathered. Pedestrians dominated the interior of

campus as parking areas were most often situated at the edges of campus or tucked behind buildings.

Looking across the quad area, I could see what seemed like a professor holding a class meeting outside rather than inside their usual classroom to take advantage of the pleasant weather and perhaps to keep students engaged as the semester neared the end. The pedestrian traffic was not just students, however. People who seemed like faculty and staff, some with branded name badges, walked around campus, so I, lacking the traditionally aged college student look, blended in well.

On more than one visit, I found a bench on the quad, out of the way, but situated where I could still see pedestrian traffic. Campus was crowded before and after classes and in the early afternoon, typically right after lunch. Students would stop and talk to each other or on several occasions stop to watch the squirrels maneuver pecans around the grounds. The student union building was a major social gathering space possessing a dining hall, bookstore, coffee shop, student life offices, and a variety of seating. In between classes and at night, it was a popular social and study space. During the day, I saw admissions recruiters leading one family at a time, pointing and describing the various amenities and telling SCU's story through its traditions. Pictures of campus life lined the walls, helping potential students and their families visualize the pitch being given. SCU's campus was well-branded. Even the trashcans outside had school colors and logos.

The dining hall, located on the student union's first floor, was a popular place. I expected students to gather largely in racial affinity groups. However, what I found was that students sat together in a variety of ways. Some groups were large, and some were small. Some groups were segregated by race, but many incorporated students from many racial

backgrounds. There was not a consistent pattern in the seating arrangements. Students I observed sitting with students of the same racial group one day, sat with a mixed racial group on another occasion. The people at SCU's campus were welcoming. On a typical walk to an observation meeting, I saw SCU community members extending friendly, unsolicited greetings to each other, and to me; several people waved hello, or said, "How are you?"

The interior of the campus comprised first-year residence halls that opened to the quad area. On the opposite side of the quad, academic buildings flanked the chapel, a building adorned with a prominent, white steeple, and seemingly located in the middle of campus. The outer-most areas were filled with apartment buildings where upperclassmen lived and a large recreation field. Over the nine months of collecting data, I observed an array of busyness that ebbed through the seasons. Each committee meeting was held on Wednesday in the middle of the day. On my way to the first observation, I walked past the chapel where approximately 1,500 students attended a weekly religious service. Students were required to attend four semesters of weekly chapels to graduate. Each Wednesday, a large crowd of students gathered on the sidewalk and porch of the chapel waiting for the chapel doors to open. On occasion, a student organization would hand out donuts as students waited or pass out fliers advertising upcoming events as students filed out.

Following a traditional university calendar, many students enrolled in fall and spring terms. Students were sparse on campus during the winter and summer terms. At the time of the May, June, and July committee meetings, the sun scorched the pavement of the sidewalks, and very few cars or people were on campus. I saw the occasional campus tour as the recruiting office was the only visibly active office in those months.

Overview of Participants and Observation

In the summer of 2020, following the rise of the COVID-19 pandemic and racial justice movement following the public death of George Floyd, Southwest Christian University communicated a plan to first collect data and then create a committee to use the data to study race on campus. Beginning in the Fall of 2020, SCU hired a consulting company to deliver surveys, conduct focus groups with students, faculty, and staff, and make recommendations based on the data results. In March of 2021, a group of faculty, staff, and alumni selected from those focus groups began to meet to talk about the data-gathering results, recommendations, and their own experiences with race on campus. Though the leadership of SCU selected the members of the committee, I am unclear who was include in this decision-making process. Rick reached out to each person to serve on the committee and each, at minimum, participated in the earlier focus groups. Some were known or more known on the campus and their visibility may have contributed to their selection. SCU's plan called for improvement in race relations, identification of sources of racial tension on campus, and solutions to move the campus toward racial reconciliation. Beginning in April 2021, participants met once in April, June, and July, and then every two weeks from August to November. Students did not serve on the committee; rather their input into the campus process came through focus group interviews conducted by SCU as part of their self-study plan. Generally, at SCU, there is very little student involvement on campus committee. Additionally, the conversation may have looked different if students had been in the room. Although levels of power existed in the dialogues, an additional layer of power with students in the discussions may have changed the discussions all together. Over the course of nine

months at SCU, I observed twelve committee meetings, the last of which occurred in November, 2021.

In addition to the participant observations conducted during committee meetings, I conducted semi-structured interviews with eight students, staff, and faculty. In February, I identified participants of administrators, staff, and faculty who SCU leadership asked to serve on the special committee and who agreed to participate in observations during the committee meetings. All ten responded and participated. I contacted four committee members who participated in focus groups and were members of the special committee to participate in individual interviews. All four agreed to participate in interviews. I contacted five students who participated in focus groups to complete an interview; four agreed to participate, while one student did not respond. The participant demographics and their participation in the university process are listed in the table below (Table 1).

Table 1

Demographics of Study Participants

Participant Pseudonym	Member Type	Race	Gender	Participated in. . .	
Rick	Executive Administrator	White	Male	committee observations	
Matt	Student Affairs Administrator	White	Male	committee observations	
Martha	Staff Member	Latina	Female	committee observations	interview
Darilynn	Staff Member	Black	Female	committee observations	interview
Linda	Faculty Member	Black	Female	committee observations	
Rene	Faculty Member	Latina	Female	committee observations	
Chris	Faculty Member	White	Male	committee observations	interview
Thaddeus	Faculty Member	Black	Male	committee observations	
Xavier	Faculty Member	Black	Male	committee observations	interview
Chimese	Student	Black	Female		interview
Jennifer	Student	White	Female		interview
Kristy	Student	Asian	Female		interview
Clinton	Student	White	Male		interview

I told participants I would use pseudonyms in place of their names and asked if they would like to choose. Some participants chose their pseudonyms, and I created others. The participant names in the table above are pseudonyms, used throughout the next two chapters. Ten people served on the committee; one member of the committee, an alumnus, did not agree to participate in the study. Five of the committee members served as full-time faculty members, two served as staff members, and two served as administrators. As seen in the

table, among the committee participants, two were Latina, both female; four identified as Black; two were female and two were male; three participants identified as White, and all White participants identified as male. Two females (Martha and Darilynn) and two males (Chris and Xavier) also participated in the individual interviews during the study; two Black, one Latina, and one White.

I interviewed all but one participant in a conference room. I met Chris at his office so he could make it to his next appointment quickly. All interviews followed a semi-structured interview guide and lasted between 50 and 90 minutes. We generally started with a question like "How are you doing today?" to build rapport, and then I moved into the first few questions on the interview guide (Appendix B).

Administrator Participant Descriptions

Participants varied in their roles and fields, which included responsibilities in student affairs and academic affairs, and academic backgrounds in fields including psychology, sociology, math and science, and religion. Two administrators served on the committee. Rick, who led the committee was a long-time administrator. Matt, a student affairs administrator had served at SCU less than ten years.

Rick

Rick, a white, male administrator, was the leader of the committee. Rick had worked at SCU for over 30 years. He was tasked by the President to form the committee, develop its objectives, and carry them out. Rick was task-oriented, yet patient, in completing the committee's work. On one occasion the committee discussed how other institutions that appeared to be doing or had completed a review of racism on their campus responded. In the discussion, Rick remarked that he believed the other institutions had acted too quickly. The

speed of their response appeared to him to be inauthentic. Rick expressed that he wanted the committee to gain a genuine understanding the state of the university related to race. “This work needs to be done thoughtfully, prayerfully, and,” he said, “it will take time.” Rick seemed to be aware of his positional power as an administrator and as a White man. As he talked about the meetings ahead and the difficult task of talking about race at SCU, he revealed his insecurity, as a White man, as the right person to lead the committee.

More than any other participant, Rick seemed to be balancing the politics of the university with establishing a safe place for all the participants to speak freely. Rick clarified their directive many times throughout the process. He made clear to the committee that when the committee was tasked to talk about diversity the members were only to talk about racial diversity. He guided the committee’s conversations where he believed they shifted away from racial diversity and helped define the boundaries where he believed topics with meaning that were too culturally or politically charged. For example, critical race theory and gender identity, were too loaded with meaning and shifted focus away from what he believed the committee was tasked to do. Though he did not reveal how he came to define diversity, committee members did not question the bounds of the definition and in some cases agreed. The absence of questions appeared to be both recognition of his authority as the chair, his senior position at SCU, and as a moral authority for the university. He also seemed to understand that decisions as the results of the committee work were not completely his to make.

In one of the final committee meetings, Rick said he “want[ed] to be honest,” and then said he did not believe that some of the statements in the diversity document would make the final edits. He said he was proud of the product but also wished to be transparent

about the realities of what he believed would likely be published, harkening back to the foundation Rick established from the beginning where he believed some topics may not be accepted to publish. At the same time, Rick seemed to want to create a safe space where people could talk openly about their experiences on campus. At the end of the first meeting, Rick, recognizing the challenge in racial discourse, encouraged everyone to trust each other and for everyone in the room to be honest with each other. He wanted "everyone to be honest, fair, and say what needs to be said" and he said, "I don't want to walk on eggshells and don't want others to either."

Matt

Matt, the second of three White males on the committee, had almost 20 years of experience in higher education but had worked at SCU for less than 10 years when the committee began its work. Matt was an SCU alumni and worked as an administrator in the Student Affairs division. Matt was very welcoming, but difficult to read at times. He often seemed to keep his opinions to himself. He was kind. I observed him talking with other participants before and after meetings. He seldom spoke up during meetings and was very careful with his words. When he voiced his opinion, his comments usually contrasted with the ideas that people of color expressed in the meeting. When he questioned others' perspectives, he often asked for proof or examples. Hearing these requests from Matt, I wondered whether people of color might have felt an expectation to prove themselves.

He seemed skeptical of how White people would receive the diversity document and hesitant to leave in phrases that other participants considered important. During one meeting late in the process, Matt argued that learning about Whiteness took him three months of meeting in this committee format, so to include language about Whiteness in a diversity

document would do a disservice to members of the SCU community who had not had appropriate time for learning in a similar forum.

As most committee members left meetings, they said their goodbyes and walked back to their respective areas on campus. Occasionally, a few would walk together if their offices were in the same direction. I was often surprised to see Matt leave the committee meeting with another member of the committee, often a member of color, and walk with them in the direction of their office, not his. Following a more intense meeting, Matt walked with Rene, a Latina woman and I could hear him asking questions about her perspective of the meeting. As they moved further from me, I could not hear their discussion. In a side conversation later, he said he wanted to learn from her and to make sure that she knew he wanted to hear her point of view.

Matt was a key player in putting together action items for the committee. He would often bring the results of reviews of the work other universities completed. Without prompting, he spent time outside of the committee meetings developing objectives and action items for the committee to review. His work spurred the committee to move forward with creating their final document. Much of the committee's time was spent discussing values related to racism. Although Matt explained that he learned about Whiteness because of his participation in the values discussions, he was not content with the pace the committee moved to produce a document and action items associated with the document. The importance he placed on the result caused me to think about what others expected out of the committee meetings.

Staff Participant Descriptions

Two staff, Martha and Darilynn participated in the special committee. Martha was a long-time SCU staff member and worked in student affairs. Darilynn was a young staff member who shifted from admissions and recruiting to academic support.

Martha

Martha, a Latina staff member, and I met in a small conference room for her individual interview. She arrived wearing a cardigan as it was a colder December day. She had an upbeat personality and we spent much of the interview laughing about a variety of topics. At the time of the interview the fall term was concluded, and she talked about wrapping up loose ends from the semester. She seemed fatigued but also rejuvenated by the prospect of not having students around for a bit. Martha was one of the most experienced staff members at SCU, having served in her role for more than 30 years. When we started, I asked Martha about her experience first in the focus groups, which occurred eleven months prior. She did not recall her participation in them very well. The committee seemed to be the most valuable experience for her. More than others she seemed to have difficulty finding her identity and voice on the committee. During our hour-and-a-half interview, she spent most of her time talking about two ideas: White identity and learning to embrace her own identity. She talked about her background and having been raised as a Mexican American. Her father was born in the United States but grew up in Mexico. Conversely, her mother was born in Mexico but grew up in the United States. She told me that her parents suffered because of their skin color, especially her father. “He didn't know the language very well, so he suffered a lot not knowing English.” Though they spoke Spanish at home, her parents made she and

her sisters learn English in order to avoid suffering. After Martha began elementary school, English was the primary language spoken in their home.

Her parents' fear of racism, Martha recounted, was so great that her parents replaced the importance of speaking English with being White. She articulated the notion that assimilating to White culture, to render oneself as culturally White as possible, was a way to avoid racism. Martha told me that her Father told her she was White. She did not think much about her racial identity until a couple of years ago when a colleague came to work at SCU. That colleague, she said, embraced her heritage and caused Martha to think about her own racial identity.

> I think I just ignored it after a while, it's like I didn't... Even my dad would say that, You're not Brown, you're White. He goes, 'There's no such race as Brown.' Okay, I'm White. I just thought I was all this time. I just spoke, I could speak Spanish. And it wasn't until that co-worker came, and I'm like, wait a minute, I am Brown. And there's nothing wrong with being Brown.

She expressed tension between the ability to pass as White and the cost of not embracing her Mexican heritage.

As a committee member, Martha was quiet during discussions. Some of the members she had known for her entire career and others she got to know. Before each meeting as people were eating and getting prepared for the meeting, Martha would talk very openly. However, once the meetings began, she was hesitant to speak up; at one point, leaning over and in a low whisper she said to me, "Lord, help me speak up." In our interview I asked her about that moment, and she told me that she felt insecure talking about race because she had only begun learning about her own culture. The tension she felt personally about her identity

showed as we discussed the diversity document. She revealed that she sometimes felt like White people were made out to be the enemy, but at the same time she wanted to make sure that statements were clear about how people of color experience SCU. Though Martha began to question her assumptions about identifying as White prior to her experience on the committee, she affirmed that the time spent on the committee helped her feel more comfortable embracing her identity as a Latina woman.

Darilynn

At the time of the interview Darilynn was a director of an academic support unit and had worked at SCU for just under three years. She was an alumna and passionate about SCU. Darilynn, a Black woman, expressed mixed emotions about her time as a student, a staff member, and a member of the committee. She struck me as someone who was heartfelt about her work and wanted to leave things better than when she found them. However, she was unsure whether the work put into making changes as a member of the committee would be worth the time and effort. She wondered if actual changes would be made and was unsure of SCU's future. She expressed that as undergraduate student she had to choose between community with other Black students or involvement in campus life because, she argued, both could not happen.

> If I wanted to be involved, I had to choose whether I was gonna be involved and excel in whatever track that I was going on, or if I was gonna have community with Black students because those Black students weren't in those [involved in campus life] communities for me.

Other Black students were not involved, she reflected, so getting involved took her away from where other Black students spent their time. Darilynn was disappointed that she could

not be involved and be in community with Black students – a sentiment that caused her question whether she would choose to be involved again at the expense of community with other Black students. Her perception was that both could not occur.

Darilynn was excited about serving on the committee. The opportunity, she told me, "is incredible . . .I wanna shift the status quo." On her own time, she met individually with all the women on the committee and then met with the men on the committee as a group (not meeting individually with a man on a Christian college campus is relatively standard practice), just to get to know them better. In meetings, Darilynn was not afraid to speak up and was eager to get involved. She volunteered to write the first draft of the diversity statement. She seemed to be committed to her role on the committee but, she told me, she often felt shut down, and not heard. I asked her if that was related to race. She said she thought she was disregarded more because of her age and relative lack of experience. She was the youngest employee on the committee. She thought that others were "expecting perfection for someone... further perpetuating this notion of Blackness or womanness or being young isn't acceptable unless it's in a perfect form, where if you're White" the standard was different. I asked her if she believed that things at SCU would change. I sensed the skepticism in her voice, as if she had come to this conclusion many times before, as she said, "I do not have a lot of faith in SCU's decision... or position to actually enact [change]." She wanted to be hopeful but had strong doubts that all the energy put into identifying and articulating issues would make lasting change.

Faculty Participant Descriptions

All five faculty members (two women of color, two men of color, and one White man) held doctoral degrees. Faculty served in a variety of academic fields in the sciences, social sciences, and in religion.

Linda

Linda was a Black, tenured faculty member in the social sciences department. She had a long career outside of higher education before coming to SCU. What Linda wanted most was what she called "deep work" to occur at the institution. She seemed to want to spend time talking about and understanding the perspectives, values, and experiences of people of color and of White people at SCU. In several meetings I had trouble following Linda's train of thought. Before each meeting, Linda would ask me how the progress on my dissertation was coming. She encouraged me often and made me feel like a part of the committee.

Linda tended to speak against the narrative, not to be abrasive or confusing, but seemingly to create balance with perspectives of people of color in the room that could have been perceived as over-represented. Linda was well-versed in ideas of equity, affirmative action, and inclusion, often talking about her personal experiences before SCU. She spoke up about student-athletes of color feeling isolated, and lack of representation in leadership roles, and argued the "invisible culture of Whiteness is the underlying problem on this campus."

She also seemed to carry a weight of answering faculty colleagues about changes coming from the committee. Several times she said that her colleagues wanted to hear from the committee about what was happening. Others on the committee, and especially members of color, did not always appreciate her opinions. In advocating for diverse hiring practices for

faculty, she said that she wanted SCU to have a diverse pool of, in her words, "qualified" candidates. Others wondered aloud if somehow talking about increasing diversity would automatically lead to diminishing quality of new hires. In another conversation, Linda said that she felt that White students were left out when students of color affinity groups were formed. Others responded that all the other student groups were inclusive of White students. Members on the committee seemed to find Linda difficult to predict.

Rene

Although she had been at SCU for just over two years, Rene had been in Christian higher education for almost 10 years. A Latina, female professor, Rene's expertise in sociology and religion was evident in her participation on the committee. She knew research language on race, ethnicity, and religion. In one meeting, she leaned over to me and said about the meeting, "This is deep, rich data." Rene listened intently to what others said and sighed often or talked to herself as if to process what they were saying. She was also vocal, engaged in conversations, and calculated when she spoke. Rene fought for what she believed should be included in conversations about race, championing language in the diversity document that she termed "provocative" or was what she believed "needs to be said."

I noticed she used a variety of tactics to achieve what she believed was the best product coming from the committee. She wanted people and documents to name ideas clearly. When others wanted to soften language, she would argue that words like diversity and racism articulate clearer than toned-down phrases. She loved the product in the diversity document that came out of the meetings. She commented that she wanted the committee to be brave and make a difference in Christian higher education. I noticed differences in the behavior of other committee members when Rene was in the room and when she was not. At

times participants would miss a meeting for a variety of reasons. When Rene was absent, participants who were often quiet spoke up where they had not prior. I observed more tension in the room when she was present. How Rene made meaning of the committee activities and how others perceived her prompted me to consider the tension in the room and how language mattered in the process of talking about race.

Chris

I met Chris, a White male, religion professor, in his office for our formal interview. It was a quaint office, filled with bookshelves that lined the walls. He had stacks of papers waiting to be graded – of his own doing, he admitted. As a primary author of the theological section of the diversity statement, Chris was especially concerned with the theological underpinnings included in the document. Similarly, he wanted the campus community to understand more about how the Bible taught about diversity and inclusion. Chris was quite familiar with Christian higher education, having worked for over 15 years as a professor with adjunct and full-time status and for more than seven religiously affiliated institutions. At the time of the interview, he had worked at SCU full-time for more than five years. Prior to the committee convening, Chris contributed in SCU's self-study as a participant in focus groups. However, during our interview, he spoke mostly about his experiences in the classroom and on the committee as reference points. In the interview, we talked about his upbringing which informed his views: "Racism," he told me, "wasn't an issue I thought about a lot," and as a result, he said, "I didn't feel like racism was a part of my world." Chris explained that he understood racism "more in terms of systems."

I asked about Chris' classroom experiences about race. He discussed intentional ways in which he asks his classes to talk about race. In more recent semesters, he used a book to

guide conversations about race. He said he facilitates classroom dialogue centered around interpretations of the Bible and who might be missing from those interpretations. The students in his classes will mention gender, and class, but are always hesitant to mention race. His students' hesitance to talk about race is why he used a book to discuss racial issues in class. It seems this is his way of critically challenging the status quo.

Chris's emphasis on the central message of the Bible caused me to think more about how important religious language may be to SCU's community. In the classroom, he said that getting students to "reject this kind of understanding that [the Bible]… is a purely spiritual thing, that it is not only about transforming hearts and souls, but it's about transforming the world around you." The faculty and staff participants seemed to resonate with the idea that talking about the Bible was important for them and for them they saw Chris as a source of knowledge about how to articulate the message.

As valuable a member of the committee as a content expert on theology, Chris echoed the experience of others that participating was impactful. During meetings, Chris was one of the more fervent to express his enjoyment. In our interview, he reflected on his committee experience by saying that generally he does not like committee work and often questions how important the work of committees is to a university.

> [Committee work in general is] probably more important than I want to give it credit for . . . but this committee is profoundly important, and the work we're doing is going to really change people's life and experience on campus. And so, I love it because I think it really matters.

As a White man, Chris listed "learning" as the most valuable part of participating on the committee: "probably learning from people of color, . . . hearing them talk about their experience . . . just learning."

Thaddeus

Thaddeus, a Black male faculty member and the primary author of the diversity statement, was a dynamic figure on the committee. He seemed to be able to draw people into conversations with humility, genuineness, and compassion. He showed care for others and was fun-loving. At the beginning of meetings, he would spend time laughing with other colleagues. Three members, Chris, Xavier, and Thaddeus, one White and two Black respectively, especially spent time talking to each other. They often talked about their love for cuisine that represented their culture. In conversations, while drafting the diversity statement, he talked about putting care front and center. He described the purpose of the committee to me in this way: "reduce friction and foster humility." For people of color, through articulating their experiences and recognizing their experiences were different than the norms, he believed SCU could show care for people of color. For White people sparking understanding, humility, inspiration, and diffusing tensions were paramount. He was okay that people felt uncomfortable with what might need to be stated. However, he also said they "should not ignore White people." What he meant was that in their dialogue about race, they should think and talk about how White people feel and process racism and at the same time articulate the lived experiences of people of color that have historically been silenced.

Committee members discussed "the invisible culture of Whiteness" more than any other concept or phrase during their meetings, the phrase to be discussed at length in the sections below. Thaddeus provided clear examples of how the notion of Whiteness impacted

others on campus and him personally. For him, the document articulated what he and other SCU members of color have experienced but has gone unacknowledged. Thaddeus wanted to challenge readers' values related to racism and the diversity document articulated his stance on what and how the values should be tested. Because Thaddeus seemed to be skilled at making strong, provocative statements in unassuming, non-threatening ways, I perceived that other participants respected what he had to say. In our interview, Darilynn confirmed that she perceived others held what Thaddeus had to say in high regard. Members seemed to trust him and see him as someone they would support as a champion to communicate in venues beyond the committee to the SCU community in the future.

Xavier

Xavier, a Black male faculty member, and I met in a conference room in the student union building. We had to be mindful of our time because he had a meeting immediately after our meeting. We had exactly an hour to conduct the interview. Xavier and I began our interview by talking about racism growing up. He told me he was always aware of racism because his parents prepared him. His parents also taught him that education was important because, they said, White people can take a lot of things but not education. Xavier's parents expected him to be more prepared than his White counterparts because they taught him that he would be judged by a different set of rules. Xavier attended a historically Black college where he began to be "very passionate about Black culture" and "the Black experience."

I was struck by a story he told about the way he experienced White people learning about race that I found particularly memorable. He recounted a time in graduate school that he developed a friendship with a White peer. Throughout the relationship his White counterpart frequently asked questions about Black stereotypes; each time Xavier answered

along the same lines: “We all don’t do that.” When they would go to the grocery store together the White peer would look at the watermelon and then look at him as though Xavier was about to buy a watermelon. “Well, I am,’ Xavier once told his friend, “but it’s because I really like the watermelon. And so do you.” When Xavier could have been frustrated, Xavier became open to answering questions about race and as a result of his openness, they maintained a friendship. Xavier’s classmate was involved in significant events in his life, attending church with him, attending Xavier’s wedding, and as Xavier recalled, “became one of my biggest supporters.” On the committee, Xavier seemed to exercise the same patience. He was quick to listen and often slow to speak, something about which I asked him.

I told Xavier that I noticed he was reserved sometimes. He answered by saying that he chose to trust that this group of people shared “the common goal of wanting to change the atmosphere” at SCU. “So,” he told me,

> when I was quiet, I was secretly saying, ’Yes, someone just voiced what I was thinking.’ And that was refreshing. So yeah, that was intentional. And I always went in. . . wondering, will this be the meeting. . . that things just blow up? Erupt?

Xavier described himself becoming “more relaxed and free to speak my mind more” as the committee continued meeting. He reasoned that he did not have to be the only frustrated person at the table and that the work for the diversity committee did not rest on his shoulders alone. Past hurts and frustrations kept him guarded in the beginning. He said he came into the meetings with a sense of embodying injustices and inequality, and thus needed to cover those raw hurts so that not too much time was spent on him voicing frustration and more time could be spent on what to do about them. In the end, he was okay with not venting because he believed it would hinder progress toward making some changes at SCU.

I observed and he confirmed in our interview that the experience talking about the invisible culture of Whiteness was cathartic:

> I have to be honest in saying that that was the most rewarding conversation we've had. I really enjoyed the conversation… I wasn't talking much, but I wanted to stay to hear the opinions. And many of the opinions I agreed with. And I was like, 'Oh, this is just... It's good that it's being voiced.'

He told me the conversation released some of the weight he carried about acknowledging and naming his experience. He said talking about Whiteness was a way to shake people awake. I asked him if he believed the discussion was provocative. He perceived that for people of color, the conversation was not provocative because they understood this as a part of their racial experience. He said for a long time he would use terms like White privilege or Whiteness, but the invisible culture of Whiteness more clearly articulated his experience as a person of color. After reading the finished version of the diversity document, Thaddeus and Xavier talked aloud about how good it felt for their experiences to be recognized in this way. The emphasis Thaddeus and Xavier placed on language caused me to think about how participants might determine when they believe they are pushing too hard and when they need to communicate more strongly. Xavier embodied one who had tools to cope with racism and desired to engage in conversations that promote racial reconciliation. However, he felt isolated which made him unsure of the outcomes of his participation on the committee but was pleased to find comradery and articulate his experience as a Black faculty member at SCU.

Student Participant Descriptions

SCU students participated in SCU's review of racism on campus through surveys and focus groups. Through my informant, I identified five students who took part in focus groups. Four responded, one did not respond. After connecting through email with the students, we selected a time for individual interviews. Three females and one male participated in the interviews; one Black or African American, one Asian, and two White. Participants varied in their fields of undergraduate study which included psychology, nursing, math and science, and education.

Chimese

Chimese, a soft-spoken, junior, education major identified as a Black female. My impression of Chimese was that she had experienced discrimination on campus but was not always sure her negative experiences were related to race. This did not surprise me given the intersectionality of race, class, and gender in Chimese's identity.

Though Chimese did feel that race should be talked about in the classroom at SCU, she could only recall two instances where race was discussed. She referenced both conversations as debates she had with White students about stereotypical perspectives. In both examples, she perceived the faculty to have managed the dialogue well and facilitated respectful conversations. Though she said one instructor chose to address the class the next time they met to lay some ground rules. Chimese described the faculty member's instructions as positive and perhaps encouraging more conversations, although she could not recall specifically.

When we talked about her social life, she spoke of code-switching and the weightiness of feeling like she lived in two cultural worlds (White and Black), both of which

she understood and knew how to navigate but lamented that White students did not have to live in two worlds and did not understand her perception that she did as well. She also laughed some at how White students did not understand Black culture. Chimese's close friend group consisted of mostly other Black students. This group was where she said she felt most comfortable and was at ease to be herself, without much explanation. I asked Chimese if she felt included on campus. She paused often to think about her response.

> That's tough. I really don't feel like I have actually [been included]. I don't feel like, No, I don't [pauses to think about this]. The only time I consider myself fully [included], including when I force my way into [social settings] … But I'm not supported. So, I actually don't feel included.

Chimese was involved in several organizations on campus and served as a resident assistant. She seemed to feel conflicted that though she was involved on campus she did not feel included.

In our hour-long interview, she bounced back and forth among experiences related to SCU and ones growing up. At times, I could not distinguish which context she was describing. The intermingling of reflections from different periods in her life made me think about how her negative experiences at SCU might mirror the negative experiences in the culture outside of SCU.

Jennifer

Jennifer was a White female undergraduate student in her third year at SCU. I met with Jennifer late in the day. We sat in a conference room in the student union, a building full of glass windows. It was already dark outside. She seemed nervous as we began. When she answered questions, she was deliberate and often quiet for some time before answering. I saw

her another time on campus and when we talked, I realized she was always deliberate when she spoke. Admittedly, Jennifer spoke of her upbringing as not very diverse. Her most diverse experience was at community college where she observed age, socioeconomic status, race, and gender diversity.

Jennifer perceived that racism was an issue on campus but was not directly aware of any issues. She could not recall any conversations about race in or outside of class. I found this interesting because she served as a resident assistant and in their training schedule on the website was diversity training. In her observation, she said that students from the same race stick together in social situations. She did not view this as inherently or intentionally bad but believed that students of different races should interact more often. Asked about if students, faculty, and staff at SCU should talk about race more often she said,

> I think it should be talked about. It should not be talked about in an aggressive way if possible... I think it's important that it's talked about in a safe space... [Safe Space] is such an overused term, but a safe space in which people cannot be offended by things, and not make assumptions, to not draw their own connections.

Jennifer seemed to understand that having parameters around conversations might vary among racial groups of people (Sue, 2015). She talked about the differences between how she has observed Black students and White students socialize and how they talk about difficult issues.

We also discussed whether Christian institutions should think, talk, or treat people differently on the issue of race. Jennifer thought universities “should be accepting and loving to every student, regardless of whether or not there’s Christian in their name.” I found Jennifer to be honest and genuine in her perceptions of racism on campus. However, I

wondered how her lack of exposure to racism on campus perpetuated the idea that it might not exist, perhaps not for her as she believed that she did not have to have proof it was an issue, but perhaps for others.

Kristy

At the time of our interview, Kristy was a Senior nursing major with only a semester left to graduate. About to travel on a mission trip, she was eager to finish the semester to travel abroad. Kristy described her ethnicity as Chinese, Thai, and Vietnamese, "but mostly a Chinese household." She talked about the influence of her Chinese heritage. Kristy arrived energetically, happy to talk, loud, and admittedly sarcastic. However, she said her family expected her to be quiet, and proper, and not draw attention to herself. Sarcastically, she said she was the 'best Chinese girl.'

Kristy talked about racism occurring on campus, but not in overt ways to her. She described experiencing racism but in her words in "unintentional" ways. She said she believed that other students experienced overt racist acts, while her experiences were more along the lines of what Sue et. al. (2007) call "microaggressions."

> Oh my gosh, you're so good at math. Oh, you're so smart, or, yeah, I expect you to get a high grade. Or you don't even have to try that hard. You're just naturally super smart or something like that, which comes off as a compliment.

Adhering to the model minority myth, White students made offensive comments that sounded like compliments. As COVID-19 emerged she said she began to experience more overt racism off campus related to the phrase "China Virus." She described going to a large gas station where people were holding a Donald Trump rally in the parking lot. As she walked in people screamed at her about the virus.

At SCU, she did not feel discriminated against. However, there were so few Asian students she felt isolated. Her observation was that Black and Hispanic people in general have a harder time in America, but because their issues were talked about more often, she found it difficult, as an Asian person, to speak up about the microaggressions and anti-Asian hate speech she experienced. She felt included among White students but said White students tend to talk overly stereotypically about people of color. She said she had the most difficult time talking to Black peers about race. She recalled a specific conversation with a Black friend about their respective experiences with racism; when Kristy shared something she had experienced, her friend responded, "Well, that's not the same." Kristy believed that talking about race on campus was important and that race was not talked about enough. She often felt invalidated that racism is an issue. I asked Kristy what she would tell the president of SCU about her experience with race if she could meet with him.

> One more experience with race I would tell him. I feel people don't really acknowledge that there's a race issue, it's just non-existent, and if it was... It's just in your head.

Kristy felt conflicted about her experiences with racism and as a result described isolation because, as she reported, SCU's campus climate did not promote an environment where she believed people validated her experiences.

Clinton

Like Kristy, Clinton had one semester remaining until he would graduate from SCU. He was a White male studying education with an interest in political science and history. His wide smile and firm handshake were akin to a candidate running for political office. To discuss his background related to racial experiences, Clinton talked about his uncle who was

Black and lived across the street from him growing up. He said he learned most about racism through stories from his uncle. One of the most memorable conversations was about what Clinton called the “silent barriers” to equal treatment that African Americans face daily. He pointed to conversations that Black parents have with their children about how to stay alive in encounters with police. He said, “No parent in America should have to have a different conversation about policing than another parent in America,” Clinton argued.

Clinton believed that people at SCU treated everyone equally and that the members were not racist. As with the other students I interviewed, Clinton did not recall having very many conversations about race in classes. He most often had them in history class learning about slavery, Jim Crow, or reconstruction. He believed that talking about race was important but felt the discussions should be planned and intentional. Clinton believed that instead of curated conversations about race in the classroom, that subject matter determined the conditions for talking about race. For example, he did not perceive a math class to be an appropriate context for talking about race. There were times when I wondered if Clinton was genuine or if he was selling the university. His assertions about the reputation of the university were overly general or exaggerated. His enthusiasm showed he loved SCU and the way in which he talked about his experience, he believed he was leaving a legacy of work, even related to race. He concluded the interview by saying,

> It's a good place to be, not just 'cause it's beautiful on the campus, but some people talk the talk. We're walking the walk. And I’m excited for what the future looks like. Not just for [SCU], but for higher education in terms of speaking about the history of our country and the future of it, and we all work together.

Clinton's views of SCU did not match those of his peers. He tended to have an idealized view of the campus racial climate at SCU, though he believed race should be talked about more often.

General Reflections

In November, 2021, I interviewed these four students, each of whom participated in a university-sponsored focus group earlier in the year. These focus groups, held in February and March 2021, brought students and employees together in groups organized by racial identity, representing two primary opportunities for students, staff, faculty, and administrators to contribute to SCU's self-study of campus racial climate. The November interviews took place during the time of the faculty and staff committee's work on SCU's new diversity statement, seven or eight months after the focus groups.

The students did not, in general, discuss their participation in SCU's earlier self-study, or the focus groups specifically, during their interviews for the current study. They could more clearly articulate what their experience as a student attending SCU was like rather than what they or others discussed in a single focus group meeting held several months earlier. In fact, Jennifer did not remember attending a focus group though I confirmed her attendance with an informant at SCU. Clinton, a member of the Student Government Association, did remember the focus groups; however, during our interview, he spoke primarily about several SGA discussions on race attended by students of all races. Kristy could recall that three Asian students including herself attended her focus group, but the experience itself was insignificant. Kristy considered the low numbers proof of very little representation by people who shared her background on campus. Speaking about the presence of Asian students on campus Kristy remarked, "I see Asians, our international

students, . . . but there's a very distinct difference between those who grew up in China and those other countries versus growing up Asian-American." Kristy's perception was that there were more students from Asian countries than Asian-American students, thus resulting in the low representation in her focus group.

Chimese had the clearest memory of the focus group experience. She could not recall much about the conversation in the group, though. Instead, she remembered how she felt during the session: "Not that we all felt the same way, but we had something in unison. So, it felt like safe for me to fully express myself. . . . At the same time," she continued, "it kind of felt like I was being used because they needed . . . Black people to speak." Chimese expressed that she wanted to participate, and was glad to do so; at the same time, she was skeptical about whether SCU administrators were genuine in gathering the information.

The students' lack of attention toward the focus groups led me to wonder what the faculty and staff members serving on the committee would say about their experience meeting regularly rather than meeting once for a focus group. Like the students' responses, the faculty and staff participants talked less during the interviews for this study about their time in the focus groups and more about their participation in the committee. Chris, Martha, Xavier, and Darilynn discussed how much and in what ways they should challenge the status quo. Matt and Rick seemed less concerned about validating the experiences of people of color and more concerned about the potential to confuse White people or the consequences of making White people angry.

The 10 SCU staff, administrators and faculty designated to discuss race on the campus spent the next nine months working on how to communicate their vision for changes they believed needed to be implemented at SCU in order to accomplish change at SCU. They

talked about values more than they talked about policy or practice. They invited me in, and I became a part of their group. They asked me about progress on my dissertation, discussed what they saw as the woes of completing a dissertation, and encouraged me along the way. After the first meeting, Rick asked each member of the committee to review the consulting group's recommendations and select what they considered the top five priorities to address through the committee's work. Rick closed the meeting by setting the ground rules for future meetings, encouraging everyone to trust each other and to be honest. "This work," he told them, "needs to be done thoughtfully, prayerfully, and it will take time." Linda, wanting to be honest about how long she believed the kind of change she was looking for would take, responded, "I am concerned about the deeper work." Cementing her commitment, she said she wanted long-term change that, in her mind, would take time to complete.

There was agreement about some issues and disagreement about others. Sometimes concurrence and dissent among members seemed to fall along racial lines and other times members agreed and disagreed in interracial groups. Most faculty and staff participants reported being encouraged by the work that had been done by the university through the committee, though Darilynn was uncertain whether changes would be made based on their work. The student participants, having only spent time in focus groups, seemed to be indifferent or even unaware of their participation in the self-study.

Overview and Next Chapter

Having been introduced to the site and the study participants, in the next chapter descriptions of events coupled with participants' own interpretations of their experiences talking about race provide context. The presentation of the issues guides the examination of the conditions and complexities of the case (Stake, 1995). Divided into themes, I present

thick, rich description (Geertz, 1973) of the meetings and include data collected through interviews, thus facilitating *in vivo* descriptions offered by participants about their experiences with race and racism. Some sections begin with a vignette (Stake, 1995) to illustrate an aspect of the case or to introduce issues within the case. In doing so I offer descriptions that help understand how people at SCU experience race on their campus and how members talk about change on their campus.

CHAPTER V

THEMES IN THE CASE STUDY FINDINGS

"Case studies are undertaken to make the case understandable" (Stake, 1995, p. 85), and thus began the research reported in this dissertation, aiming to understand the relationship between how people at a Christian college talk about race (Sue, 2015) and how they describe their campus racial climate (Hurtado et al., 1998), as well as identifying religious forms of race-talk (Emerson & Smith, 2000) embedded in the descriptions. This chapter begins with a presentation of the findings organized into four themes. I conclude with a discussion of the findings contextualized within the current literature on race-talk and campus racial climate.

Themes Emerging from Data Analysis

As I searched for meaning in this case I attended to frequency and patterns of data. Throughout the analysis process I relied on Stake (1995) and his categorical aggregation method. This method involves repeatedly going through the data, seeking a collection of themes from data that may emerge to reveal meaning or learn about a case. I applied codes to chunks of data through several rounds of reviewing the data. I organized the initial codes into related concepts and spent more analytical time on data that attended to the research questions; this approach caused me to return to the data over and over to help the reader understand the case. See Table 2 below for the five themes, including subthemes that emerged in the data.

Table 2

Presentation of Themes

Common Identity	Crafting the Message	Alternate Reality	Strategizing the Delivery
• Valuing personhood through the Imago Dei • Reframing the belief System • Teaching Christians to respond	• White resistance • Pretending racism does not exist	• Unseen alternate reality • Rules that required strategy	• Don't push too hard • Combatting resistance • Use data

As the goal of this case study is to help the reader understand the phenomena in the case, I discuss the themes individually, while at the same time best they are understood as parts of an interdependent whole. A significant part of the discussion of this study is related to

development of a diversity document produced by the special committee. I chose to include some excerpts from the document, but chose not to include different iterations of the document. This choice was intentional. As the final document was posted online prior to the completion of this study, I was concerned that including the document in the appendix or in the discussion would open up the possibility of identifying the institution, and then from that, the participants. I was invited into a process by the participants that may have been different if the participants had known that I would make the draft(s) public.

Theme 1: Common Identity

I arrived early, entering the large, terraced lecture room for the first meeting of the committee, allowing myself time to prepare for recording field notes. As members arrived some appeared to know each other, and others introduced themselves. In that meeting, members listened more than they talked. Many were hesitant to speak up; I interpreted that as evidence of a lack of familiarity with one another. There seemed to be an absence of clarity regarding the goals and priorities for the committee. Some discussed marginalization of people of color, some discussed how people at SCU view race conversations, and others talked about the complexity of the work ahead for the committee and SCU. As a first priority, the members of the special committee decided to work on a document that communicated their commitment to racial reconciliation through the teachings of their faith.

Members found a common identity in their faith commitment. Participants unanimously chose to develop a theological statement on diversity in order to challenge beliefs held by members of SCU. The committee spent significant time during meetings formulating ideas about what the Bible, their foundational text, said about race and how one should behave based on the beliefs about behavior that could be drawn from that text.

Participants discussed their desire for future readers of the diversity statement to respond to their common identity as evangelical Christians in several ways. Darilynn, a Black staff member, called for the theological statement to have a strong biblical base for considering others. Building on Darilynn's thought, Xavier argued, "The theological statement should cause people to think about mercy and come to ideas of racial diversity with humility. I have to sacrifice who I am today to be something [new or different] tomorrow." In agreement, Chris, a White faculty member said, "The theological statement is a way to help people drop their defensiveness about racial issues." Darilynn, Xavier, and Chris attended to the resistance to race-talk they perceived would come if race were discussed at-large on campus and believed the theological statement should emphasize humility. Adding to the idea that the theological statement should challenge people to think differently than before, Thaddeus, a Black faculty member, argued that he wanted the content of the theological grounding in the statement to make readers ask if their beliefs line up with the interpretations of the Bible presented in the statement.

In the beginning members expressed a variety of priorities for what they wanted to include in the theological statement and what they hoped to accomplish with its development. The theological statement they created would eventually serve several purposes for them. First, they saw themselves as educators and the theological statement formed a basis of understanding about their faith. Members used the Bible to teach and, in their minds, reteach Christian principles for living and being in community. Second, the theological framework served to challenge the status quo, but in a way that neutralized White people's expected arguments against, and emotions derived from talking about race. The participants made a theological case for racial reconciliation and thinking about how race has

affected the university culture, and how members of the community should align themselves with what the participants argue the Bible says about race. Third, committee members intended to create a sense of ownership of racial reconciliation work they expected to prescribe at SCU, what they called "conviction" through the theological framework as particularly helpful in understanding how participants attended to their faith as a common identity and how they resourced the Bible's teachings to, in their minds, challenge the SCU community.

Common Identity: Valuing Personhood Through the Imago Dei

Participants spoke of how to create a sense of ownership over racism a commitment from people at SCU to their common identity rooted in their faith. Chris, a White faculty member and Thaddeus, a Black faculty member, led the charge in terms of their priorities. Chris and Thaddeus said they wanted the statement to reflect the Imago Dei - the concept that all people are made in the Image of God. People, in this way of thinking, are valuable as a reflection of God's image. Thaddeus described the approach this way: the diversity statement "rooted in the Imago Dei, should attend to common identity as Christians. This is a way into people's hearts." During our interview, Chris talked about the Imago Dei as a common identity among Christians saying the concept "is the actual catalyst behind why we value distinct human beings, it's why humans have values, they're made in the image of God."

He reiterated his earlier talking points that the theological grounding of the diversity statement "matters for faith." "God cares about [racial unity]," he continued, because people are created in the "image of God." Racial reconciliation is therefore, Chris explained, "a crucial issue for the church" in the sense, he said

> that [God] deeply cares about racial unity and deeply cares about all of his creation being treated rightly, as valued and important, and so I think it's really important…that we communicate the deep value of every person, people, race, nation, language.

Conversely, he acknowledged possible shortcomings with this approach, given that "people of color may not take the image of God idea well," because drawings, paintings, portraits, and images of Jesus tend to be White. Metaphorically, he continued, White Christians are often put forth as representatives of the character of Jesus. All of the members of this committee wanted to shape a common identity and call others in the campus community into that identity. Realizing the Imago Dei was just one piece of their beliefs, they discussed that they may need to step out a bit further and consider more of the belief system.

Common Identity: Reframing the Belief System

Participants in their anticipation of getting members of SCU on board with the diversity statement discussed why and how to make a compelling argument to deepen people's beliefs about racial diversity and racial reconciliation. In an early meeting, as the committee began to work out how they might help people of SCU reframe their beliefs, Matt and Chris discussed the need for their diversity statement to have theological grounding that shapes the belief system. I observed Matt discuss with Chris how to set up the argument. Matt wanted to identify beliefs that the committee believed they were correct on and for which they could find common ground. Matt also wanted to know what challenges to tenets of faith would make people think. Chris offered one of the clearest presentations of this point: "The university has been faithful" to biblical messages about the individual and their reconciled relationship with God. However, for Chris, "The gospel is bigger than that. The

gospel is also about restoring broken creation. Relationships with each other are a part of that broken creation and racial tensions are a result of that as well." He said that what they would be communicating in a statement is a Biblical understanding that "restoration of all of creation" is a part of the gospel too.

In my subsequent interview with Chris, he expanded on his argument to the committee by talking about how he taught this notion in the classroom. "The gospel" he said, "is not only about transforming hearts and your soul, but it's about transforming the world around you as a new creation, bringing about new creation realities in your world." Like Emerson and Smith (2000), Chris challenged the notion that many White Christians have about racism – namely that because individual relationship between a person and God is central to Christian belief, Christians and particularly White Christians do not adhere to a systems view of racism. They believed racism is an individual sin to be dealt with between God and individuals, thus racism is an individual act. Chris pointed out several times that evangelical Christians do well at believing and acting on the first part of the two-part narrative of the Bible. He went further on this point during our interview:

> The gospel has been kind of boiled down to Jesus dying on a cross to bridge the gap or overcome the sin that separates me from God. And that divine-human interaction is the gospel, and that I can be restored in my relationship with God. And preaching the gospel is telling people about that and getting them to be in right relationship with God. And that's an important part of the gospel. And that's not wrong. It's just small.

The full message Chris wanted others to understand began, in his mind, "in Genesis, which a lot of us miss, ... God [is] creating a temple for himself... And human rebellion creates this separation between heaven and earth." Chris described presenting this message to his

students as one of repairing what had been broken apart: “The gospel,” he said, “is the story of God putting heaven and earth back together again. That's the gospel. You now are like the people that live with heaven and earth put together again.” Chris seemed to want to challenge the SCU community in their belief that they may not want to talk about racism, yet according to the story of the Bible, Christians must reconcile broken relationships with others. Chris said, “Be my agents of the universal restoration in the world around you, embody that, bring about those realities.” The call to embody the new creation reality was, for Chris, directly related to the topic of addressing racism on SCU’s campus “new creations transformed by Jesus, forgiven by Jesus . . . that then [a new creation] engages a broken world and tries to overcome those broken things and fix those broken things, poverty, hunger, racial disrupt.”

Participants seemed to easily adopt both a position that they must correct some assumptions in the Christian belief system and viewed Chris as an authority on the matter because of his profession as a biblical scholar. Chris stated that Christians tended to act as though they believe only a part of a central teaching of the Bible. “We'd be involved in all those things,” Chris said – addressing racial disrupt, along with other what he called “broken things,” because “that's the whole gospel, not the small gospel.” Rick, recognizing Chris’s passion for the theological statement, asked Chris, along with Darilynn and Thaddeus to write a theological framework for the diversity statement.

Common Identity: Teaching Christians to Respond

Participants, particularly the faculty and staff committee members, believed they should draw attention to SCU members’ common identity as Christians through Imago Dei, by challenging common-held beliefs, and by using the Bible to inspire SCU members to action. After Chris, Thaddeus, and Darilynn brought the draft of the theological statement of

diversity, a couple pages in length, to the committee, Thaddeus began to explain some of the statement. He said the statement moves from convictions to commitment, basing actions on theological premises.

After reading the draft theological statement, much of the conversation shifted to how committee members believed readers might respond to specific phrases and ideas in the document. The committee members expected pushback from future readers but hoped that people at SCU would be willing to adhere to the messages in the theological statement even if they felt strong, negative emotions in response. Participants aligned with the beliefs that formed their common identity as Christians and use Christian practices and the Bible to back up their claims.

Xavier talked about the need to have difficult conversations; "to be open to being offended and offer[ing] grace." "In community," he continued, "we meet people where they are and where they need relationship. This [SCU] is a great place to have difficult and offensive conversations. We worship together so we should be able to have [difficult] conversations. Xavier emphasized the practice of worship as part of the Christian college community. In his mind, if Christians participate in such an important and sacred practice together, they could withstand or should be willing to withstand difficult conversations about racism.

Chris, in his interview, talked about how he believed Christians should respond when conversations about racism draw attention to people who feel ignored. He referenced a story in the book of Acts in the Bible about widows who felt neglected. When they spoke up to the disciples, the disciples listened and appointed people to care for the women, listen, and meet their needs. The disciples were not defensive. "Listen," Chris continued,

> if your initial reaction to people feeling marginalized and seeing you as privileged is defensive then that's not the Christian posture you need to take. The Christian posture is, "What can I do to make you feel heard, to make you feel valued, to make you feel empowered, to fix whatever you perceive to be wrong?" And to go in above and beyond to do that.

Chris put considerable weight on validating others' experience over defending one's position. He believed that was the way the Bible said Christians and thus members of SCU ought to be behave and were not.

Chris utilized another story about a character in the Bible named Paul to emphasize the importance of reconciliation. In this story, Paul writes to a group of Christians about how they should treat lawsuits. Paul says that accepting having someone commit wrong toward you is better than being at odds with them because you sued them. Thinking about his argument, I asked him if he thought White Christians were resistant to talking about racism and if so how should they respond. "How can we understand you?" Chris said, "How can we empower you to help resolve the problem with us?" Chris and others challenged the notion of resistance from White Christians with teachings from the Bible that they interpreted to teach the opposite.

Participants at SCU wanted to make changes to address racism on campus. One strategy they used was to challenge members of SCU's values through the theological statement in which participants used the Bible to teach principles to which Christians at SCU should adhere. Participants attempted to tap into SCU members' common identity as Christians, argue that all people have value as creations of God, that the Bible teaches Christians to actively engage in racial reconciliation, and that Christians should be humble as

they approach change to improve racism. Participants saw themselves as preachers and teachers of the Bible and used their positions on the committee to challenge the beliefs of members of SCU who may not view racism as their responsibility, and to promote a particular set of actions based on biblical doctrine.

Theme 2: Crafting the Message

Thaddeus, Darilynn, and Chris brought copies of the draft document for the committee to read. As the meeting began, the room was silent, and all the members read the statement for the first time. I watched to see the members' reactions. There were no obvious patterns: one person flipped the pages back and forth; a few circled words or phrases on the page. Ultimately, I was unable to interpret the body language or facial expressions with any confidence. Finally, speaking about this, someone said, "It's scaffolded like a charcoal drawing." Another said they like the phrase "We come humbly." Rene said, "This is beautiful." I saw her put a star next to the phrase "invisible culture of whiteness." She continued, "Wow, that's good." Rick, clarifying the organization of the diversity statement said, the statement appeared to him to take the following shape: 1. acknowledge the wrongs of the past and approach racism with humility; 2. Persuade the reader that something needed to change and commit to make changes; and 3. the plan of action. In my observation the diversity statement resonated for people of color on the committee. Rene again expressed that she was in awe. She thanked the three writers, repeating "This is so good." The diversity statement captured a lot of emotion that people of color in the room wanted to express but had not said or had not heard at SCU.

For participants of color at SCU talking about racism meant to talk about race more frequently and talk about racism as it relates to a system of belief rather than individual acts

of discrimination. For faculty and staff participants of color, talking about racism meant to explicitly name the barriers to changing culture at SCU. Participants of color in particular expressed relief about hearing the phrase the invisible culture of Whiteness expressed at the university. From the first to last draft the statement about the invisible culture of Whiteness stayed the same. The phrase read:

> We strive to meet the challenges of these commitments by disrupting barriers such as the invisible culture of Whiteness on campus which erodes the sense of belonging for many students, faculty, and staff of color.

Participants of color felt their experience was being communicated in a way that they had not been able to talk about before at SCU. Expressing details related to being a minority in a majority culture where norms were taken for granted or unacknowledged was a relief. While some participants struggled with whether to keep the phrase in the document, others expressed a sense of freedom they experienced by naming explicitly the invisible culture of Whiteness that felt like a barrier for them at SCU.

The invisible culture of Whiteness was complex to discuss. On the one hand, the process of talking about it reflected a partnership among participants. People of color had to teach White people about the invisible culture of Whiteness and White participants had to listen without being offended by the argument. Rene, Xavier, Thaddeus, and Darilynn, staff and faculty of color, discussed White norms, colorblindness, whitewashing, feelings of otherness, and ways that they perceived White people knowingly and unknowingly participate in racism. On the other hand, whether to talk about race or not was not just a White issue. People of color struggled with how explicitly to talk about race, but as they confronted White resistance.

White Resistance

For several meetings, the committee worked on the diversity statement, making grammatical changes, and reformatting sometimes to make the document clearer. At this meeting, the group dialogued about the phrase "invisible culture of Whiteness." When participants described their racial experiences at SCU, they described White culture and how it affected them using a variety of methods and examples. Chris described becoming aware of his race as a difficult process: "[I]t's hard when you're the majority. You just are what is normal in your world." One of the ways participants described the invisible culture of Whiteness was by giving examples of White norms.

Norms

Participants described the invisible culture of Whiteness as a belief system where White people valued White culture first. In a committee meeting about how to increase participation by students of color, Darilynn and Thaddeus, Black staff and faculty respectively, talked about how to make students of color feel more welcome so they would be interested in participating in student leadership opportunities. Matt, a White administrator, responded by saying that students of color did not apply for leadership positions. Darilynn described the systemic barrier she perceived students of color experience. She said that student leaders are sought out by other students and by faculty and staff, who are majority White. She said that biases among these groups are difficult to detect because White people do not recognize they consider White people first, as the norm. Thaddeus responded by saying that he believed that considering White students first is not necessarily intentional but contributes to students of color feeling isolated and excluded. Students of color I interviewed talked about White students thinking about White culture first and how that impacted their

experience at SCU. Chimese, a Black female student leader, said she was passed over frequently in favor of her White peers. She was used to being overlooked as a Black student but had recently observed another Black student leader experience the same:

> Right now, there's another one [Black student leader], but she just going through the same thing I'm going through. … when she's talking, they'll talk over her or cut her off real fast... I can see that she gets tasked with the busy work. She's not tasked with the actual hard, important work.

Though Chimese was involved on campus, she described White people considering White students before thinking about her and her peers of color. Chimese also talked about how White norms at SCU impacted her day-to-day choices. One example she gave was about listening to music. She described a dominant power that went beyond just taste in music. In our interview she told me about an instance when a White friend of hers came to her while Chimese was listening to a hip-hop artist. They were both working, and her friend told her that Chimese could not listen to that type of music at work. Chimese said she responded to her to tell her that she was listening to Christian hip hop music, but her friend assumed the music was inappropriate because of its style.

> I was playing it and my friend goes, Oh my gosh, you're not supposed to be playing it. And I go stop and listen to the lyrics. Literally, listen to it... I have to play their music... I kinda get pushed to the back.

Because the music did not fit the White norm of what Christian music was supposed to sound like, her friend intervened.

Kristy, a senior I interviewed, said that White students tended to participate in the same cultural activities creating a nucleus of popular practices that dominate campus culture.

> There's this one church that almost every student goes to that I don't go to 'cause I don't like big churches...And so there's at least one of three churches that they [most White students] go to, and everyone else [students of color and few White students] goes to a smaller church nobody knows about.

Kristy equated attending one of the smaller churches that is less popular among White students to feeling left out in the campus culture.

One participant described the influence of White norms on how she viewed herself as a person of color. In my interview with Martha, a Latina woman, told me how she was raised and what led to some change in her thoughts about her heritage. Martha said her father, born in Mexico and raised in the United States, would say she was not brown, but instead White. "Yes," he would say, "you have a Spanish heritage, but you're gonna struggle in your Spanish heritage living here in the United States, so" he would continue, "English, the White culture is the way to go. And, that's," Martha recounted in her interview, "how we were raised." Valuing White culture was a way for Martha and her family to cope with racism.

People of color on the committee wanted to explicitly talk about racism and name the invisible culture of Whiteness as one form of racism in the diversity statement. After a bit of committee discussion about White norms, someone asked if the statement about the invisible culture of Whiteness could be triggering to White people. The answer was yes. The cultural change that participants wanted SCU to make required statements about beliefs and values versus strategies and policies. Rene, a Latina faculty member, responding to the value of talking about the invisibility of Whiteness and White culture, argued strategies solely focused on demographic improvement in diversity can be isolating and ostracizing because White people often do not recognize that values they view as normal may not be normal for people

of color. Rick asked if belief systems embedded in the invisibility of Whiteness at SCU can be corrected. Rene responded that having the phrase in the statement meant that Whiteness is not invisible anymore.

Thaddeus spoke about the struggle to overcome the invisibility of Whiteness which, he explained, might be overcome by putting care front and center. He talked about caring for people of color and recognizing there is something they experience that is alternative to the norms. For participants of color including the phrase the invisible culture of Whiteness validated their experiences with racism. Chris, a White faculty member, also said the reality can feel hostile but can turn from hostile to "change the perception from you don't hear me to we do." Thaddeus said White norms are everywhere. Linda, a Black faculty member, continued a discussion about White norms by asking if White norms were inherently bad. Chris responded with his opinion that when people are aware of how their actions are received and do not care, others view those who do not change as apathetic toward racism. When White people act as though their norms are everyone's norms, or have not even thought about other norms, they can make people of color feel like the experiences that differ from White people go unrecognized.

Pretending Racism Does Not Exist

Another specific phrase in the committee's document became a part of the discussion throughout the process. In the diversity statement, the committee communicated that a priority for SCU was to be "realistic about race issues on campus," address them in "proactive conversations about race" in ways that develop "understanding of all perspectives and experiences at SCU rather than pretending they do not exist." The draft document described the failure of the institution to address race issues on campus in the past and

commit to talk about racial issues moving forward instead of "pretending they do not exist." Student participants described and the effect of the campus' tendency to ignore race and faculty and staff on the committee talked about giving voice to their experiences felt. In general, participants talked about ways that ignoring conversations about racism affected them. Chimese said she perceived that she was often ignored at her campus job because of her race. She said,

> They don't think about it [Black culture]. They don't think about catering to my people, so I think I have to force it [talking about racism] because they didn't think about it… I've never, not once, ever been tasked with anything hard. They've never once called me first to see, Hey, can you... They've never given me the opportunity to even try to step up.

I asked Martha, an SCU veteran of more than thirty years, to reflect about her time at SCU and discussion about racism. She said that she thought racism was ignored through the years. She struggled to talk about race. On one hand she said she understood why it was ignored – that SCU didn't want people of color to feel different. She said she that even she advocated a colorblind belief system because she wanted color not to matter, she said, "just see me for who I am." Though she said ignoring conversations about race should not be the end goal, reflecting she said,

> I kept ignoring, but I'm a Hispanic person, and I think... Just don't ignore [conversations about race]. I think that, to me, that's the key word. I ignored it. Other people ignored it because it's like you're just trying to make it all the same, but you have to address it when it comes up.

Martha and others said that talking about race is worth the discomfort that might occur as a result of talking about race.

Darilynn, a Black staff member, described how she related to White people during a time in the past when SCU students and alumni called out the institution about racism. Though she did not describe the particular event, she detailed the battle in emotions she felt about the event and how the people in her office were moved only after she expressed to them how she felt. On the one hand she was frustrated that her White colleagues, who shared that space, seemed to be unaffected by the reports of racism. On the other, she said she understood how her White colleagues responded and she was thankful for their reaction, but also disappointed that they only reacted after they saw her emotional about the event.

> So... if I wasn't so emotionally moved, we would've just posted like, 'Hey, campus stores is still available today.' After getting called out… but yeah, so they definitely were moved in seeing me being moved, which is good and appreciated, but still not enough because you shouldn't have to have someone who represents that pocket of people to say, this is atrocious and disturbing... and we shouldn't move forward... like it [racism] doesn't exist.

In her mind, people at SCU responded to a specific incidence of racism that occurred to her because they were close to her and saw that she was upset by the event. They would not have reacted if they had not observed her reaction.

In my interviews with Martha and Xavier they described their experience when the committee talked about the phrase, "pretend that race issues do not exist." For both, the committee conversation was memorable, however for different reasons. The conversation challenged Martha because she saw White people as her allies with power.

> That was a hard conversation for me. I'm still trying to get past [if White people were intentional]… 'Cause to me, White people weren't the enemy. White people were the ones I need to draw to in order to succeed in life. Okay, all my best friends are White people.

Xavier though was less conflicted about his feelings. During our interview I asked Xavier if there was anything that he thought was good in the draft document - that expressed how he felt in a way that helped white people understand his experience as a Black man.

> So, the word pretending... My experiences dictate that pretending has been the common practice. Surely you cannot be that blind to what I'm going through, to what I'm experiencing. So, you have to be pretending as if you don't see it.

Xavier gave an example of when he came to SCU and his perceptions of how White people ignore racism. In one of the meetings Xavier talked about how he expected White people at SCU would act.

> I mentioned this in one of the meetings that when I came here [to SCU], because it was a Christian institution, me being even more nervous because how the Bible and its theology has been used in the past to subjugate my people. So, pretending that that wasn't used as a weapon [was troubling and disingenuous], 'surely you know better'.

Xavier and others described a tension between what they believed White people were aware of regarding racism and a racist system in which they unknowingly or intentionally participated. For people at SCU the invisible culture of Whiteness captured the notions that White culture, despite White people's failure to recognize its existence, was present and used to dominate non-white cultures. Similarly, participants found that the phrase, "pretending

racism does not exist" communicated that White people had agency and responsibility in a system of racism.

Theme 3: Alternate Reality

The primary approach of the faculty and staff committee to assessing racism on campus was through listening to the experiences of people of color on the committee. SCU people of color were concerned about communicating the alternate experiences of people of color at SCU. According to participants an alternate reality existed at SCU that people of color experienced but White people neither recognized nor understood. People of color reported that the lack of recognition by White people of people of color functioning in two worlds, the norms of White people and the reality experienced by people of color was isolating, and unwelcoming, and participants described strategies they used to cope. Participants seemed to be speaking to what DuBois (1903) described as double-consciousness in his writings. The concept identifies the notion that Black people in America experience two disparate realities, the way White people see Black people and the way Black people see themselves and the struggle for Black people with the conforming pressure of norms of White society. SCU participants described this two-ness in society and at SCU.

In one committee meeting, the group noted the differences in responses between people of color and White people to the survey conducted the previous year. Thaddeus, a Black professor said, "People of color live in an alternate reality and there are sharp differences between the views of White people and Black people…Your [White people] reality may not be the right reality." Though he did not explain more about what that experience was like, others provided examples. For example, Xavier, a Black faculty member, described the visceral response he has "every time I see flashing blue lights":

> Every time I see flashing blue lights, I wonder whether I'ma make it home. Growing up and having a police officer be courteous or friendly to you was foreign. And my White counterpart saying, "Hey officer. How's it going?" Or going into a restaurant and immediately looking at the number of people of color that either work there or sitting there. Will this [the number of people of color] predicate my experience in this [majority White] place by some notion?

Xavier described the relative difference in how he and his White counterparts experience law enforcement as "common experiences" for Black people, and simultaneously something most White people – at SCU and beyond – do not understand. Not feeling understood by those around him left him feeling isolated. Chimese, a Black student, also talked specifically in our interview about how it felt to live in two realities at SCU:

> I look at my [White] co-workers and they just seem so comfortable to just be themselves. I am scared to sit there and fully open up, and to me... sometimes it's sad... I wanna be free… For me, freedom is being able to sit there and voice my opinion without it being shut down.

Xavier and Chimese reflected on feeling isolated as people of color at SCU – the consequence of knowingly living in two realities.

Unseen Alternate Reality

Participants, especially those of color, contended that White people tended not to see the reality of people of color. Participants describe their reality as alternate in large part because White people do not validate or talk about the realities of people of color. Xavier said that the frustration for Black employees is that they experience many injustices that white people do not see.

In an early committee meeting the members sat around the table talking about what exactly about racism they believe needed to change. The conversation mirrored literature about moving beyond diversifying the demographic make-up of a university (Hurtado et al., 1998). Darilynn, a Black staff member said that she believed the psychological dimension (perceptions of racial tension, discrimination, and prejudice) was the most important area for SCU to change. She said that White people say people of color are welcome at SCU, but believed the silence related to racial issues and to more than one lived racial experience takes a psychological toll on people of color. In our individual interview, Darilynn reflected that even though she loved working at her alma mater and had coping skills to deal with living in an alternate reality, she was not sure how long she wanted to deal with the isolation related to her community invalidating her two-world lived experience. “Because I love SCU... I love the community here. I love my story here and my place, but coming into adulthood, I'm like, I don't wanna be alone in a community that I have.” On the one hand, Darilynn felt she had a sense of community, on the other the unrecognized reality she lived produced loneliness. She and other participants of color at SCU worried that the paradoxes lived by people of color were trivialized and described their striving to be recognized.

Thaddeus, a Black faculty member, said that through this self-study process he wanted to protect the validity of the alternate realities. He described the invalidating silence by his White colleagues as the source of isolation. “I have never heard a faculty member say they recognize that my experience may be different than theirs. That I may experience an alternate universe. This feels isolating and unacknowledged.” The invisibility that Thaddeus and Darilynn described was not just about what Brown (2020) described as “White

weightlessness", a system of oppression that is invisible to White people (p. 154). They described how an invisible system that ignores their reality makes them invisible.

Participants, motivated by the unseen alternate reality and as members of the committee, saw themselves as teachers of the SCU community about the lived experiences of people of color at SCU. To prove the validity of the alternate reality, the people of color serving on the committee talked to their White colleagues about the strategies they used to navigate the two worlds in which they lived.

Code Switching, or Rules for People of Color Requiring Behavioral Strategies

In my interview with Darilynn, we talked about her interaction with White, Black, and Latina peers on the committee. She reported that she felt silenced on the committee. She said she believed that others did not respect her opinion as much because of her age and perhaps gender, rather than her race. However, in our interview she showed some resentment toward Thaddeus, a Black faculty member, for being accepted by White members in the committee by how he presented his arguments, for regulating himself more than perhaps in ways she did not perceive she was able to display.

Black participants more often talked about White people's misperceptions about them because of their mannerisms. In contrast, both Latina participants and the Asian student participant described that people of their race expected them to be more reserved and White people similarly expected them to assimilate quietly. They described these expectations as reflecting culture at-large rather than specifically about the campus climate at SCU.

Behavioral code-switching. Thaddeus and Xavier, both Black faculty members, talked about how their families were loud and expressive growing up but that this was not accepted at SCU. "If you wanted to get your voice heard in a family of 10 or 12," Xavier

said, he needed to be “demonstrative,” move his hands a lot. In contrast, to get his point across in a department meeting, even if he was passionate about the topic, he would “restrain” himself and use a phrase like, “Oh, well, let’s reconsider.” He said this was a way to ease his White counterparts “into more of his personality.”

I observed Xavier regulating himself to keep up the professionalism standard that he perceived White people at SCU expected. In the very first meeting with the committee, I noticed Xavier speaking quietly. In fact, when he first spoke during a committee meeting, someone asked him to speak up because they could not hear him. He said he was trying not to be unprofessional. At that point I was unclear about Xavier’s personality, but I eventually came to know him as a loud, expressive, and vibrant person.

Participants of color described modulating their voices and expression when interacting with their White peers. Xavier recalled a story where with colleagues in his department he said, [he] “let more of [his] personality slip out” in a conversation that “startled’ two of them. He described their reaction and his internal dialogue saying,

> Well... My first thought was to sort of apologize. It was visible. Eyes bulk [get big], head went back. And I said, "Maybe I should apologize." And then second thought was, Well, this is me. Why should I apologize... It wasn't offensive. It was just being more demonstrative.

In later committee meetings, as Xavier was more comfortable, his personality came out. He was expressive and less reserved.

Linguistic code-switching. Xavier talked about how he used code-switching as a strategy to earn and keep respect amid White norms. He described the isolation he felt working with colleagues that did not seem to understand his experience.

> So, the first thing is when I got to this institution, it was, let me code-switch. Let me try to act the standard of professionalism that is expected. So, restricting some of the mannerisms, some of the comments, or how I comment, just so that I'm not perceived as an aggressive Black person.

He used code-switching (Gumperz, 1982) to be accepted by his White peers at SCU. Xavier talked about choosing White vernacular to relate to his White peers. During our interview, he gave an example of a word that he used often - "aks." He said that White people say "ask" so he used "ask" around his White peers instead of aks. "Aks" was not a new word, but a pronunciation of ask that he was taught to say growing up.

In our interview, Chimese, a Black student, recalled that she utilized code-switching with White faculty and students. She said that using code-switching did not bother her because she was so used to utilizing the strategy at SCU and before SCU. She said, "I'm gonna live my life. I stopped trying to worry about other people…how they're responding to me. I code switch, but I don't have to tighten up." The linguistic shifts she utilized were embedded in her reality.

Though participants of color expressed feeling isolated as a result of the campus climate at SCU, faculty and staff participants expressed relief and satisfaction in having the opportunity to expose their unseen alternate reality in the committee and at the potential to do so at SCU. People at SCU hoped their work on the committee would produce a product that would communicate the lived realities of people of color at SCU as a result of racism and their responsibilities as members of the SCU community. Since the committee decided their primary task was to develop a document to teach the SCU community about race and the SCU community's responsibility in making change at SCU, they had to decide what would

be included in how they crafted and how they delivered the message. Participants discussions centered around how to overcome White resistance to change at SCU.

Theme 4: Strategizing the Delivery

With three meetings left, the committee members discussed the diversity document many times over. As the committee began to imagine their audience, the physical people who would read the document, they considered how best to be heard. The group revisited two specific points: the use of "pretending" in relation to acknowledging that race issues exist on campus, and the phrase "invisible culture of Whiteness" to denote participant's description of the most pervasive barrier toward sense of belonging for people of color on campus. Matt and Rick, though still engaging, spoke up about their discomfort with the phrases. Xavier said that the term "pretending" communicated the experience he felt, but there was what he called a "tone" that indicated White people know racism existed on campus but intentionally chose to ignore its existence. He was conflicted about what may be conveyed through the phrase that "may not be needed." Xavier talked about his struggle "to decide what kind of Christ I want to be. The Christ who turned over the tables or the merciful Christ." There was a sense in this discussion that they believed a balance was needed not to – on the one hand -- turn people off from the message and on the other to acknowledge the experiences of people of color at SCU. Although participants talked about race in different ways than they had previously during these meetings, several strategies emerged: how hard to push, considering resistance, and the use of data as proof that silence about racism promotes negative campus climate.

Don't Push Too Hard

Some participants worried about challenging White resistance for fear they may disengage. Members discussed how White people would receive the phrases "the invisible culture of Whiteness" and "pretending it [racism] does not exist." In my interview with Martha, I asked her what she thought about the discussion about the phrases and the underlying notion of how much the phrases might make White people feel uncomfortable enough to shut down. She tended to agree more with Matt and Rick as she described her preferred approach saying,

> Let's not try to offend people. Let's speak the truth in love. Knowing that there are some people who aren't agreeing with this [that silence on racism is intentional], that will be White. Let's not stir so much that nothing changes.

Martha was aware of the power for White people to withdraw from conversation about race if they were explicitly blamed for racism.

As the committee's goal was to make changes in values of people at SCU, participants were concerned that being too explicit about what they believed was happening at SCU might cause White people to resist. White people on the committee resisted the idea that the document should communicate that White people were aware of systemic racism, chose to ignore it, and needed to make changes. Some asked to soften the language so as not to push White people away. Later, during our interview, Chris suggested "maybe there's wisdom in not having" the pretending phrase; at the same time, he acknowledged being in a "tough place" because, he wondered aloud, "who am I betraying in getting rid of [the notion that silence on racism is intentional]?"

At one point in the discussion, Rick said he wanted to "inspire people, not punch them in the throat." Regarding the phrase "pretending it [racism] does not exist," most of the members of the group nodded in agreement at Rick's perspective and began talking about how to balance what was required to attract people to the discussion for change. Darilynn reluctantly conceded that the language might be too strong. They replaced the phrase with "intentionally and unintentionally" neglecting race issues. In our interview, I asked Xavier about what he thought about removing "pretending it does not exist." He processed aloud about the positives and negatives of debating the phrase, saying:

> I can see why we changed from that because pretending also gave ownership of knowledge. Were they even aware? And that's one of the issues with this staying woke. And I guess that was my woke moment in that we want to use pretend as if everyone is aware. We want everyone to be aware. We're shocked that they're not aware, but truth be told they're not.

As educators, they were keenly aware of the challenge of bringing people along for change, while being honest about the realities of racism.

Considering Resistance

The special committee talked about how they expected White people to not want to talk about race or that they expected through this self-study that SCU may already be talking about race too much. Considering resistance, participants wrote into the document directions about how one should respond should they feel resistant. They talked about what the reaction to this phrase may be among readers. Some speculated it could cause some intense emotion. Thaddeus said the document explained that experiencing strong emotion in response to reading the document would be a good thing. The final draft read that if readers of the

document felt strong negative emotions, they should "heed those emotions as proof for the need to renew commitments to our spiritual call for healing racial/ethnic divides on campus."

Thaddeus did not "want people to feel comfortable when they read this." Instead, he wanted people to read the diversity statement and think, if they are going to be better Christians, this is important. He wanted readers to pay attention. He said, "The document reads that if the reader is feeling this way, it's okay. It's normal. The statement is an invitation to reflect." Thaddeus believed that pushing against resistance was worth the risk. As a result, Thaddeus said, "We match data that has already been collected with strategy. People will be fine. They are way more resilient than we give them credit for."

Use Data

On several occasions, people of color used data or talked about using data to support their arguments in the face of opposition. In late August, the group had not yet formulated a plan. They bounced from topic to topic as the issues were many. As the group discussed how people might receive the message that people of color struggle to feel welcome at SCU, the group asked if White people could handle the claim. Thaddeus talked about something DiAngelo (2018) has termed "white fragility" but also said that he believed people at SCU could handle the potential negative emotions. White fragility refers to the phenomenon that society is set up to insulate White people from racial discomfort and thus lack the stamina to engage in difficult conversations related to race. He argued that data was available to support the committee's claims that people of color felt unwelcome at SCU as documented in the draft diversity statement.

Rene proposed a similar strategy in a later meeting, recommending a discussion about a hostile environment be included in the document. She pointed to the data collected

previously where people of color responded that SCU was hostile. When she used those data points there was no argument from others, but no statement about a hostile environment was included in any of the draft or final statements. Excluding Rene's proposal, participants talked about using data in future discussions, as they suggested perhaps in town halls or in talks with colleagues as a way to prove that discussions about racism on campus was important and to combat resistance to race-talk.

Silence

Participants also discussed not just what was being said about racism, but what was not being said and whether this silence was okay. White participants were more likely to be okay with talking less about racism on campus compared to participants of color. One of the striking conversations in the committee was about the role Christian organizations play in silence. Participants on the committee discussed the responsibility of Christian organizations, the University being one of them, to speak up about racism so that it was not continually perpetuated. Participants of color said that silence was a harmful strategy and Christian organizations seem too often to remain silent. Participants said that speaking up was not just about responding to major moments but about the day-to-day experiences of people of color.

In a committee discussion about Christian organizations' role in talking about racism, Xavier began to talk about how he and others may perceive silence at SCU. He perceived that peers say coming to a Christian university, one doesn't expect racism, and therefore do not anticipate a need to discuss racism as a campus climate issue. Xavier said that he expected racism more at a Christian university because throughout history the Bible was used to enslave. He then referenced Dr. Martin Luther King's description of Sunday morning at Christian churches as the most segregated hour in 1960s America. Xavier saw the same

segregation in 2022; “People of color have experienced this [racism] for too long,” he continued, “for Christian organizations to be completely silent”; thus, Xavier’s analysis of the campus racial climate was that SCU was silent about racism, and that the silence was not just unintentional silence. Matt, a White administrator then asked, “Each time something happens in the world, does the institution need to respond?” The answer was no, but Xavier argued that “this [moment in history following the killing of George Floyd and SCU’s decision to evaluate racial tension on its campus] is a major moment, so yes.” White participants more often felt comfortable being silent. Rick followed with the rhetorical question about responding to national events, “Does the institution at large recognize the land mines with making a statement?” Rick said, “If the silence is too loud, to not be silent is fraught with rockets.” Rick’s position as an executive leader made him privy to positive and negative feedback about making statements following a national incident. He believed that silence was a wise tool to utilize, though participants of color expressed that silence was akin to pretending racism did not exist.

In student participants’ evaluation of SCU’s racial climate, they seemed to agree with Xavier and others that silence about racism was a strategy, but not desirable one. Kristy, an Asian student expressed a similar sentiment to faculty and staff participants about the amount race was talked about on campus. “People don't really acknowledge that there's a race issue, it's just non-existent,” Kristy said; more often, she experienced people whose attitude seemed to sound like this: "and if it [racism] was [an issue]... It's just in your [people of color] head.” She was frustrated by the silencing force of her White peers that halted conversations about race.

Jennifer, a White student, and I talked about her perceptions of other students' dis-/comfort with talking about race. She said she believed that some people shy away from talking about race because it can be an uncomfortable topic. She stated that she did not hear race talked about very often. I asked her if talking about race could happen too often. She replied,

> I have never experienced that [race talked about too much] just because... growing up, I didn't feel like it [talking about race] was necessary. Which doesn't mean that not talking about it is the right thing. Just because it [conversations about race] didn't exist doesn't mean it shouldn't be talked about.

Jennifer described that talking about racism was ideal but accepted silence because she did not perceive that racism directly affected her. People at SCU varied in their beliefs about how much race should be discussed. More White participants held more idealistic views about racism, namely that the goal for them was to not have to talk about race. People of color however, believed that talking about race was necessary and that conversations were not happening enough at SCU. Participants deployed or talked about ways to deploy a variety of communication strategies as a result of their expectation that White members of SCU would resist talking about racism.

The Final Document

The primary means of teaching and preaching utilized by the faculty and staff committee was through this diversity document. As previously discussed, the document included a theological argument to draw members of SCU to an understanding of why addressing racism was important to the SCU community based on Biblical teachings and the document included a description of what kinds of issues the SCU community was facing

related to racism. Faculty and staff participants on the committee believed they were contributing to change at SCU and believed their conversations could lead to enduring changes that challenged the held beliefs perpetuating a system of racism on SCU's campus. For some participants, the diversity document was important because it communicated experiences that had not, in their minds, been communicated to the SCU community before. For other participants, change occurred in their beliefs because of their time on the committee and believed less should be said in the diversity document because they believed members of SCU, especially White members, required the kind of relational, group oriented, work that would help them challenge their assumptions and beliefs. Evidenced by the final discussions about whether to keep the phrases "invisible culture of Whiteness" and "pretending racism does not exist," participants found it difficult to communicate in a way that was communal, that did not prioritize one group over another.

In the second to last meeting Rick said he was going to send the draft document to people within the institution, not serving on the committee and encouraged other members to do the same to get some feedback. In the final meeting, Rick and others brought feedback from outside members. Participants moved quickly past grammatical and editorial suggestions that were not related to content, but phrasing.

Pretend Racism Does Not Exist. In crafting their message committee participants wanted to create a document that challenged the status quo, but also pulled members of SCU into the community and its shared values. The committee decided to change the statement to say that SCU should value talking about racism in a variety of ways, "rather than intentionally or unintentionally neglecting these issues." Participants were mixed in what ownership White people at SCU played in knowing about and addressing racism. People of

color were okay with the change but battled with what they were giving up by changing the way they expressed how they felt. Xavier battled particularly with how much grace to show in the document. In the meeting he was asked how he felt about the change. Xavier, talking about what kind of representation of Christ he wanted to be said, "I'm trying to decide what Jesus I'm going to be. The push over the tables in the temple Jesus or the Jesus filled with grace." Along with others, Xavier believed that he could not determine if White people intentionally ignored the existence of racism, though it was difficult for him to believe it was unintentional.

"The Invisible Culture of Whiteness." While editing the document Rick came to the phrase "invisible culture of Whiteness." Later, during the meeting, he told his colleagues "the phrase bothered almost everyone I showed it to." Rick and Matt, both White administrators believed that Whiteness as an oppressive culture would be challenging to explain to White people. Matt argued that this concept required a great deal of explanation for him to understand, and thus he wanted to eliminate the phrase "invisible culture of Whiteness."

Though Rick was unclear about who had the final say, the group talked as though the president of the university and the Board of Trustees would be the only two that would have higher rank than him. Rick said, "I get the sense that this statement is not going to make the final document." Linda asked him directly how he felt about it and Rick replied, "I don't want to Whitewash the statement" by taking the phrase out. "But," Rick said, "not everyone knows what "the invisible culture of Whiteness means." Though most of the people of color in the room did not find the phrase problematic, Rene, a Latina faculty member, wrestling

with how to give credibility to how much the phrase may impact White people chimed in: “It takes a lot to talk about Whiteness, especially for White students.”

People of color in the room argued to keep the phrase in the document. They described how being able to teach the community about Whiteness as an invisible belief system that places importance on the norms within the system at the expense of non-White cultural norms was relieving and beneficial for the SCU community. The document “puts words to what I feel,” Xavier said, and then added some examples: “Why is Jesus always white? Why is Santa always White? We’re hyphenated. All of this is unacknowledged. “Culture means White and we’re [people of color] hyphenated.”

Rene talked about how the language in the document illuminated the alternate reality about life at SCU. She said that it “communicated with two different people groups.” Others nodded in agreement. Their hope was to embrace and explain in a way that was communal, not targeting one group over another. Thaddeus and Xavier both talked about how good it felt for their alternate reality to be recognized. “This document, this work, Thaddeus said, “says, we see it. We’re gonna do something about it.” Xavier reflected on the relief he felt in having had conversations in a group in the way they had and creating a document that validated the experiences of people of color at SCU . He said, “This is a way to bring people of color’s experience to life.” Others were proud and believed that talking about Whiteness on campus was courageous. Rene said, “If we want to be at the forefront of Christian higher education, we need to be brave.” Thaddeus again arguing to keep the phrase as is, saying that “Whiteness is the most pervasive barrier on campus. It is covert. Naming it in the document is important.” There was also a sense that one needed to argue that talking about Whiteness was good for White people too. Thaddeus argued that White cultural norms impact White

students, “diminish. . . White students’ experiences.” Further, he argued, “cultural Whiteness oppresses White people too. It is a conforming pressure. It's hard but we need to do this.” Toward the end of the final meeting, Darilynn posed a question: If all of the document was digestible, was the committee serving a purpose? Chris argued in support of keeping the phrase “the invisible culture of whiteness,” that Whiteness is important to understand for all people regardless of color. Thaddeus agreed, because Whiteness affects all people. Thaddeus made the argument that addressing racism was not just about the better, fair treatment for people of color but is about benefits White people and their understanding of humanity and themselves. Chris said that in our educational process we need to explain what Whiteness is. Rene said that even as a woman of color, this document was convicting too. The invisible culture of Whiteness stayed in the diversity document.

Discussion of Case Study Findings

Faculty and staff participants saw themselves as integral to the process of talking about racism on campus. Given their limited participation, however, students did not perceive their participation as important to the process; in fact, none of the student participants recalled participating in the focus groups which were the primary vehicle for student contributions to the work. Faculty and staff participants saw themselves as teachers and preachers, and this sense of their individual and collective identities was ultimately reflected in the diversity statement they produced over nine months. Participants appreciated their common identity in their Christian faith using teachings to try to challenge SCU members’ beliefs about racism. All members anticipated pushback from White members of SCU to talking more about race and participants discussed ways to combat that resistance.

By the same token, participants were willing to push against the status quo more aggressively than others.

The benefit of the long-term, small group conversations among the ten people charged with producing a diversity statement for the campus was that participants had time to talk through ideas about race and perhaps even in some instances move toward changes in their own values. Participants at SCU did not just talk about racial tension, but whether people at SCU were willing to talk about racism. What they experienced in the group setting was a diverse group of people talking across racial lines; even so, participants did not seem to recognize the importance of cross-race relationships in their work to change SCU. What people were willing to do and say in person, within their small group, was different than what they were eventually willing to publish in a document that might teach the university about racism.

1. **Faculty and staff approached change by challenging and shaping attitudes and values.**

As the faculty and staff participants began to meet as a committee, they talked through their priorities and what they believed they needed to do in their committee work. In their first meeting, Linda said the institution needed to do "deep work" to achieve the kind of change that would address campus racial climate issues on the campus. In their book *Whiteness as Witness: Reconceptualizing Diversity in Christian Higher Education*, Cha and Jun (2019) argue that before practices are changed, people must participate in "critical consciousness" tied to the work of Paulo Freire which encourages "critical investigation of the world" (p. 69). This argument follows that the dominant forces reinforced by underlying assumptions will drive action. Cha and Jun posit that beliefs because of dominant Whiteness

must be critically examined and changed in one's mind for change to occur. In the faculty and staff committee's example, the dominant mode of change was in thinking, talking about, and articulating ways they perceived members of SCU should change their beliefs.

Participant's in their pursuit of change argued for discussions at SCU that challenge held assumptions that racism was not an issue. Participants believed that White members of SCU would resist change related to understanding racism and moving toward racial justice. What they hoped by challenging assumptions was to challenge people, and particularly White people, to resist being defensive and come to race dialogue with humility. Participants developed action items that included commitments to increased recruitment and retention of students and employees of color as well as a plan to add an office of diversity. However, most of the participants' recommendations were still related to educating SCU's community about racial diversity, thus their emphasis was on challenging attitudes and beliefs.

Mathew et al. (2023) explored the relationship between words and actions of racial justice allies. They found that White allies actively used racial justice language, but their actions were missing. However, they also cautioned that movement too quickly to action may minimize understanding in the racial justice journey. They encouraged White racial allies to learn the language of racial justice and not move right away to action. This literature suggests that attending to underlying and implicit belief systems is important and in particular attending to the embedded Christian belief systems. This finding also suggests that change agents should help members of Christian institutions develop racial justice language attune to the Christian college context. The complexity of talking about racism on a campus involves practical solutions but first priorities may include targeting attitudes and values that people need to examine.

2. **Participants utilized teachings from the Bible to create a set of shared values that questioned existing assumptions.**

Faculty and staff at SCU produced a document that communicated what they believed should be the institution's belief about racism. They rooted their ideas in teachings of scripture and believed that through commonly held beliefs in the Bible they could shape new values they wanted to integrate on campus. A primary way participants approached this was through the teachings of the Imago Dei – the concept that people are valuable because they are made in the image of God. This is a common belief in the Christian worldview. In a case study of 7 African American women who attended PWIs, Riley (2021) found that teaching Biblical concepts related to the Imago Dei to contend against disparaging views of African American women, was helpful in African American women's success at PWIs. The author contended that evangelical churches should create a curriculum for churches to use to "debunk" myths about African American women using Biblical concepts. Similarly, Ash and colleagues (2017b) found in their study of eight White administrators that their Christian faith motivated them to be engaged in racial justice work.

At SCU, Chris made use of other teachings of the Bible to challenge the idea that one's individual relationship with God was the most important thread in the Bible. Instead, Chris argued that reconciling with people is also just as an important thread and in his mind completes the message of the Bible. Chris' introduction of an altered understanding of the Bible is significant in that it attends to Emerson and Smith's (2000) findings that White evangelicals tend to think about racism from an individual rather than a systems perspective and to Hurtado's (1992) work that asserts that dominant groups impose certain attitudes related to race in covert and overt ways undergirded by "embedded ideologies" (p. 544).

Given Emerson and Smith's (2000) conclusion that Christian evangelicals tend not to believe in systems of oppression, participants' inclination to teach about systems of oppression from a theological perspective appears to be positive toward addressing unchallenged assumptions related to faith and race.

While some scholars argue that the White evangelical beliefs systems do not particularly influence anti-structuralism and individualism but are built into the fabric of the White, American belief system (Tatum, 1997; Tranby & Hartmann, 2008), this finding suggests that for Christians at SCU, framing a belief system in a particular way to be heard is important to their identity and to informing their practice. Not only is cultivating Christian values vital to SCU's mission and other CCCU member institutions', challenging embedded theology explains the belief system in a communal and perhaps sacred way that may draw members into learning rather than evade talk about racism.

3. **Faculty and staff members participated as change agents but were also changed.**

Strayhorn (2008) studied 531 students and found that the experiences of Black and White students who socialized with students from different race significantly influenced positive perceptions of campus racial climate and promoted a greater sense of belonging on their campuses. Adding to the body of literature, in their study of 1,354 students from 19 institutions, Loes and colleagues (2012) found that students' interaction with students of other races positively influenced critical thinking skills for students. Moving beyond the quantity of cross-race relationships, Denson and Chang (2015) concluded that the quality of cross-race interactions improved students' sense of self-concept and agency. In their study of dialogues on race, Moore et al., (2021) found that student, faculty, and staff participants (n=30) who participated in dialogues on race made connections with each other, increased

awareness of themselves and others, and as a result of connecting and awareness, committed to continued dialogue on race. Moore and colleagues recommended further study of faculty and staff participants separate from student participants.

Prior to their appointments on the committee tasked with studying and making changes to affect SCU's campus racial climate, they had not engaged in formal discussions with colleagues at this level about racism on this campus. Though they were tasked with identifying ways in which SCU should change, they experienced change as they participated in sense-making. Faculty and staff spoke positively of their experiences on the committee and were proud of the conversations that happened and the work they produced because of those conversations. Chris, a White faculty member, said he learned a lot from listening to people of color on the committee. Renee, a Latina faculty member, was a frequent contributor to thoughts around how to craft statements and ideas that challenge attitudes and values of members at SCU related to race and racism. Renee said that the statements in the diversity document were challenging for her, even as a woman of color. The group made up of 2 Latina women, 2 Black women, 2 Black men, and 3 White men developed heterogeneous networks over time and through important committee dialogue, consistent with literature related to cross-race interactions at colleges (Schreiner & Kim, 2011).

This finding suggests that cross-race dialogue may have positive impact on faculty and staff members. Dialogue about race over time and in this manner – to be heard and to communicate over time in an attitude of respect as Christians who experience the world in different ways – is a microcosm of what race-talk can look like on a campus. Similarly, the process of producing a document of this nature was a springboard for more dialogues and more visibility of talk on race. However, there appears to be a gap in research that addresses

cross-race dialogue between faculty and staff on race and how that process affects faculty and staff participants of dialogue. Outside the consideration for this study, researchers may want to know how experiences like racial battle fatigue (Smith, et al., 2011) affect participants in dialogues like this one.

4. **Faculty and staff varied in their willingness to challenge the status quo against the backdrop of resistance from White members of SCU.**

In her work on Whiteness, Robin DeAngelo (2018) argues that White people have a lower tolerance for stress when challenged about race and are more likely than their peers of color to return to their expectations of comfort nested in their White norms. Similarly, Mathew et al., (2023) in a study of 7 professionals of color who worked with White allies, found that White allies lacked stamina to engage in the difficulty of race conversations. Participants of the study said their White colleagues tended to focus on their own feelings when faced with the discomfort of talking about equity and racism. Results from preliminary data gathered by SCU showed that White employees would be resistant. Faculty and Staff committee participants varied at the amount of challenge to place on White members of SCU.

SCU Participants anticipated White pushback to diversity initiatives and content in the diversity statement. Regarding the invisible culture of Whiteness (ICW), White people believed its inclusion in the diversity statement was too strong for White people. While they conceded that it was a valid variable to the experience all members of SCU, they were not sure that White people that read it would understand in one statement. Renee, a Latina faculty member at SCU, felt White people on the committee continued to return to the debate about whether to keep ICW in the document. She feared after agreeing the phrase was

important, that White colleagues were secretly going to remove the phrase. Thaddeus, a Black faculty member, believed that White people at SCU were resilient enough to handle feeling uncomfortable with the message in the diversity document. Some participants on the committee wanted to "punch White people in the mouth" for their perception that they knowingly and intentionally ignore conversations about race issues on campus. This indicates perceptions of White fragility and resilience played a critical role in faculty and staff's evaluation of what to discuss and White people's tolerance for "racial stress" (DeAngelo, 2011, p.54).

Understanding White comfort in the system of power may help White members recognize they have power to retreat into comfort. Understanding White comfort may also help White people recognize how that makes people of color feel. Assessing White fragility is important in understanding an organization's capacity and readiness for change. Though difficult to overcome, unrecognized or deeply held underlying beliefs should be examined. Kezar (2018) posits that new value systems need to be adjusted slowly as resistance to change is the strongest related to cultural issues.

Nurturing learning was important for all participants. Agency also played a role in how much knowledgeable complicity faculty, staff, and students believed the people at SCU had in contributing to racism. This suggests that change agents should nurture conversations that expose White fragility and the power dynamics, resistance, and obstacles to change, but still may have to balance patience as people learn and grow committed to the dialogue. Xavier reflected on Matt's comments about taking three months to understand the phrase the invisible culture of Whiteness, "Yes, thank you for taking the time to realize it…it takes a while to realize the things that I take for granted." Xavier embodied the nature of this balance

participants seemed to want to achieve. He reported that he wanted to challenge people, but also wanted to give people space to learn.

5. **Some participants viewed silence about racism on campus as perpetuating a system of racism.**

As faculty, staff, and students talked about race at SCU, they described a history of silence and how that made people of color feel that racism was ignored. Faculty and Staff participants on the committee felt relief at being able to talk in depth about racism on campus and in a group where White people could dialogue with them. In her research, Sue (2010, 2013, & 2015) found that people of color perceived White's silence on race as a form of power. According to Sue silence allows White people to maintain innocence. The phenomenon is what Sue calls the "conspiracy of silence" (2010). Participants describe a culture where people at SCU have largely been silent about racism and about race. In the faculty and staff committee, participants discussed several methods White people used to silence race talk.

The colorblind belief system was one tactic participants reported members of SCU use to shut down conversations about race. In a study of 140 students self-identified as Black and White, Bonilla-Silva (2006) found that colorblind systems of belief maintained White supremacy. Colorblindness denies the existence of alternate realities experienced by people of color and makes invisible the inequalities that people of color describe. Evidenced by their response, SCU faculty and staff made the argument that God values people of color as beings created in his image. They hoped to draw members into that belief system to say that God cares about conversations about race rather than avoiding them.

Researchers contend that on the one hand White people avoid race talk out of fear that conversations are not solvable or where the end results seem to not have clear resolutions (Sue, 2013; Pollock, 2004). This manifests in questions that are too idealistic and shut down conversations about race. During discussions on the committee, Rick, a White male administrator, made the comment, "I can't win." He described that if he talks about race he is offensive and if he does not talk about race, he is perpetuating racism. Other faculty and staff participants responded that they believed the process of talking about race was not about winning but having a better understanding of the campus culture and making improvements to it so that people of color felt more welcome. Xavier said he appreciated Rick's admission that talking about racism is complex and nuanced. Several times during the nine months of meeting, Rick, in attempts to encourage the committee's continued conversations, said the committee's work did not need to solve the world's problems. He said that if SCU was at a 1 they did not need to move it to a 10.

Participants described experiencing colorblind ideology and White silence as salient experiences that contributed to negative perceptions of campus racial climate. Martha, a long-time employee of color at SCU expressed relief at participating in dialogues on race, saying that she believed the one thing she would tell the President of SCU if she was asked about one thing she would change at SCU, was not to ignore race conversations any longer.

This finding suggests that people involved in race conversations aimed at making change at their institution should pay attention to the tendencies of White people and White culture to silence race talk. Silence established by differential power dynamics between Whites and people makes people of color feel shut off from talking about race. Admittedly, I expected to observe White participants on the committee utilizing the tactics Sue (2015)

described in race-talk. Instead, in these small group dialogues, race-talk appeared to be productive. SCU faculty and staff of color voiced their experiences, disrupting the colorblind narratives that perpetuate the notions that diminish different racial realities (Sue, 2015).

6. **While some talked about race, others talked about racism.**

In her study of learning about racism, Tatum (1992) found that students learning about issues related to race, for example prejudice, led students to learn about racism. While prejudice contributes to racism they are distinguished from one another. This aligns with the findings in this study in two ways. First, the institution's stated goal was to understand and to solve racial tension on campus. Although well meaning, administrators did not use the word racism, which suggest they did not perceive racism to be the main issue. In his review of 225 articles of higher education research on race, Harper (2012) concluded that researchers used a variety of words other than racism to explain variables that were in his estimation racial factors. He said researchers used words like exclusionary, hostile, alienating, or discriminatory to describe phenomenon and argued that attributing race-related issues to racism was more effective. Similarly, Bonilla-Silva and Baiocchi (2001) argues that focus on the plight of people of color at the bottom as a way of explaining racial stratification does not do enough to talk about the power structures at the top, limiting the significance of racism.

Faculty and staff participants at SCU attributed racial inequality to racism and described it as a belief system. Participants described racism as a lived alternate reality for people of color. They talked about Whiteness as the greatest barrier to inclusivity and described SCU as an institution where members of the dominant racial group on campus pretend racism does not exist. Renee, a Latina faculty member, argued to keep the word "racism" in the diversity document when others believed the use of the word was redundant.

She believed it was important to emphasize racism. However, talking about racism without defining it, may be counterproductive in a campus climate that perhaps views racism as individual acts of discrimination rather than a system of belief and practices that stratifies the experiences of people based on race.

In their over 2,000 interviews on White evangelical views about racism, Emerson and Smith (2000) found that White evangelicals emphasize individual accountability, reconciliation in relationships, and mistrust systems of oppression, all beliefs that shut down discussions of structural forces impacting racial inequality. Other researchers argue that colorblind (Sue, 2015), colormute (Pollock, 2004), and post-racial (Modica, 2012) ideas enable White people to resist dialogue about racism as a system of oppression. Perhaps SCU's faculty and staff's hesitancy about how hard to push their colleagues is undergirded by the idea that people of color and White people may not be talking about the same thing. The significant amount of time in cross-race conversation about racism and how it was manifested at SCU was helpful for people of color to flesh out, but also, as participants described a learning process. While arriving at understanding racism is aspirational, findings at SCU would suggest, they should continue to define racism and create environments where their members can discuss what racism means. As Emerson and Smith (2000) concluded, the divergent opinions about racism contribute to the lack of clarity of racism's definitions.

7. **Making the Invisible, Visible.**

Participants of color described SCU as a place where a system of racism they called the "invisible culture of Whiteness" (ICW) was the most pervasive barrier to inclusivity. In ICW, participants said that distinct religious norms in forms such as Christian music, church choice, Christian values, and even images of Jesus all resemble White culture. Collins and

Jun (2017) discuss the White architecture of the mind wherein White people subconsciously rely on long-standing attitudes and belief systems that produce policies, procedures and institutional traditions creating a structure where White people dominate through established norms. Scholars like Collins and Jun use the term “Dominant White Institutions” (DWIs) as opposed to “predominantly White institutions” (PWIs) to demarcate the compositional diversity of institutions like SCU and to draw attention to the systems of power supported by subconscious hegemonic belief systems.

Faculty and staff participants that served on the committee talked about ways that White people subconsciously and “unintentionally” preferred White norms over those of people of color. Participants gave examples where colorblindness or White norms served as hegemonic forces that perpetuate exclusion of people of color and hurt White members. They described the process of choosing student leaders, not as an overt system where students of color were intentionally excluded. Instead, faculty and staff, preserved dominant White culture by thinking of White leaders first. Researcher Matthew Hughey, termed a phrase “hegemonic Whiteness” to describe a cultural process whereby White identity creates and preserves dominance by norms that fail to meet White norms as marginal or stigmatized.

SCU Students talked about that they felt that White peers' norms were valued over their own. Student participant, Chimese talked about how a peer heard her gospel music, but because her peer normalized Christian music to fit a White cultural norm, asked Chimese to turn the music off. Chimese then asked her peer to listen to the words and realize the music fit within the Christian culture context.

Faculty and staff of color attempted to help make the invisibility of Whiteness visible by talking about Whiteness as a primary barrier to improving campus racial climate and

helping people of color feel a sense of belonging at SCU. Faculty and Staff at SCU articulated a counternarrative by teaching that the Bible emphasizes mercy, humility, and considering others first in opposition to values that are rooted in White nationalism, individualism, work ethic, and competition. That faculty, staff, and students talked about hegemonic White practices suggests that Whiteness was a primary element of racism that they perceived people of color experienced and that White members of SCU did not recognize. Sue (2013) argued that the greatest challenge for White people in honest race-talk is making visible the invisible. Invisibility allows White people to believe in their racial innocence, lets them skirt responsibility for oppression, and avoid action. Bringing to light the invisible uncovers the intentional and unintentional denial of the different experiences people of color have compared to Whites. Talking about Whiteness in invisible terms, helps White people understand that examination of systems of power is important toward profitable conversations about race.

8. **Faculty, Staff, and Students perceive that change should occur by educating SCU about Whiteness.**

Cha and Jun (2019) argue that White people are used to talking about race as a people of color issue rather than examining Whiteness in terms of its advantages and privileges. They argue for a clearer understanding of Whiteness in the Christian college context. In their roles as participants talking about racism on campus, faculty, staff, and students primarily talked about the underlying beliefs that existed in Whiteness on SCU's campus. Their evaluation of SCU's campus climate was that members divergent experiences and that their faith experiences were especially different because of the White norms that exist in the faith practices. This is consistent with Cleek's (2017) findings that students of color at Christian

colleges experienced a lower sense of belonging related to their faith fit at their Christian institutions. SCU Participants talked about increasing diversity in the employee pool, or considering more students of color for leadership positions. However, participants more heavily focused on the underlying assumptions that exist in Whiteness that are barriers to accomplishing those goals. This suggests that talking about and learning about Whiteness is significant to the approach to change. Members may have divergent faith experiences because of the White norms that exist in the faith practices.

Thaddeus, a Black faculty member at SCU, argued that Whiteness and diversity affect White people too. Alexander and Jun (2017) describe a system of logic they call the "White architecture of the mind" that White Christians use to make sense of their reality. The metaphor explains how Whites intentionally and unintentionally preserve power but deny their privilege through a series of tactics and arguments, tactics that Sue (2015) highlights. Dalton (2015) talks about race obliviousness and the ways in which White people are shaped by their race as much as people of color. He argues that White people are not aware because they are in the driver's seat. SCU faculty and staff emphasized conversations that contributed to learning about and confronting Whiteness and demonstrated a maintained focus on dialogue about Whiteness. Participants of color were especially relieved that discussion about and naming Whiteness happened at SCU. This suggest that educating White people about Whiteness helps Whites understand the evolutionary nature of racism that goes beyond the stratified effects of racism and toward the belief systems that are behind them.

9. As change agents, faculty and staff saw themselves as preachers and teachers.

In her research on lasting change, Kezar (2013) argues that shared leadership is productive toward understanding institutional context. Share leadership happens when

change agents working at the top and bottom of the organizational hierarchy are involved in the change process. Similarly, Kezar and Holcombe (2017) argue that when institutions practice shared leadership, leadership is shared vertically and horizontally across teams based on relevant expertise. The researchers propose that using the expertise of institutional members may help bridge academic language to institutional context. When Faculty and Staff at SCU sat around the committee table, they were able to be involved in decision making and shape the way the institution approached change. They developed shared purpose, goals, and learned, grew, and adapted to conversations related to change. SCU faculty member, Chris, a religion professor, was a major contributor as an expert in Biblical studies. He helped develop what the committee perceived the SCU community should believe about the Bible and what it says about racism. Others saw Thaddeus, a professor in psychology, as a content expert about race. Though not her field of work, Darilynn had a background in journalism, public relations, and writing and contributed as a content editor. This finding is important in that they found value in their appointments as change agents. They believed they had shared leadership in their service.

On the one hand, the faculty and staff group dynamic seemed to show that SCU was a collegial institution that gave faculty and staff shared input about how the university should change. On the other hand, the committee was aware that decisions about what would remain in the diversity document were ultimately up to executive leadership. As the group discussed the final edits of the document, Rick told the faculty and staff committee that he was doubtful that the phrase "the invisible culture of Whiteness" would remain. He did not say who would make final decisions about what content stayed. In their study of five campuses, Kezar and Holcombe (2011) found that leaders in positions like presidents, provosts, and deans, if not

careful, have the ability to diminish the good intentions of establishing shared leadership structures. The researchers discuss that differences exist between the expectations and the power differences that leaders face among grassroots leaders like faculty and staff and executive teams. As a result, they face different barriers.

Faculty and staff leaders can provide balance to the prestige and revenue challenges top leaders face. Top leaders can provide avenues for grassroots leaders to speak to the administration about wanted changes. At SCU, Rick, aware of his leadership position and that he was White, told the faculty and staff group that he was unsure if he should be leading the group. Linda, a Black faculty member, responded by saying they needed him in their group. Others agreed that his presence was important from a positional perspective. This finding suggests that bottom-up and top-down leadership can happen at the same time. In the absence of diversity at the top, institutions may rely on faculty and staff at the "grass roots" level to talk about race. The bottom-up approach could enhance contributions from members inside the institution but could also make members feel powerless in putting efforts toward change.

10. Students did not perceive they played a role in the change process.

In contrast to faculty and staff participants, SCU student participants did not perceive they were significant in the change process. Clinton and Jennifer did not even recall participating in the focus groups at the start of SCU's data gathering. As the core mission of institutions is to educate students, students did not feel they were important stakeholders in the change process. Kezar (2018) suggests that "coalition-building" and leveraging classroom curricula as ways to partner with students (p. 141). On the one hand, student participation in change and in particular change related to race is important, on the other a

gap exists in how students participate with faculty, staff, and administrators in the change process. More research exists on activism and the nature of relationships among the groups.

In their qualitative study about how students relate to administrators, Roper et al., (2005) found that although student activists desired a working relationship with campus administrators, they found relationships were strained. Students reported that they were hopeful relationships would be positive, but reported that administrators were adversarial, absent, or antagonistic. Given their influential relationships, faculty can provide students with a voice. However, the power differences between faculty, staff, and students provide an added layer to navigate, perhaps one that keeps faculty from involving students in the change process (Kezar, 2018). Case et al., (2012) in a faculty student participatory research project found that faculty's collaborative, learning approach to creating change on their campus was successful. Faculty researchers were worried that students would burn bridges with administrators, given the brevity of their attendance at institutions and immaturity in relationships.

Embedded in student involvement in activism and change is the learning process. Cole (2014) studied activism at two Christian colleges and found that consciousness to issues was embedded in the learning process. The learning process takes planning and time. The transitional nature of students and the effort put into the learning process perhaps mitigates institutional leaders' willingness to involve them in the change process. Institutional change planning lacks flexibility and is bureaucratic in nature, not ripe for student involvement where race topics are controversial and require learning.

At SCU, where students only participated in campus-wide surveys and focus groups, students were mixed about how the institutions would utilize them as stakeholders. Kristy

said that her participation in the focus groups was insignificant. Chimese was suspected that White administrators were tokenizing her to "gather information" rather than to make changes. She wanted her voice to be genuinely heard. As a result, she was skeptical about SCU making changes that reflect her input. There appears to be a gap in research that addresses how students impact the change process and how faculty, staff, and administrators deal with the conditions of power related to bottom-up leadership and race-talk. This point is beyond the scope of this study but could be an area for further research.

CONCLUSIONS

Originally, in my analysis, I did not hone in on change and what change meant for the people at SCU. Through productive conversations with my advisor, I realized that change was the main point. SCU faculty, staff, and students engaged in a process to implement change on their campus. Questions remained about how they would approach change, what success meant for them, and what they would talk about. In one of our discussions about the big idea, my advisor asked, "What is the main idea?" I learned from this research that the biggest barrier to successful conversation and thus change at SCU was how to talk about racism. Participants described the campus racial climate that is reflected in the literature for a small, Christian, predominantly White campus would face – growing student compositional diversity and low employee diversity (CCCU 2019), and diverging experiences related to sense belonging for people of color (Cleek 2017; Parades-Collins, 2014). Participants also described SCU as a place similar to what researchers described in terms of race-talk. SCU participants described the campus racial climate related to racial dialogue characterized by silence, resistance, and the pervasiveness of Whiteness (Sue, 2015) and an individualistic view of racism (Emerson & Smith, 2000).

When I got in the room with faculty and staff at SCU, I realized they were there to make known the experiences of people of color and to address the challenges through talking about Whiteness. They were discouraged by the silence that they had experienced in White culture and in the dominant narratives at SCU. However, they were encouraged by the opportunity to have a place at the table for racial dialogue and talk about how they could change the SCU community. As they challenged ideas of White hegemony, the double consciousness of the Black experience, and aligned their ideas with those they believed were foundational to their faith, they were looking to draw people in. They desired mercy and humility and from those change.

Campus racial climate (Hurtado et al., 1998) and race-talk (Sue, 2015) provided conceptual frameworks to study SCU's dialogues on race as they sought to change their campus climate. Looking at their change process provided me with a final layer to discuss what happened and what may continue to happen at SCU. In the final chapter, I draw on the work of Adrianna Kezar (2018) as a theoretical framework to offer reflections about the work that happened at SCU and what this dissertation's findings imply for research, theory, and practice.

CHAPTER VI

CHANGE, IMPLICATIONS, AND FINAL THOUGHTS

Beginning in the fall of 2020, Southwestern Christian University (SCU), where this research study took place, underwent a self-study of racism on their campus. SCU first gathered data through campus-wide surveys and then focus groups made up of students, faculty, and staff. Then university leaders selected a group of 10 faculty and staff to sit on a committee, charged with reviewing the survey and focus group data, and developing priorities for the university. Over nine months, I observed the meetings of this group, listening, watching, and recording field notes. During this period, I also interviewed eight participants, including four students who participated in the focus groups and four committee members who also participated in focus groups.

The special committee considered their charge to primarily be about creating a guiding document related to racism, faith, and recommend priorities for future work. Instead of recommending policy, funding, or structural changes, the members of this special committee dialogued about race in a way that helped them make sense of who they were as an organization, what they were up against, and who they wanted to be – as individuals and as an university community – vis á vis race and racism. It was not as though they were uninterested in concrete and measurable changes; instead, their process reflected what one participant said she wanted to embark upon: "deep work" on change related to racism at SCU. This exploration of what happened at SCU was about the relationships between race-talk (Sue, 2015) and campus racial climate (Hurtado et al., 1998) as well as identifying religious forms of race-talk (Emerson & Smith, 2000). As the dialogue unfolded the interaction of these concepts emerged as embedded in the change process (Kezar, 2018).

In this final chapter, I draw on tools available through Kezar's (2018) multi-faceted approach to organizational change in higher education. The tools help us answer the central question: How do members involved in a formal process to review racism on a Christian college campus talk about race? The intent of adding change theory is not to shift movement from one topic to another, but to offer a discussion on the work that was done at SCU, namely a review of racism on campus set up to create change on the campus.

The chapter is divided into three sections. First I present a brief reintroduction of race-talk (Sue, 2015) and CRC (Hurtado et al., 1998) and then present Kezar's (2018) Multifaceted Framework for Understanding Change together as a lens for reading the findings from the data analysis. My aim is to explore how people talk about race in the varying facets of their review of racism on campus. The second section begins with a

discussion of delimitations in the study and implications for research, theory, and practice. In the final section, I conclude with how my recommendations could be helpful for SCU and perhaps others.

Discussion

As SCU students, faculty, and staff talked about race on their campus, I used campus racial climate, and more specifically religious forms of race-talk, as key conceptual tools for understanding the factors that inhibit and promote dialogue about race. I used CRC to get a sense of the context of SCU, the patterns of race-talk to intentionally examine the structure of CRC at SCU, and change management theory as a lens to understand what happened in the process. What is needed to understand the phenomenon of race-talk is an exploration of the change process – what people at SCU understood about SCU, how they made meaning, and their approach to change (Kezar, 2018). Moving forward requires a more detailed understanding of the distinctions and the intersections among the three concepts.

Campus Racial Climate

The campus racial climate framework provided four areas inquiry for exploration of race in this study. First, compositional diversity addressed SCU's racial demographic data. Similar to the majority of Christian colleges in the CCCU (NCES, 2019), SCU was a predominantly White campus with over 53% of its students reported as White. Employee composition was more homogenous where more than 80% of staff and 84% of faculty were reported as White. Second, behavior within the campus community is defined as the quantity and quality of cross-race interaction. At SCU I observed how people on the special committee tasked with reviewing racism on campus interacted with each other and how, through interviews, students, faculty, and staff describe cross-race interactions. For example,

faculty and staff participants gathered regularly over the course of 9 months on a racially diverse committee to discuss racism. They interacted with respect and provided space to learn from one another. The psychological dimension of CRC refers to beliefs about inequality, bias, racial attitudes, both individually and collectively. I used this dimension to think about how members at SCU described the perceived beliefs of members of SCU. Faculty and staff committee members met and decided to develop a vision statement that challenged perceived beliefs about racism and about the Bible. The psychological dimension focused the study on the perceived beliefs held by White people at SCU. The fourth dimension deals with an institution's history of inclusion and exclusion. Participants of color described the CRC of SCU both in the context of their experience directly at SCU but also as Christians of color in the larger context. They told stories about their perceptions of church and reflected on incidents of discrimination in their past.

Race-Talk

Sue (2015) coined the phrase "race-talk" to describe the challenges inherent to talking about race among races in America. Sue describes three patterns utilized by White people that serve as barriers to positive racial dialogue;

1. White people evade talk about race through deflection and denial;
2. colorblindness silences productive conversations about race; and
3. White people and people of color talking about race in different ways including the ways they talk about racism.

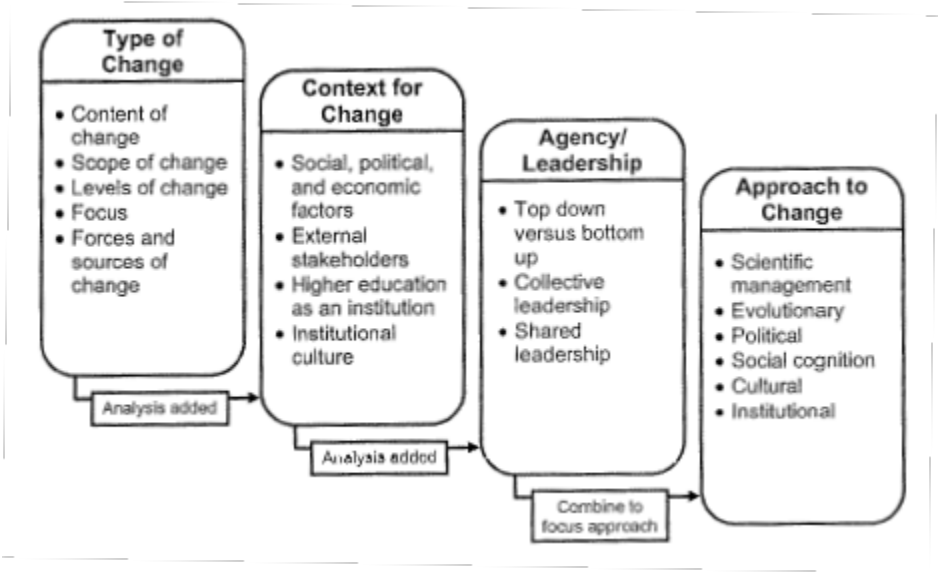
I utilized Sue's work to understand the ways dialogue occurred in the committee and the ways participants at SCU described the presence and absence of racial dialogue on campus.

Kezar's Multifaceted Framework for Understanding Change

Adriana Kezar's (2018) work on change in organizations includes her research on the types of change that occur in higher education institutions. She argues that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to change, and that a multi-theory approach is needed to fully understand the complexities of change in higher education institutions. Figure 1 shows layered framework used as a lens to understand change. Kezar theorizes that change is complex and requires a dynamic process to understand how to plan it.

Figure 1

Kezar's Multifaceted Framework for Understanding Change



Note. Reprinted from *How Colleges Change : Understanding, Leading, and Enacting Change* (p. 66), by A. J. Kezar, 2018, New York: Routledge. Copyright 2018 by Routledge.

This study is not addressing whether change occurred as a result of a review of racism on campus; rather, the focus is on understanding how participants talked about race in their

change process and what that tells us about race-talk. Taken together CRC, race-talk, and a multi-faceted approach to change management synergize as a lens for the discussion on the findings and in the implications. As a heuristic device, the framework depicted in Figure 1 above foregrounds challenges encountered by participants in this study in their work to change campus racial climate at Southwest Christian University.

Type of Change

Kezar (2018) uses "type of change" to reference the nature of the change initiative that determines the approach that should be taken. Relevant considerations include content, scope, levels, focus, and forces of change. In a broad sense, universities undergo two types of change: incremental change and transformational change (Kezar, 2018). Incremental change, also called first-order change, refers to small, gradual adjustments to existing structures or processes. Incremental changes are initiated to address specific problems, for instance to improve efficiency in an existing system. Incremental changes tend to be less disruptive to the institutional culture. Examples at SCU of these changes might include increasing employee compositional diversity, adding a racial justice curriculum requirement, or diversity training for employees. On the other hand, transformational change refers to more comprehensive changes that could alter the way an institution operates. Transformational change, also identified as second-order change, involves shifts in organizational culture, values, attitudes, and beliefs that may result in more profound transformation for the organization. At SCU, transformational change began with dialogue about racism in effort to understand SCU's campus racial climate. The transformational change process continued as the faculty/staff committee developed a document to orient the SCU community about what they perceived should be the institution's values and attitudes.

A hallmark of Kezar's multifaceted framework is the use of multiple theories to analyze the change process and develop strategies moving forward. Given the nature of SCU's issues, social cognition theory, cultural theory, and institutional theory foreground this discussion. Social cognition theory (SCT) assumes that change is best understood and achieved through the thought processes of individuals. SCT argues that individual's thinking paradigms shape their worldview and when their thinking and values in the change process conflict, individuals resist. SCT, however largely ignores context. So, for SCU, where logic paradigms about racism and Whiteness were discussed, the environment where Whiteness was learned, but ignored, might be a shared process rather than an individual one. Filling in gaps where understanding context is important, cultural theory, emphasizes the social, environmental, and organizational contexts and its primary driver for change is a long change process that examines underlying values and alters mission. SCU took almost two years after first responding to George Floyd incidents to conduct a climate assessment, review data, dialogue about race, and complete a vision casting document for the university. The criticism of cultural theory's approach to change is that change is impractical and leaves leaders with little tangible action to produce or manage change. Finally, institutional theory examines why change might be difficult in long-standing organizations like higher education. Institutional theory suggests that normative pressures outside of the institutional context influence and institutions ability to change. At SCU, Whiteness is a schema that exists outside of the institution. Though Whiteness should be examined within the SCU context, the external norms influence the organization's internal ability to change. The external norms may be why people of color at SCU were able to more easily give external examples of how White norms affect them, rather than institutional ones. The interplay between external and internal

contexts is important to note. Drawing on these three change theories, I discuss the findings through the lens of the multifaceted framework for understanding change.

Content of Change

Content of change speaks to issues of how the content of change can encounter resistance and impact the change process. Faculty and staff believed the change was about challenging and shaping the attitudes and values of members of SCU. Students, faculty, and staff believed that change in how White people's attitudes about racism was needed for the institution to be a more welcoming campus racial climate. What they understood from a social cognition theoretical point of view was that Whiteness as a system of racism was a schema that people at SCU did not understand or intentionally participate in. Whiteness's invisibility was part of the embedded schema that shaped the understanding of their environment. In the course of dialogue about race, the faculty and staff committee went through a learning process by which they made sense, to some degree, of Whiteness and how it shaped campus culture.

The committee also came to understand that resistance may come if their faith values were not addressed. Cultural theory suggests that individuals will resist more when changes occur outside of their existing values. By establishing a set of arguments about their Biblical values, for example in the Imago Dei argument, the committee attempted to attract their members by arguing that their esteem for God and people was congruent with the commitment to recognize that people of color did not feel welcome as a result of Whiteness.

From an institutional theory perspective, SCU should consider how Whiteness in the Christian context outside of the organization influences how members think. It is difficult to address societal norms and institutional norms as well as distinguish between the two

notions. Because the content for change was not entirely clear and because of the complexities of race-talk and understanding campus racial climate, second-order change required a sensemaking process.

Scope of Change

Kezar (2018) argues that because higher education institutions have long-enduring missions, they are not expected to change. However, undergoing significant changes may be what is needed for institutions to accomplish their mission. If underlying values, attitudes, and beliefs are rooted in values that reduce sense of belonging and increase risk of attrition, then those values should be challenged. First-order change involves minor adjustments to practices or policy. In contrast second-order change involves addressing attitudes, underlying values, structures, or culture for change to occur. While faculty, students, and staff participants referenced practices or instances of discrimination as examples of behaviors they perceive need to change, they described how they wanted White people to change in their thinking about racism. Participants' decision to start with shaping underlying values did not mean they did not want to see structural, policy, or pedagogical changes. To get to those types of changes, however, cultural theory suggests that slow, methodical change is necessary to establish a new culture ready to address racism.

Second-order change is often more difficult to achieve in higher education because of the unique challenges related to deep change that is required and the resistance that change agents encounter because of the dissonance created between the desired and existing cultures. Kezar (2018) says that second-order change is really about sensemaking. Sensemaking "is a recognition that perspectives are socially constructed with and through other people who are organizationally situated" (Kezar, 2018, p. 87). Sensemaking occurs in one of two ways: 1.

deep thinking around a familiar concept; or 2. develop new language. Participants at SCU developed new language as they proposed to talk more corporately about the "invisible culture of Whiteness" (ICW) and the "alternate reality" with which people of color at SCU exist. ICW is not a new phenomenon (Collins & Jun, 2017, Helms, 1995). In the sensemaking process, participants developed new language and new concepts in SCU's culture that reflected deeper thinking about the issue of racism. Descriptions of the "alternate reality" and "the invisible culture of Whiteness" reflect racism in a campus racial climate that people of color understand, but that White people did not recognize. Participants described ways of thinking and talking about Whiteness that may be unique to Christian colleges where distinct religious language, for example, that Jesus, Christian music, Church choice, even Christian values all resemble White culture and contribute to the dominant unexamined culture that is Whiteness and where members of SCU value White norms over those of people of color. In Xavier's case, he praised Thaddeus for articulating his experiences as a Black man at SCU through conversations about ICW.

Participants viewed silence about racism on campus as perpetuating a system of racism. Participants describe silence about race as a pervasive practice. Faculty, staff, and students, especially members of color, perceived that SCU did not care about racism as conversations of race were not a part of the campus culture. Due to the silence, participants were skeptical that the work put into addressing racial tension on campus would result in change. Participants of color talked about their relief to be talking about race together. Silence at SCU was not just about the absence of race-talk as a characteristic of the campus racial climate. Researchers hold that silence is a form of power and a way for White people to move back into comfort (Collins & Jun, 2017; Sue, 2015). Gordon (2005) talks about the

logics Whites use to suppress race talk. Colorblindness is at the root of the logics and undergirds the belief that race does not exist as a meaningful dialogue. Going further, she described "avoidance" as a strategy where White people acknowledge race but change topics to avoid what they believe is unsafe ground (p. 283). For Gordon and others (Brown, 2020) these strategies are embedded in Whiteness and people use them to control race-talk and return to comfort. The logics, silence, colorblindness, are tactics and symptoms of an underlying belief system that values comfort over understanding.

Levels of Change

People in a group benefit from having conversations about race on a regular basis, building relationships, especially in a small group over meals (Moore et al, 2021). The SCU committee had time to talk through the nuances of racism and hear each other. They time spent together in a small group allowed them to learn from each other and perhaps move toward changes in their values. Chris talked about how listening to committee members of color led to learning for him. Renee reflected in the last meeting that the statements in the diversity document about attitudes and beliefs even challenged her as a woman of color. In this way of thinking, she was able to wrestle with what ICW meant for her guided by these social interactions over time. Kezar (2018) says these "vehicles for change" are about facilitating interaction, having conversation, and collaboration that help individuals make "sense of their environments" (p. 90).

In contrast student participants did not participate in the change process in a way that was conducive to second-order change. Though the focus of change was about the attitudes and beliefs of members of SCU, not necessarily the change agents, sensemaking conversations altered participants' attitudes, beliefs, and thinking. The more that faculty,

staff, and students can be a part of discussions that challenge their attitudes and values, the more opportunities exist for second-order change to occur. As Bandy, Harbin, and Thurber (2021) illustrate through analysis of students enrolled in a racial justice course, White students and students of color developed more complex, nuanced, and intricate understandings race and racism. Participants in this study experienced greater empathy across racial lines and were particularly able to engage one another productively in conversations about racial justice.

Kezar (2018) says that if sensemaking develops among a few individuals, though sensemaking has occurred, change is not scaled up enough to create lasting second-order change at an institution. This suggests that group conversations can produce sensemaking and should be duplicated in order to scale up change that produces collective understanding. In Eckel and Kezar's (2003) case study of six institutions undergoing change, evidence suggested that institutions achieved sensemaking by participating in numerous, ongoing, and widespread conversations around their topics in question and developed new ways of thinking and talking about concepts important to their institutions. Similarly, faculty and staff at SCU initiated new ways of talking about campus racial climate at SCU. In contrast however, they did not widen their circle of participation or plan to duplicate their process. Kezar (2018) argues that if second-order change develops only among a few people, sensemaking has happened, but not in a way that creates change for the institution. With good intention a small working group may undergo a tremendous amount of hard work processing and creating meaning that is largely invisible to the rest of the organization. Though a small working group can set direction and create momentum, they cannot do the processing on behalf of the organization. This finding suggests that successful change must

have several stages. In terms of collective and institutional change, this suggests that small working groups, where people can build trust and foster relationships, are important in the sensemaking process However, institutions should also plan ways to have widespread involvement. In addition to the how sense making occurred important to this case study is the What of the sense making process.

Focus of Change Initiatives

Institutions typically focus change on structure, process, and attitudes. Structure is about the organizational chart or policies and procedures. Process relates to changes in operations like admissions or decision-making. As discussed above, attitudes refer to the beliefs and values institutional members have about what they do and about how they feel about existing structures and procedures. Change in all three areas is difficult to accomplish at once (Kezar, 2001). The work of the committee focused on the attitudes and values of the institution. Kezar's research points out that attitudes and values can be much more difficult to change.

Linda, a Black faculty member described the focus of the process as "deep work." Faculty and staff developed a diversity statement that was primarily about attitudes, values, and beliefs about racism and were most proud of sections of the diversity statement that challenged what they perceived as institutionally held beliefs. Participants believed that one of the root causes of racism on campus was a lack of understanding by the White majority about what beliefs and attitudes perpetuated racism. Although, they decided that the held beliefs were not intentional, participants talked about an implicit belief system that entrenched racism and was a barrier for people of color to feel a sense of belonging on campus.

Furthering the change process, SCU leaders should consider how the wanted changes in attitudes among individuals and groups should lead to deep changes in processes and structures. Though participant conversations focused heavily on challenging values, they discussed White norms that affected issues of power among student leadership and administrative leadership. White, male leadership at the top was a concern for the committee. They did not strategize ways to solve the issue, but instead talked about the lack of representation for students and employees of color in leadership positions. As a result of considering White people first, a norm that participants described, White people filled top positions and made people of color feel as though they would not have a chance to be considered equally for positions. A reexamination of structures and processes overlaps some with scope as understanding all three foci would entail looking at first and second-order change.

Forces and Sources of Change

Kezar (2018) argues that when determining the type of change that should occur, an understanding of where the change is coming from is necessary. At SCU, the decision to begin the review process came as a result of the public death of George Floyd. As the faculty/staff committee searched through the data collected in the campus climate survey, they saw evidence that resistance to talking about race at SCU was present and it would come internally. One interesting discussion in the committee and even among student participants, was when they believed people at SCU needed to talk about race and when they believed leaders should not. In a particular committee meeting Matt, a White staff member, asked if SCU should publicly respond to every widely known incident of racism. The committee said no, but a response was appropriate at this time, though they were unclear about the reason.

Darilynn, a Black staff member in a later individual interview said she was hurt when her colleagues went about their business after a public incident occurred. She said they were moved after only she showed them she was hurt.

Even with the differences in ways people perceived resistance and how to respond, SCU seemed largely disconnected with the larger movement. This seemed to be intentional. Rick, the lead administrator on the committee, remarked that the committee's purpose was to address issues at SCU, not the broader culture. He was careful to maintain that direction throughout the process. Even with pressure to respond during the nine months of the committee meeting, he made the argument that he believed that peer institutions undergoing similar self-studies acted too quickly. He said he wanted to be thoughtful and deliberate about the changes SCU made. His position as the second administrator in charge influenced the balance between the sense of urgency for change and the deliberateness he argued for to allow for deep change.

Recognizing that the type of change that was needed was a deeper understanding of the attitudes and beliefs that contribute to a negative campus racial climate, SCU participants called for second-order change. They focused on the underlying assumptions and beliefs embedded in individuals and in Whiteness. They understood that there would be resistance and varying levels and attended to that resistance at some level. The committee participated in a sensemaking process that defined their context.

Context for Change

Kezar (2018) describing the second element of her framework, context for change, emphasizes the importance of considering the "broader environment and how it might shape change processes" (p. 109). Context refers to the external and internal factors that influence

the process. External context refers to the societal, economic, and political factors that drive the need for change. For example, in the wake of the killing of George Floyd, institutions across the country publicly began processes of investigating racism on campuses. Internal factors refer to context within higher education and at an individual institution that shapes the way it considers and implements change. This might include, leadership, shifting priorities, changes in the student population, and organizational culture. Factors that might influence SCU are the faith paradigms that Emerson and Smith (2000) and committee members at SCU work to combat. Social, political, and economic factors, institutional context, and institutional culture make up contexts for change that Kezar (2018) argues need to be understood to determine an organizations capacity for change.

Social, Political, and Economic Factors

Very little was discovered about the social, political, and economic factors that influenced the need for change. The large social justice movement that began with the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement and elevated in 2020 after George Floyd's death played a role in motivating SCU leadership to embark on a process to study racism on its campus. The social views at the time were powerful factors that loomed large in higher education. I was ultimately unable to get a sense of whether SCU capitalized on the momentum or responded because of the pressure of the movement. From an economic perspective, at the time, SCU was impacted by lower retention rates and in particular lower retention rates for Black students. This was one of the issues the committee aimed to address. In their discussions they perceived that lower retention rates were due to a complexity of reasons, but the campus climate results revealed that students of color and in particular Black students perceived they were not as welcome as their White peers at the institution.

Institutional Context

From an institutional theory perspective (Leicht & Fennell; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991) higher education as a social institution is not swayed much by market forces and their long-standing missions are stable forces in society. How an institution fits in this context should be considered. SCU, as a Christian higher education institution, sits among 144-member institutions of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, most of whom are predominantly White institutions. Though research about race in these colleges is sparse, enrollment of students of color is low compared to their public counterparts, but growing in compositional diversity at a faster pace (Menjares, 2018). This situates SCU as a predominantly White campus that serves a growingly diverse population that may not be stewarding their student population well, a catalyst for understanding the individual institutional culture for change.

Where Kezar theorizes about the institution as it fits into the higher education sector, there is a gap in understanding how the church and faith-based institutions influence each other. Additionally, White, evangelicals fit into a larger political schema in the American national system. Trends such as the hesitancy around critical race theory, racial reconciliation, and intersectionality are concepts that impact how Christian institutions make decisions and decide whether or not their institutional missions are in jeopardy as a result of interacting with those ideas.

Institutional Culture

A key finding in research is that change agents are more successful when they align their change initiative with institutional culture (Kezar and Eckel, 2002). A primary objective of this dissertation is to understand the campus racial climate. Participants described the

campus racial climate as silent about racism, where people of color live in unrecognized alternate realities, and where unrecognized White norms perpetuate racism. They described feeling isolated and left out. What the faculty/staff committee did was say that the negative campus racial climate experienced at SCU was a result of Whiteness.

Participants also described SCU as a place where they believed that White people were not intentionally trying to harm their peers and colleagues of color. They described a place where ethics of humility and understanding were of high value. The faculty/staff committee highlighted this ethic and wanted to elevate those values in their diversity statement. They wanted people to come to race-talk with humility. Their language was purposeful when they talked about the Imago Dei. They articulated that race matters and they care about race because God cares about race. This ran counter to the White, evangelical narrative that race does not matter because God created everyone equally (Emerson & Smith, 2000; Modica, 2012).

Understanding context is essential for understanding an institution's readiness for change. As illustrated by the committee's discussions about what to include in the diversity document and how people might respond, there was capacity for change, but seemed to be leeriness about the institution's readiness for change. Chimese, a Black student, put it simply when she told me that she believed that administrators were tokenizing her as a participant in the focus groups and was skeptical about SCU's members' willingness to examine racism for deep change. Institutional theory suggests that addressing racism at SCU will be difficult, requiring a thorough strategy for change.

Leadership and Agency of Change

The third element, leadership and agency of change, highlights the importance of the ability of individuals and organizations to shape their own future. Change agents in higher education can exist beyond positions of authority and although leadership often is viewed as an individual, group forms of leadership can be successful. Kezar (2018) argues that institutions that embrace strong, internal, top-down and bottom-up strategies will be the most successful.

Top Down Versus Bottom Up

Historically, Kezar (2018) argues, positions of power – Presidents, Chief Academic Officers, Vice Presidents – correspond to leadership. However, leadership theory suggests that leadership is about creating change, not about position (Burns, 1978). Related to race-talk, SCU gathered information through a campus climate study from students, faculty, and staff of a variety of racial backgrounds. Then campus leadership, led by Rick, built a team of diverse faculty and staff to dialogue more about race. Rick seemed to understand his role as the leader, but as a facilitator of conversation also questioned his position as a White man. In the first meeting Rick wondered aloud what he would have to contribute about race. Linda, a Black faculty member, in response said she believed the committee needed him in the room for his position and for his perspective.

As experts about their personal experiences and as experts in their fields, faculty saw themselves as change agents. Faculty and staff participants saw themselves as important to change. As such they viewed themselves as teachers and preachers that disseminated values and teaching through the diversity document. As experts in a variety of fields they varied in power to create the results they wanted. People of color at faculty ranks and in academic

fields of Sociology and Psychology influenced the group's perspectives. Unique to Christian colleges, religious faculty also had a place because of expertise. Participants valued people of color's perspectives on race. POC played a major role in curating a religious perspective, philosophy, and initiatives to make changes to the campus racial climate.

Collective and Shared Leadership

Kezar (2018) posits that collective leadership, as opposed to individual leadership, provides a support network that aids an organization to be resilient toward change. Collective leadership groups must develop relational skills to deal with conflict, maintain a shared sense of purpose, be open to their own biases, understand how to support each other's diverse perspectives, and work through power differentials. As the nature of race-talk is tenuous and complex (Sue, 2015), social cognitive theory and cultural theory suggests that SCU should take time to develop working groups to address racism. Rick, though he kept the committee meetings going, was not a dominant leader. Faculty and staff participants praised his leadership style of facilitating the group conversations.

SCU's model of engagement in the change process seems to strongly suggest that their collective, leadership committee could enact significant change. Of note however, the group's make up contained mostly leaders in their field of study, had significant years of service on the campus or represented a group of people whose voice was not typically heard on campus. The group that was not present in the process was students. In contrast to faculty and staff perspectives, students who participated in focus groups did not remember their experiences as contributors toward a review of racism on campus. They did not see themselves as involved in the change process. The compositional make up of employees affects the campus racial climate. Leaders at SCU may be limited in their ability to duplicate

the cross-race group dynamic that existed in the special committee. On the other hand, there may be more students of color to accomplish learning and planning groups around race-talk. The CRC appears ripe for increased interaction in a collective group and avenues for students to be involved in the change process.

Approach to Change

The final element of change in Kezar's (2018) multifaceted framework is the approach to change. Kezar's approach emphasized the importance of using a comprehensive and integrated approach to change, that includes evaluating the context of change, the type of change, the people involved in the change all while utilizing a variety of change theories. SCU participants knew from their own experience and the results of data they collected that the change they wanted was second-order change that required sense-making through racial dialogue focused on attitudes about race and about SCU's campus racial climate. They described the CRC at SCU as one where they perceived that White people would the most resistant to conversations about race and about racism, in particular they might feel uncomfortable about Whiteness as a schema. I observed participants describe the context of SCU as one where race-talk does not happen. At the same time, however, participants talked about the culture outside of SCU as influential to the way White people at SCU act. In order to begin talking about race, leadership at SCU, after gathering data, built a team of faculty and staff to serve on a committee to talk about race. They varied in rank, tenure, and roles and seemed to be aware of their agency in the group. Given the descriptions above, a final discussion about three change theories and how they relate to race-talk and campus racial climate at SCU is warranted.

Social Cognition Theory

Social Cognition Theories (Harris, 1996; Kezar, 2001) emphasize that change can best be enacted through individuals' thought processes. The core concept in this school of theories is that sensemaking is constantly occurring and change in thought comes through cognitive dissonance as new information, feedback, and reflection challenge current paradigms of thought. People change when their values conflict with a new worldview and adjust (Kezar, 2018). SCT, is aimed at second-order or transformational change in individuals. Important tactics in SCT are facilitating interaction among individuals and helping people examine their understanding of issues - change that is more difficult to make. SCU's change agents were a small group of people. The change that occurred was limited to individuals. However, the change they aspired to was organizational. What SCU should do moving forward is continue to identify ways that, as Collins and Jun (2017) put it, the "White architecture of the mind" serves to respond to issues of race (p. 6). Second-order change at SCU, and perhaps at other institutions, is about the learning process of which learning about how people are predisposed to a system of logic that guides their decisions and evolves to maintain dominance. People of color are influenced by this system, too. For example, SCU staff member Martha was taught to internalize Whiteness and to value Whiteness more than her cultural heritage. For them and for her this was about survival. To compete with Whiteness' resisting forces, SCU should continue to provide and participate in dialogue that engenders humility and exposes new strategies that perpetuate racism.

Social cognition theories though are limited in their focus on individuals rather than organizational change, emphasis on rational rather than acknowledging the irrational nature of change, and may make second-order change too simplistic. Cultural theory helps fill some

of those gaps by emphasizing the irrational, the systems of thinking, and the underlying beliefs and values.

Cultural Theory

Where social cognitive theories root change in the psychological, cultural theory points to change from an organizational and anthropological perspective (Kezar, 2018). What cultural theory does is focus on the implicit cultural systems that change agents may not see (Schein, 1985; Simsek & Louis, 1994). Change is slow, happens over long periods of time, and highlights that groups of people often view the same experiences differently. Cultural theory also focuses on second-order changes steeped in their institutional contexts. Therefore, from a cultural theory perspective, change agents should have a good understanding of institutional knowledge and utilize their understanding of the context. Leaders should examine mission statements, attract interest in values both current and aspirational, and utilize institutional language, symbolism, and tradition to integrate change (Kezar, 2018). Change agents at SCU utilized symbols found in the Bible and appealed to SCU's values. Change agents attempted to build a case for a positive relationship between second-order change and institutional change. However, the limitation of cultural theory is that change is not practical and leaves leaders without any pragmatic steps for change.

Institutional Theory

Institutional theories (Leicht & Fennell; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991) help one ask how broader society influences thoughts on racism in higher education and Christian higher education. The theory suggests that embedded beliefs originate from outside of the institutional context. Two examples appear in the data. First, as participants of color described the campus racial climate, they were also describing their experiences with the

larger cultural climate. For example, students, faculty, and staff identified norms in Christian higher education and in their perception White Christian practice. Participants' gave, as evidence of racism, examples of incidents that occurred within and outside of the institutions.

A second example appears outside of SCU. Current trends have made conversations about critical race theory political landmines. For example, after Jemar Tisby, a popular speaker and author, spoke at a chapel service at Grove City college, the college's governing board called for an investigation into shifts away from its conservative values. Tisby did not mention critical race theory in his 2020 address, but the college's governing board believed, in allowing him to speak, the college was drifting toward CRT advocacy. The point here is not whether CRT has use in a Christian college or education in general. Rather, the Grove City College example serves to highlight White, evangelical leeriness about CRT that may keep Christian institutions from exploring systems views of racism that their members of color experience. SCU participants described racism as manifested in White norms, an invisible culture that served as a barrier to be inclusive of people of color, and a history of silence. Institutional theory helps change agents understand that external forces influence how people at an institution talk about change. Though difficult to know for certain, it seems that participants understood SCU campus racial climate through their direct experiences combined with embedded understandings of culture at large.

Drawing on social cognition theory, cultural theory, and institutional theory I recognize that SCU is entrenched in internal and external forces that might apply resistance to talking about racism and improving campus racial climate. Using the theories and Kezar's (2018) multifaceted framework for understanding change allowed me to see the potential for conflict in race-talk, but then also hone in on the two main ideas of what I learned from this

study. First, I have great respect for the faculty and staff members who worked for nine months on this special committee. They showed great respect for each other. What they wanted from their community was for people at SCU to come to race-talk with humility, willing to listen to each other to make change on their campus. They were committed to each other and to the conversation. Second, I learned that how they wanted to start change was to get to peoples' hearts. They started by drawing them into the common identity of their faith and then challenge the attitudes and embedded belief systems rooted in Whiteness. The question they brought to the SCU community was simultaneously simple and complex: What can I learn about myself and other people?

Delimitations of the Study

The findings reported in Chapter 5, as well as these conclusions drawn from an organizational change perspective drawn, are based on a deep exploration of the experiences of a few at the institution, and the application of a particular approach for analyzing change as a lens for discussing these findings. This is the nature of qualitative research. Thus, a careful delimitation of the parameters of this study is warranted at this juncture, as well as some comments about where interested researchers might look on their own campuses for additional insights into changing campus climate.

The findings from this study represent a portion of the change process undertaken by SCU community members. For example, I analyzed the draft documents as the study concluded, prior to the delivery and implementation of the final document. More may be understood as race is discussed on campus once initiatives begin. Second, I recruited participants for this study from among people involved in the change process. Findings are based on what I learned from those participating in SCU's self-study.

Other members of the SCU community who did not participate in focus groups or were not asked to serve on the committee may have experienced something different during the self-study. Participant perceptions reported in this study represent the experiences of faculty and staff who took an active role in the nine-month process to write a statement which they intended as a guide for the university community as a whole. Further study could be done to explore further perspectives of those who participated on the committee, and certainly expanded to included students, staff and faculty who were not part of the formal change work. Finally, the findings are not intended to be generalized as this was a single-site case study and findings apply to SCU and may be transferrable to other Christian institutions. As a small, Christian liberal arts institution in the Southwest region of the United States, results may vary based on size, demographics, and institutions type.

Implications and Recommendations

This study outlined the complex nature of the relationship between race-talk and campus racial climate at a Christian college. A look through the lens of change management theory enhanced the discussion of the findings about how a Christian college practices change particularly related to addressing racism on campus. SCU provides a situated example of the nature of race-talk on a Christian college campus, with implications and indicated recommendations for research, theory, and practice.

Implications for Research

This study contributed to the research in higher education by addressing a gap in the literature related to how faculty and staff talk about racism on a Christian college campus, and more specifically, in the context of a change initiative related to campus climate. Much of the literature on race talk relates to the contributors and barriers to successful race talk on

college campuses (Sue, 2015). However, this study provided a view of the ways in which faculty, staff, and students engage in race-talk and how race-talk reflects the campus racial climate.

The findings also provided more situational examples of what kind of race talk occurs on Christian college campuses including the embedded language that may exist in a Christian college context. This study provided evidence that members of a Christian college wanted to talk about racism and in particular talk about the ways recognizing, talking about, and understanding Whiteness could move a campus toward racial justice. The findings of this research suggest that the process of dialogue about race at SCU where institutional leaders met in a small group setting and in a long-term learning and collaborative group led to change for that the people who engaged in that process. The finding suggests a strong potential for positive outcomes if the process is expanded to include more people. The literature suggests options toward deliberative intergroup dialogue in higher education settings (Dessel et al., 2006; McCoy, 2021; Moore et al., 2021). they are more likely to move toward change in values and practice.

The implication of researching the kinds of deep, intricate processes that occurred in this study took time to observe and time with which to think, write, and reflect. Cases should illuminate context, should be place-based, tease out the nuances of race-talk, and reflect the time participants take to do this work. This has implications for higher education research on Whiteness, cross-race dialogue, change processes, campus racial climate. Building on the findings of this study, future research is needed to understand the nuances of race-talk on Christian college campuses.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. As members of Christian colleges are not a monolith, researchers should consider duplicating aspects of this study in different regions of the United States to provide an understanding of how faith and race talk intersect. The dialogue on race highlighted in this dissertation demonstrate that small, working groups have the potential for positive change of CRC.
2. Study Whiteness and conversations about Whiteness in the Christian college context. Research about Whiteness may serve to uncover additional embedded language that serves to perpetuate racism in a variety of ways. Research could provide perspective about campus racial climates at Christian colleges.
3. To assist institutions in well-rounded dialogue about race, consider exploring how students are involved in change processes, particularly related to race dialogue. This would provide an additional layer of discovery about power and provide institutional leaders, faculty, and staff insight into how students engage in learning about race through dialogue as they work with their institutions for change.
4. Finally, investigate how other identities intersect with race which might provide a more nuanced view of the challenges that institutions face to improve their campus climates. For instance, researchers could study how socioeconomic status or gender impact experiences for people of color on Christian college campuses.

Implications for Theory

The findings in this study calls for understanding race-talk and campus racial climate related to theory in ways that expand the discussion beyond campus climate at predominantly White institutions. Because what happened at SCU cannot be separated from its place

(Harvey, 1993), SCU, where this particular sample of race-talk occurred, may be relevant to the theorizing about CRC, race-talk, and change. Viewing race-talk (Sue, 2015) as a change process (Kezar, 2018) and as a reflection of campus racial climate (Hurtado et al., 1998) could provide a nuanced understanding of the relationship between race-talk, change theory, and campus racial climate, and in particular in the Christian college context.

Theoretical insight into how race-talk serves as a catalyst for change, for instance thinking about it as a second-order change process may guide practitioners in understanding not just what is happening in terms of the strategies employed by participants of race-talk, but what needs to be talked about to explore the underlying ideologies. It may also assist campus leaders in understanding the obstacles to change related to the differences between first and second-order change and expose new schema that White people, particularly White Christians use to promote and hinder race-talk.

Recommendations for Theorizing Race-Talk

1. Look for distinct characteristics of campus racial climate on Christian college campuses. The dynamics of campus racial climate specific to Christian colleges is underexamined. The scholarship in this field needs a way of exploring how certain people at Christian institutions use certain strategies, for example, silence, to diminish race-talk and perpetuate negative CRC to inform theorizing about race-talk in different settings.
2. Think more deeply about race-talk related to discussions of the context for change. Participants in this study spoke of the church in an embedded way as an influence on ideas about race. Theory about contexts for change focuses on political, social, and

economic factors. Given their relationship to the local church, religious factors should also be considered in the context for change.

3. Draw on sensemaking as it relates to Whiteness to foster new ideas about how people engage in dialogue about racism. Further theorizing about the nature of race-talk might help institutional leaders develop curriculum to facilitate positive conversations about Whiteness.

Implications for Practice

I am drawn to the practical implications, the now-what of a study, so thinking through the ways that institutions, particularly in the Christian college context, could make use of these findings to strengthen campus climate is an important step. Steps toward starting, moving through, and sustaining change using tools such as conversations about race may be aided by these practical implications.

At SCU, learning, values shift, and change related to racism occurred in a small group. Though the group did think through an approach to deliver their diversity statement and plan to the larger community, they did not suggest how members of the community would participate in meaning making of their own. Institutions would benefit from spending concentrated time in small working groups learning and talking about race.

In dialogue initiatives focused on race, members of institutions like SCU should talk about Whiteness and what Whiteness means in their campus contexts. Participants at SCU described a campus climate where White members were not aware of the invisible system of privilege manifested through White norms and preferences. One of the characteristics of SCU's campus climate was that race-talk was absent. It seems a plan to maintain

conversations about race may be warranted as an approach for challenging the tendency for silence about race to continue.

Institutions may have experts in academic fields that are advantageous to include in race talk. As subject matter experts and as persons familiar with the individual institutional context, faculty and staff are valuable resources for dialogue and learning about race. Additionally, managing change through people invested in an institution, like influential faculty members may create the power structures needed for sustained change.

Finally, careful messaging about values may make a difference as resistance emerges, though value systems must be slowly adjusted. This approach may help Christian colleges to move beyond just agreeing that people of color matter and look at ways that behavior contradicts God's view of people through the Imago Dei reflected in the Bible.

Recommendations for Practice

1. Develop change processes that invite learners to discuss race. In studying race on campus, institutions should discuss race in large and small groups to move change into the next phase.
2. SCU's small group model should be duplicated to include more groups than the one faculty and staff team that met and should be frequent, ongoing, repeated, and inclusive. Place members in racially diverse groups and allow them to have repeated, long-term, discussions about values, attitudes, and beliefs related to race. These groups could have learning outcomes for groups. Instead of allowing conversations to organically occur, institutions should work through intentional processes by which members can learn about race..

3. SCU and institutions like it should consider maintaining a committee or working groups, representing different races on campus, to maintain dialogues on race, beyond a diversity initiative.
4. Facilitate readings about Whiteness to give members language with which to discuss barriers. Nurture conversations that expose White fragility and the power dynamics of how race conversations can be shut down. Institutions could study Whiteness, privilege, colorblindness, and clarify the differences between individual acts of discrimination and the underlying belief systems that exist at their institutions.
5. Find ways to involve on-campus experts to enhance understanding of the internal context.
6. Finally, in the Christian college context, identify ways in Christian theology to develop value systems that encourage humility and learning in race talk.

Final Thoughts

The purpose of this study was to explore how people involved in a self-study of racism on campus talked about race. I purposefully observed people talking about race in their own exploration of racism on a Christian college campus. Participants at SCU described their campus racial climate where Whiteness as a norm, as silence, in Christian language, as an implicit value serve as a barrier to racial justice on campus. Questions still remain in an approach like this. What are people really talking about? How do they get to shared dialogue about race? What are their barriers?

Conversations about racism are nuanced, challenging, emotion-filled, personal, and take work. Kezar's (2018) multi-faceted framework for understanding change is a helpful tool in assessing the complexities of racial justice talk. The deep work, second-order change

may encounter resistance. At SCU, determining if and what that resistance looked like has not been determined. If a Christian institution is charged with change work related to racism, where should they start? Perhaps hearing what one faculty member said would make it simple:

> Whiteness is the most pervasive barrier on campus. It is covert. Naming it...is important. It diminishes White students' experiences. Cultural Whiteness oppresses White people too. It is a conforming pressure. It's hard but we need to do this"

This work affects all people. Perhaps language is a barrier. Maybe it is an unclear understanding of a definition of racism. It may be that the process for change is too simple or too complex.

As of this writing, little has happened at SCU. The special committee recommended SCU create an office responsible for addressing diversity initiatives. SCU leadership has since added two positions related to diversity. There is no other tangible evidence that sustained conversations about race have occurred. It could be that the pressure to make improvements in the campus racial climate has diminished and therefore the campus has slipped back into silence. It could also be that the leaders at the institution are deliberate and do not want to act in ways that move too quickly. Perhaps they want to build a culture of learning and sensemaking. My own experiences, and organizational change theory, suggest that each of these possible explanations is salient to varying degrees.

I am unclear if moving slowly is just another maneuver to make the lifting of dealing with racism lighter or if new ways of talking about racism develop in the slowness. With deep respect for the people I observed, what SCU helped me understand was that coming to the conversation about race with humility and grace was one of the most valuable

characteristics to display. The people at SCU provide a powerful example of dialogue about race giving higher education leaders a tool to implement practices that move them forward.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
Participant Recruitment Email

Dear [Insert Name]

I am a Ph.D. candidate in the Higher Education program at Oklahoma State University. I am currently working on my dissertation which focuses on race in higher education. I want to speak with students, faculty, and staff about their experience at the university.

My study is about how people at an institution talk about and experience race and how they perceive the university talks about race. I hope to find out what it is like to be in your shoes by conducting interviews with various people on campus. The results of the study should provide some insight into how the people in the university think about race. My hope is that others at Christian institutions will get to see what people at one institution experience and relate it to their own experiences.

If possible, I would like to interview you as part of the study. Participating in the project should not take too much of your time and I hope to conduct the interviews over the next couple of months.

This study has been approved by the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board as well as this university's IRB.

If you are interested, please reply to this email. I'd be happy to speak to you by phone as well. If there are any questions you have or if you would like more information, please let me know.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Michael Burns, Doctoral Candidate
Higher Education and Student Affairs
Oklahoma State University

APPENDIX B
Semi-Structured Interview Question Guide

I'm here to talk with you about how SCU talks about race and your experience related to race at SCU.

Demographic Questions:

1. What is your race?
2. What is your gender?
3. Please list your role at the university (student, faculty, staff).
4. Students - How long have you been at the university and what are you studying?
5. Faculty - What do you teach?
6. Staff - What are your primary duties?

Lead off question:

Please tell me a little about yourself and your experience with race growing up.

Possible probes:
What was an experience that made you become aware of race?
Tell me more about your background.

Questions:

Tell me about your experience talking about race during the focus group. How did it go? Who talked? How did the conversation make you feel?

What kinds of responses did others in the group have when you talked about race or someone else talks about race?

Tell me about your experience with race at SCU. What is it like?

Possible probes:
What are your experiences like in the classroom related to race?
What are your experiences outside of the classroom related to race?
How do you hear other students talk about race?
How do you hear faculty or staff talk about race?

Are there times when talking about race is okay and not okay?

Possible probes:
When is talking about race okay?
When is it not okay?
Does talking about race make you feel uncomfortable? When?
Should race be talked about more? Why or Why not?

Higher education researchers use the term "compositional diversity" to talk the

diversity of the student body or the employees of a university. A description of the compositional diversity of our campus would include statements about the percentage of students on campus who are Black or Hispanic, etc. I'm trying to get a sense of our campus from the perspective of students. Based on your everyday interactions and experiences on campus, how would you describe the SCU community?

What percentage of the students are Black?
What percentage of the students are White?
Etc.

Describe what interactions with students from a different race than you are like.

Possible probes:
How do you refer to each other?
Is there time when talking to each other is okay and not okay?
When students congregate with each other, is that okay?

Tell me about times where you have felt discriminated against?

Possible probes:
Where have you felt most included?
Where have you felt least included?
Can you give me any examples of when you felt racism was apparent in the classroom?
What instances do you fear on campus?

Tell me about an instance where racial conflict occurred. Did SCU handle the conflict? How do you feel SCU would handle the conflict?

How do you think students from different races treat each other on our campus?

From your perspective as a [race group] person, does SCU treat all people the same?
Why or why not?

Closing Questions:
You have been appointed XX high-level administration role (in your functional area, or the university perhaps). You'll soon have the opportunity to start addressing some of the situations you've talked about in our conversation today.

What are the biggest challenges related to race you expect to find facing you?
Biggest opportunities?
What would you do or create first?

You're in the President's office and he asks you to tell him one more thing about experience with race at SCU. What would you tell him?

You're in your favorite professor's office. S/he asks you the same question. What is one more thing you would tell your professor about your experience with race.

APPENDIX C: OSU IRB Approval

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date:	01/11/2021
Application Number:	IRB-21-3
Proposal Title:	Exploring race at a Christian College
Principal Investigator:	Michael Burns
Co-Investigator(s):	
Faculty Adviser:	Tami Moore
Project Coordinator:	
Research Assistant(s):	
Processed as:	Exempt
Exempt Category:	

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in 45CFR46.

This study meets criteria in the Revised Common Rule, as well as, one or more of the circumstances for which continuing review is not required. As Principal Investigator of this research, you will be required to submit a status report to the IRB triennially.

The final versions of any recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are available for download from IRBManager. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be approved by the IRB. Protocol modifications requiring approval may include changes to the title, PI, adviser, other research personnel, funding status or sponsor, subject population composition or size, recruitment, inclusion/exclusion criteria, research site, research procedures and consent/assent process or forms.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any unanticipated and/or adverse events to the IRB Office promptly.
4. Notify the IRB office when your research project is complete or when you are no longer affiliated with Oklahoma State University.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact the IRB Office at 405-744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu.

Sincerely,
Oklahoma State University IRB

VITA

MICHAEL BURNS

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis: EXPLORING RACE AT A CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

Major Field: Educational Leadership and Policy Studies: Higher Education

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in your major at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 2023

Completed the requirements for the Master of Education in Student Affairs at University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma in 2009.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts in Religion at Oklahoma Baptist University, Shawnee, Oklahoma in 2003.

Experience:

University of Mary Hardin-Baylor	2018 to Present
Dean of Students	
Oklahoma City University	2016 to 2018
Director of Residence Life and Housing	
Oklahoma Baptist University	2005 to 2016
Director of Residence Life	
Director of Residence Life and Student Activities	
Resident Director	