WHAT MAKES AN ACTIVIST? EXPLORING HOW RACIAL JUSTICE MOVEMENTS MOBILIZE BLACK AND WHITE COLLEGE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

In 2020, George Floyd, an unarmed Black man, was murdered by Minneapolis Police. As social media and news outlets reported on Floyd's death, racial justice activists began to organize under the Black Lives Matter movement. The United States was also on lockdown due to the global pandemic – COVID-19. Prior researchers have noted that the lockdown was consequential to the sustained longevity of peaceful protests. Additionally, researchers have concluded that this time saw a heightened number of college students from diverse racial backgrounds.

This study examines what explicitly motivated Black and White college students to act on racial justice and engage with these movements. More importantly, this study included 11 participants to inquire about what motivated White racial justice activism and to explore Black students' perceptions of these actions from their White peers. This research used an interpretative phenomenological to analyze interviews and a facilitated Social Justice Dialogue circle on racial justice. Despite the lack of research on racial justice activism amongst White students, understanding theories such as Intersectionality and Critical Race is paramount in being aware of countering anti-Blackness. Ultimately, this study produced five findings explaining how Black and White college participants described their perceptions of White racial justice activism and how race socialization contributed to this interpretation. Findings show that White participants possessing marginalized identities interpreted this as Intersectionality and showed more empathy in engaging with racial justice activism while also expressing uncertainty about self-identifying with this advocacy status.

Additionally, participants revealed that social media contributed to inauthentic and performative activism post-Floyd's death by using black squares by White content creators
lacking a fundamental understanding of anti-Blackness and the Black Lives Matter movement. Participants looked more profound into how society has socialized Whiteness as the normative identity and manifested guilt, fear, and fragility when discussing racialized topics. Lastly, participants revealed that the divisive socio-political climate during the Trump administration significantly contributed to furthering structural racism. At the same time, the global pandemic provided an environment of racial reckoning within the United States. Broader implications for practice and theory are offered to guide recommendations for future research on racial justice activists.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my family and ancestors in profound gratitude and love. Through their unwavering support and the opportunities, they created, I have been able to pursue higher education and equip myself to advocate for racial justice.

To all those who have suffered the profound effects of anti-Black racism and White Supremacy, I offer this dedication with heartfelt recognition. Your experiences have shed light on the urgent need to dismantle systemic oppression. This work is dedicated to your strength and resilience in adversity.

Lastly, I dedicate this dissertation to future racial justice activists. May this work serve as a blueprint for ongoing social change. Let us unite to dismantle structural racism and foster a more equitable world. We can forge a path toward justice and liberation by recognizing Black Lives Matter.

Thank You
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>xiv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Background</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of the Study</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Frameworks</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Race Theory</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory of Intersectionality</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the Problem</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the Study</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Study Questions</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Methods</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Terms</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activism</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy &amp; Allyship</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Blackness</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Justice</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Justice Dialogue Circle (SJDC)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
White Guilt ................................................................................................................. 15
White Responsibility ................................................................................................. 15
White Supremacy ........................................................................................................ 15
Implications of the Study ......................................................................................... 15
Organization of Study ............................................................................................... 16

2. LITERATURE REVIEW ............................................................................................... 17
   History and Significance of Student Activism ......................................................... 17
      Race as a Construct ................................................................................................. 18
      Examining Case Law on Racial Equity ................................................................. 20
      Influence of College Students in Racism Justice Movements ...................... 21
      Black Lives Matter Movement and Racial Accountability ............................ 22
      Activism During Trump Presidency .................................................................. 23
      Generation Z’s Influence on Activism ............................................................... 24
   Utilizing Theory to Explore Systemic Constraints .................................................. 25
      Critical Race Theory ............................................................................................ 26
      Utilizing Intersectionality for a Holistic Approach to Activism ...................... 28
      A need for racial justice activism ...................................................................... 30
   Development of White Consciousness ................................................................. 30
      Identity Socialization ........................................................................................... 31
      Unlearning Systemic Bias .................................................................................. 32
      Developing White Empathy .............................................................................. 33
      White Progressiveness ....................................................................................... 34
   Countering Anti-Blackness in Society and Higher Education ................................ 35
## Chapter 1: Racial Justice Activism Amongst White Students

1. **Black Identity Development and Belonging** ................................................. 37

2. **A Need for Racial Justice Activism Amongst White Students to Foster Inclusive Spaces** ................................................................. 37

3. **Institutional Demands and White Students’ Response to Countering Racism** ................................................................................................. 39

4. **Summary of Chapter** ....................................................................................... 40

### 3. METHODS ........................................................................................................ 42

- **Purpose of the Study** ...................................................................................... 42
- **Design of the Study** ...................................................................................... 43
- **Site of the Study** ............................................................................................ 44
- **Participant Recruitment** .................................................................................. 46
- **Data Collection** .................................................................................................. 48
  - **Participant Interviews** ...................................................................................... 49
  - **Social Justice Dialogue Circle** ..................................................................... 50
  - **Social Justice Dialogue Circle Observation** ................................................ 52
- **Data Analysis and Trustworthiness** .................................................................. 53
- **Role of Researcher and Researcher Positionality** ............................................ 56
- **Ethical Considerations** .................................................................................... 58

### 4. FINDINGS ........................................................................................................ 59

- **Participant Profiles** .......................................................................................... 60
  - **Participant: Rachael Lee** .................................................................................. 60
    - Racheal’s Racial Justice Activism Experience ............................................. 61
  - **Participant: Blaze** .......................................................................................... 62
    - Blaze’s Racial Justice Activism Experience ................................................. 62
White Racial Justice Activism Involvement ............................................. 108

Racial Identity Development, Urban Campuses, Racial Justice Conversations ................................................................. 111

Black Student’s Interpretations of White Racial Justice Activism ................................................................. 115

Limitations .............................................................................................. 118

Study Implications ................................................................................... 119

Implication for Racial Justice ................................................................. 119

Implications for Theory ........................................................................... 121

Implications for Practice ......................................................................... 123

Recommendation for Future Research .................................................. 129

Conclusion .............................................................................................. 132

REFERENCES CITED ............................................................................. 134

APPENDICES ......................................................................................... 143

A. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL AND QUESTIONS ........................................ 143

B. SOCIAL JUSTICE DIALOGUE CIRCLE PROTOCOL AND QUESTIONS .................................................................................. 145

C. COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS AND BRAVE SPACES ......... 147

D. OBSERVATION PROTOCOL .................................................................. 148

E. IRB APPROVAL FORM ........................................................................ 150

F. RECRUITMENT EMAIL ........................................................................ 151

G. RECRUITMENT FLYER ........................................................................ 152

H. INFORMED CONSENT FORM .............................................................. 153

I. ELIGIBILITY QUESTIONNAIRE ............................................................. 158

J. DEMOGRAPHICS QUESTIONNAIRE ................................................... 159
LIST OF TABLES

1. Demographics Data.........................................................................................48
2. Sample Observation Criteria........................................................................53
3. Themes and Subthemes.................................................................................73
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the United States has had a racial reckoning to recognize anti-Blackness's influence and harm on the Black community. This transpired as the nation witnessed the murders of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and Ahmaud Arbery during the summer of 2020. Additionally, the 2022 mass shooting in Buffalo, New York, has called for a critical need to examine racism afflicted toward Black identity. These senseless murders heightened the number and longevity of Black Lives Matter demonstrations calling for racial justice. More importantly, this racial awareness laid the foundation for understanding how White Supremacy creates oppressive conditions for communities of color (Alexander, 2010).

The presence of college students at in-person demonstrations and through social media platforms has been instrumental in calling for the accountability of racial inequities on and off campuses (Fisher & Rouse, 2022). During this mobilization, these protests saw an increased number of White college students present to amplify their voices for systemic change. The increase is attributed to the social climate and the global COVID-19 pandemic (Fisher & Rouse, 2022). News outlets flooded networks consistently with the recording of Floyd's death, which activated a heightened response from intersectional activists. Compared to previous Black Lives Matter protests, White advocacy-based organizations sent messages to their members, forming coalitions against racial injustices (Fisher & Rouse, 2022). Over time, White students have been involved in various social justice movements empowering areas of gender identity, women's rights, sexuality, climate change, and rising tuition costs (Goodman, 2011). Today's college students have capitalized on advocating using technology, expressing their right to vote, and
creating change through student leadership opportunities (Smith et al., 2020). These methods have allowed students to engage more with racially motivated issues nationwide.

In the United States, race is recognized as a social construct promoting a hierarchy towards Whiteness. This construction was primarily based on non-biological factors to create separation based on skin color while justifying the unjust treatment of Black Americans (Alexander, 2010). Throughout American history, a White lens has been applied to how education is taught and contributed to establishing legal principles and legislation. These practices have undoubtedly shaped identity development and defined privilege, often obscuring Whiteness from connecting with racial inequities (Johnston-Guerrero, 2016). To dismantle this layer of White Supremacy, further examination is needed to understand how this ideology has victimized Whiteness (Cabrera, 2014). Thus, understanding the influence of White Supremacy on identity development and consciousness can inform how White students respond to racial justice issues. Unfortunately, limited research assesses how White college students unlearn social constructs of Whiteness and develop a racial consciousness mindset leading to activism (Tatum, 1994). This research is critical in understanding how White empathy triggers engagement as a bystander to dismantle racialized bigotry and biases.

Sociologists contend that Generation Z is the most diverse in United States history. This generation is also well-noted for utilizing activism to challenge systemic inequalities (Tanaid & Wright, 2019). Despite this diverse generation, there is an existing gap in recognizing how racial identities influence students' involvement with activism countering racialized systemic issues. This gap expands as concepts of White guilt, White fragility, and White fear may impact how educational institutions teach racial relations (DiAngelo, 2015). A deeper analysis is needed to reconcile how White college students develop awareness and consciousness.
to advocate for racial equity effectively. Further, this analysis discusses whether Black students interpret these actions as performative due to guilt, fear, and fragility that can influence White identity development (Tatum, 1994).

This study explores how racially conscious White college students at Predominantly White Institutions can create social awareness and foster anti-racist principles. Moreover, this study seeks to examine how Black students interpret actions of racial justice activism by their White peers. Lastly, it can provide future guidance on how students establish inclusive communities on college campuses.

**Historical Background**

Higher education institutions have historically been the landscape for student activism (Logan, 2016). However, the foundation of colleges and universities has often mirrored the social climate of the United States – an underlying bias in promoting racial justice. Moreover, the United States has an unsettling history of systemic oppression toward historically marginalized communities of color. Despite higher education institutions' commitment to creating enlightened and critical thinkers, many universities did not promote racial development among their White students (Cabrera et al., 1999). This is due to an absence of fostering dialogues and course curriculums to authentically address racialized issues in the United States. To better articulate today's race relations within educational institutions, it is critical to have a foundational grasp on how this climate has existed throughout American history. In understanding this dilemma, it is essential to consider how legal precedents have promoted advocacy through expanding constitutional protections based on race. Such legal instances paved the way for modern-day student activism centered around racial justice (Alemán et al., 2011). Cases such as *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) cemented a social environment amongst educational
institutions that promoted a separate but equal doctrine between Black and White communities. This landmark decision fueled oppressive conditions already existing in a racially toxic nation. Subsequently, Jim Crow policies created harsh treatment promoting a heightened degree of systemic racism across the United States (Alexander, 2010). This racially exclusive climate showed up in educational spaces at all levels.

An ill-effect of how *Plessy (1896)* influenced higher education institutions wavered in *Sweatt v. Painter (1950)*. The facts of this case involved the admission of a Black American to the University of Texas School of Law. During this timeframe, the University of Texas was exclusive in only admitting White students, therefore, rejecting Herman Marion Sweatt's application based on race. The Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) justices had to determine whether the denial of admission violated the Fourteenth Amendment. The court issued a unanimous decision citing that the University of Texas School of Law violated the Fourteenth Amendment due to an adjacent "law school for Negroes" deemed as unequal in resources and overall prestige. In the companion case of *McLaurin v. Oklahoma State of Regents (1950)*, SCOTUS applied a similar standard regarding the state of Oklahoma's ability to deny George McLaurin into the University of Oklahoma to pursue a doctorate in education due to being a Black American (Brown, 2004). An implication of both *Sweatt (1950)* and *McLaurin (1950)* challenged whether racially segregated spaces created a void for equitable opportunities. Subsequently, both cases paved the way for overturning the *Plessy (1896)* decision.

The "separate but equal" era ended in 1956 after SCOTUS overturned *Plessy (1896)* through *the Brown V. Board of Education (1954)*. Although this legal decision ended the separate spaces for Black and White individuals, systemic racism intensified (Crenshaw et al., 1995). An apparent area of this intensification involved policing Black communities and bodies.
Policing in Black communities is at the center of contemporary student activism. Law enforcement within the United States has been an example of how implicit bias is grounded in racist ideology. The history of policing through slave patrols and later with members of the Ku Klux Klan joining Sherriff offices has contributed immensely to how the Black community is treated (Alexander, 2010). These socialized stereotypical beliefs have led to many unarmed Black individuals dying at law enforcement's hands, while White counterparts often experience non-fatal outcomes (Alexander, 2010).

These law enforcement-involved shootings frequently happened over the last century; however, technology has allowed bystanders to begin recording these instances that, trigger an outcry for social change (Logan, 2016). Despite the legal remedies to promote racial equality, modes of anti-Blackness continued throughout legal and educational institutions. The history of racial injustices shapes the trauma many Black students experience on college campuses and within society (Pieterse et al., 2010). Equally, these socialized beliefs have cemented how White identity development occurs within the United States (Tatum, 1994). Although these racial barriers have existed throughout American history, there are various instances where student activism took on a multi-racial lens to counter such systemic issues. There is a history of racial justice activism amongst White individuals that serves as a precursor to understanding modern-day mobilization for equitable standards.

The United States has had several examples of racial injustices throughout its existence. The country's construction was based on racialized undertones through chattel slavery and indigenous genocide (Alexander, 2010). As Black Abolitionists began to counter enslavement practices, this movement gained White advocates that opposed the unjust treatment of this marginalized community (Blackett, 2002). Although the numbers were small, White
abolitionists contested the societal stance of enslaving Black Americans while citing that these actions contradicted principles outlined in the United States Constitution. Penalties for this type of racial advocacy could result in imprisonment or fatalities for aiding an enslaved individual to freedom (Blackett, 2002). This type of selflessness carried over into the twentieth century as the United States began dealing with a more contextual mode of racism during the Jim Crow era and the 1960s Civil Rights Movement (Clayton, 2018). Black college students during this timeframe established coalitions amongst their White counterparts to enforce changes to laws permeating anti-Blackness. Like the selflessness described by abolitionists, these students had to take critical risks to impart social change. The history outlined throughout this section emphasizes the embedded history of racism and examples of Whiteness became engaged bystanders to promote social justice (Clayton, 2018). This history underscores White identity consciousness's importance in countering racial constructs promoting continued inequities.

**Significance of the Study**

A sense of belonging is integral for students to feel campus connections. These environments allow students to feel valued. However, the history of Black collegians at higher education institutions has had a different experience due to historical factors outlined earlier in this chapter (Choi, 2007). Based on race, Black students can counter societal and campus bias simultaneously. This highlights the importance of actively engaging campus communities in inclusive student engagement and equitable policies (Logan, 2016). Over the past decade, college students have united with the Black Lives Matter movement whenever an injustice has occurred in the United States.

Additionally, these protests fostered spaces where students countered racial injustices and created environments where students could show up as their unapologetic selves. Another
component of inclusivity regarding racial justice involves creating spaces that challenge White Supremacy and promote restorative cultural awareness. In this instance, students center their voices by utilizing activism to hold campus communities accountable for any failures in achieving inclusion. When students feel institutional campus or society incidents impact their belonging, activism can be used as a remedy. A vital factor in campus student activism on racial justice involves the engagement of White students. Research has revealed that student demands focus on combating racism and inequality through institutional transformation (Byrd et al., 2021). Lastly, researchers reported an unexpected outcome that campuses with documented student protests were not more likely to have demands issued by students.

Another study focused on White students' response to societal racism to maintain a sense of belonging to their Black peers (Spanierman et al., 2008). This study extended earlier literature on how White individuals respond to societal racism. It also describes how people of color experience daily injustices and how White individuals experience negative consequences from this socialized systemic behavior. However, the findings of this study highlighted White students' ability to address issues of societal racism as being complicated to navigate (Spanierman et al., 2008).

**Theoretical Frameworks**

Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Intersectionality were utilized as frameworks throughout this study. These grounded approaches explored how identity-based issues surface within the United States while triggering a need for activism. Theorists have utilized these approaches to unravel systemic issues to stimulate social change. For this study, CRT and Intersectionality highlighted how socialized concepts could impact racial consciousness and a need to counter behaviors that promote anti-Blackness.
Critical Race Theory (CRT)

CRT is a framework conceptualized by legal scholars after the American Civil Rights Movement (Crenshaw et al., 1995). The theory surfaced to explain the failures of the American legal system in promoting racial equity; however, it has been adopted into the education field. CRT critiques dominant racial power systems and explores how activism can generate opposition to racism. There are five tenets of CRT; however, this study utilized counter-storytelling and interest convergence to elaborate on how activism can facilitate racial justice (Crenshaw et al., 1995).

Using CRT in this qualitative research allowed a critical examination of how multifaceted racial justice activism occurs on college campuses (Parker & Lynn, 2002). Further, CRT uncovers the complexities of how power dynamics and inequities shape White students' motivations and Black students' perceptions. This theoretical framework allowed a deeper investigation into the intersection of race, power, and activism, contributing to future recommendations on engaging in racial justice activism with college students (Parker & Lynn, 2002). Furthermore, the assertion of this theory can provide practices for promoting anti-racism through the unlearning process and the willingness to create a more just society (Moradi & Grzanka, 2017).

Theory of Intersectionality

Intersectionality is an approach introduced by Kimberle Crenshaw during the late 1980s to describe how interconnected oppressions can influence an individual with two or more historically marginalized identities (Moradi & Grzanka, 2017). In the context of this study, Intersectionality can factor into how activism is utilized to support the "whole" student (Berger,
2009). For instance, questions have been developed during participant interviews to discuss Intersectionality with White students specifically (e.g., ability, sexuality, gender identity, socioeconomic status). White students possessing intersecting marginalized identities can influence how these students empathize in advocating for communities of color. Using Intersectionality in this qualitative study informs a technique of intersectional thinking (Duran & Jones, 2019). During this study, intersectional thinking allowed an analysis of how personal experiences, socialization, awareness of privilege, and unity with the Black community can foster White racial justice activism (Duran & Jones, 2019). Further, using Intersectionality significantly informed how gender identity and sexual orientation were crucial in participants' motivations.

**Statement of the Problem**

The issue under consideration was whether movements such as Black Lives Matter provided a foundation for White students to develop racial empathy and create social change through activism (Cole, 2020). Moreover, this study additionally examined how Black students perceived or understood 'White Racial Justice activism'. Activism can be utilized as a counter-narrative towards how individuals have been socialized and combat levels of anti-Blackness (Johnson, 2020). Institutional racism in American society can foster White privilege while further marginalizing the Black community through anti-Black measures (Aldana & Byrd, 2015). To better interpret how White college students react to racial justice issues, it is necessary to have an awareness of White identity development.

In the early 1990's, Janet Helms developed the White Identity Model to describe the responsibility of Whiteness to counter systemic racism. Helms based much of this theoretical approach on William Cross' Black identity model to apply standards on how White privilege can
be harnessed to address anti-Blackness. Moreover, Helms' model emphasizes five phases for abandoning learned concepts that have historically socialized and constructed Whiteness. Currently, there is limited information assessing how White college students develop racial consciousness to advocate for Black students and better understand the importance of unlearning race as a socialized ideology. The unlearning process is linked to identity socialization. During the 1980s, Bobbi Haro introduced the *Cycle of Socialization (1986)* to describe how bias (intentional and unintentional) is learned early on. This process speaks to how individuals understand racial awareness due to various societal behaviors and experiences.

Another critical area involves how transparent White college students are in dialoguing about their racial awareness and societal inequities. Fragility and guilt have been attributed to a shutdown of White individuals engaging in conversations on progressing societal change. White fragility is defined as acts of defensiveness to evade discussions on race-related issues (DiAngelo, 2011). Coincidentally, White guilt is the remorse or shame a White person feels related to racial inequality and injustices. These terms are connected to how individuals are socialized in thinking about race as a construct. Also, it is attributed to the lack of educational institutions having honest conversations about race. To better navigate issues of guilt and fragility, White individuals should consider how they experience their Whiteness (DiAngelo, 2015). In college settings, this awareness is paramount as institutions are charged with creating critical thinkers (Aldana & Byrd, 2015).

A final challenge is the inability of past research to utilize an intersectional lens when discussing identity development that can lead to racial cognizance. Factoring in the efforts of Intersectionality would implicate multiple theories to be combined with supporting an individual's authentic self-development through empirical research. For instance, a person who
identifies as a woman, lesbian, or Black has various marginalized identities, creating Intersectionality (Moradi & Grzanka, 2017). There is no all-inclusive framework to forecast how multiple marginalized identities can impact self-development. This approach is also critical in exploring how Intersectionality can impact Whiteness. In these instances, studies require numerous theories to project behaviors. Intersectionality, at its core, uncovers that identity is not a monolithic value and has a fluidity that sparks different experiences. Hence, Intersectionality is a means for activists to conceptualize racial justice holistically.

This theory asserts the awareness of systemic constraints that target other marginalized identities outside of race. Systemic examples consist of capitalism, patriarchy, and ability. (Crenshaw, 2010). Further exploration is necessary to determine what experiences should occur to activate White college-age students' consciousness of racial justice (in some cases, anti-racism) as a concept (Moradi & Grzanka, 2017). A more racially conscious analysis is needed to recognize how instances of White fragility and White guilt guide race dialogues between White students and their Black peers. This study describes hindrances and barriers that can cause White students to disengage as activists while considering how Black college students interpret activism in racial justice movements.

**Purpose of the Study**

Racial justice activism has become an increasingly important topic at colleges and universities (Gorski, 2019). Despite current backlash from various political figures, many higher education institutions have prioritized scholarship on race by creating Centers for Anti-Racism or extending the role of social justice education. This research describes how White college students can serve as racial justice activists while examining what sparks their involvement as engaged bystanders. Moreover, it provides narratives on how White college student activism
connects to racial justice. Lastly, this study highlighted Black college students' perception of
their White peers' involvement and motivation in facilitating racial justice.

As institutions continue to promote anti-racism as a concept, it is essential to
understand how students are prepared to counter and respond to systemic issues, mainly racial
injustices. Further, this study focused on students self-identifying as activists. This approach
highlighted how institutions have developed resources that support inclusive leadership while
factoring in conversations about racial identity. By exploring this concept of racial justice
activism, higher education administrators can better understand how campuses can continually
foster dialogues and education that inspire social awareness (Gorski, 2019).

**Research Study Questions**

Considering how racial justice activism happens amongst Black and White students, the
following questions have been developed to guide this study.

1. How do White college students describe their experience with racial justice activism?
   a. In what ways are students involved in racial justice activism?

2. How does racial justice activism influence identity development in White college
   students at predominantly White urban institutions, and how do their Black peers
   perceive this development?

3. To what extent do racial justice movements (e.g., Black Lives Matter) influence how
   Black and White college students engage in campus activism?
   a. How do Black students interpret racial justice activism by their White peers?

**Research Methods**

This study used an interpretative phenomenological qualitative approach to answer
each research question. This approach is essential to understand better how racial justice
movements, such as Black Lives Matter, impact White college students' participation. Moreover, this study explored how Black students interpret racial justice activism by their White peers. This study included 11 participants representing Black and White college students at an urban institution.

**Definitions and Terms**

**Activism**

Activism encapsulates various actions to bring about social and political change. Activism is an outlet to advocate for equity and equality for marginalized identities. This is when an individual develops consciousness, allowing direct action to change biased behaviors against others. These techniques generally occur whenever systemic constraints marginalize identities. In the context of this study, activism is centered on racial justice or anti-racism (Thompson, 2001).

**Advocacy & Allyship**

Advocacy is the state of individuals proactively taking measures and building relationships within and across various groups to promote social change and awareness of systemic issues. On the other hand, allyship happens when individuals actively support others with marginalized identities. This study discusses advocacy when describing racial justice rather than allyship due to the proactive nature of having informed consciousness about countering anti-Blackness. Further, data from this study unveiled that participants described allyship when discussing inauthentic and performative actions while using advocacy as a term to illustrate racial justice activism.

**Anti-Blackness**

Anti-Blackness are behaviors, attitudes, and practices that dehumanize Black people while maintaining white Supremacy. These actions undermine Black liberation and teach
socialized bias based on skin color. According to Bobbi Harro (1985), such sentiments are socialized through various institutions (e.g., media, family, education, and educational institutions) subtly or overtly (Grier-Reed & Quiñones, 2021)

**Racial Justice**

Racial justice is transformative actions designed to eliminate racial barriers and create an equitable landscape for Black and Indigenous People of Color. Anti-racism has been a guided approach providing necessary techniques to challenge systemic racial barriers in recent years (Thompson, 2001). This research study occasionally uses the phrase White racial justice to describe behaviors by White identified individuals to advance equity while dismantling anti-Blackness racism.

**Social Justice Dialogue Circle (SJDC)**

The Social Justice Dialogue Circle (SJDC) is modeled from a standard 'Fishbowl' activity. The SJDC utilizes intergroup dialogue techniques to discuss a social topic that traditionally has multiple views. In this instance, the SJDC discusses race, Whiteness, anti-Blackness, and racial justice activism. This activity is facilitated for 90-120 minutes by creating two distinct groups based on participants' self-identification to respond to facilitated prompts.

**White Fragility**

White fragility is discomfort and defensiveness by White individuals when confronted with discussions or instances of racial inequality. This phenomenon is often linked to the erased racialized experiences and a rewrite of history representing a different narrative on biases impacting communities of color (DiAngelo, 2015).
White Guilt

White guilt is defined as shame surfacing when White individuals are presented with issues about race-related disparities. These feelings can often cause White individuals to disengage from the topic; however, this can also trigger an experience of unlearning biases (DiAngelo, 2015).

White Responsibility

The development of social awareness by White identified individuals in understanding the construction of racialized systems. In addition to developing awareness, this responsibility takes ownership of their racial development to become cognizant of how guilt and fragility can serve as a barrier to promoting racial justice activism.

White Supremacy

White Supremacy is an ideology and system established to elevate Whiteness within societies. Moreover, this ideology fuels privilege and stipulates Whiteness as the standard. White Supremacy is an oppressive system created through the socialization of race (Alexander, 2010).

Implications of the Study

Critical conversations regarding racial justice have resurfaced in the United States following fatal police actions against unarmed Black individuals. Activism and civil unrest have been central to calling out these racial inequities. Student activism has been essential in promoting societal change on higher education campuses. Activism is a mode of accountability that speaks directly against targeted injustices (Grier-Reed, Said, & Quiñones, 2021). While promoting levels of racial justice activism, students should utilize a holistic approach by applying intersectional measures. To continually challenge systemic racism, higher education administrators should use an inclusive lens when drafting policies and releasing advocacy
statements. These actions increase a sense of belonging for Black collegians while demonstrating racial advocacy to White individuals.

Unlearning supports the storytelling and counter-storytelling narrative of anti-Blackness taught in history books, media or passed down through societal customs (Choi, 2007). As higher education institutions continue to diversify campuses, recognizing systemic racism is necessary to advocate for and develop Black students. Additional research is needed to analyze how anti-Blackness can hinder identity development.

Furthermore, future research can inform how racial justice activism can continually inspire White peers to become involved with authentically countering anti-Blackness racism. These are necessary for providing a good sense of belonging for Black students in higher education while recognizing the trauma outside societal factors can cause.

**Organization of the Study**

This dissertation consists of five chapters. Chapter one introduces the study, highlighting White students involved in racial justice activism and the perceptions Black students have on this advocacy type. Chapter two provides a literature review on selected studies encapsulating this topic while introducing a historical and legal perspective informing today's racial climate. In chapter three, the study's research design, methods, and data are explained, providing a deeper understanding of how the methodology guided this study. A presentation of the study's results and participant profiles are detailed in chapter four, reviewing the results of the findings. Lastly, chapter five connects themes and findings to the literature and offers conclusions and implications of this dissertation.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This dissertation explores racialized implications of activism between Black and White college students. Critical Race Theory (CRT) and the theory of Intersectionality are frameworks that guide this study’s research. These theoretical approaches underline social change’s importance in creating equitable spaces based on racial identity. Fostering a comprehensive approach to racial identity development amongst White college students can trigger awareness in addressing racial justice issues. Further, this study sought Black students’ perspectives to understand better how White Racial Justice is seen through a Black lens. The literature review justifies this study while identifying gaps associated with student activism from a racialized context. This review has been divided into five areas: (1) the history and significance of student activism in higher education; (2) utilizing theory to explore the impact of systemic constraints; (3) the influence of White consciousness; (4) countering anti-Blackness; and (5) Black identity development and belonging.

History and Significance of Student Activism

It is vital to have a well-rounded understanding of the historical development of anti-Blackness in American society. This section connects how higher education institutions have fashioned activism with the influence of race on college campuses. Colleges and universities have historically been the landscape for student activism (Logan, 2016). Recognizing the complexities of racialization and social inequities throughout American society is equally essential, warranting a need for social change and activism (Lee & Bean, 2004). College-aged students have been among many social reform and advocacy groups throughout United States history (Logan, 2016). Traces of activism amongst college students date back to 1766 at Harvard
University. The “Great Butter Rebellion” is the campus unrest, often referring to student actions (Chambers & Phelps, 1993). These actions subsequently led to student government organizations on college campuses (Johnston, 2015). Black collegians enter higher education with centuries of embedded racial bias that has historically undermined their education and are subjected to systemic racism outside campus life (Kendi, 2012).

These are significant issues not experienced by their White peers and can create a dualistic outlook on Black identity. W.E.B Dubois classifies this experience as having double consciousness (Itzigsohn & Brown, 2015). Dubois defines double consciousness as a sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of contempt and pity. Moreover, one feels a degree of duality through a lens of Whiteness and consciousness of Black identification. This concept is critical in understanding identity awareness for Black students and balancing how oppressive systems influence belongingness, which can trigger activism (Itzigsohn & Brown, 2015).

This dissertation defines activism as various actions to bring social change by countering systemic inequities (Kendi, 2012). Moreover, activism in the context of this study focuses on how students can actively participate in racial justice or anti-racist behaviors. Racial justice is centered on how activism is utilized to counter barriers inherently experienced by Black students (Kendi, 2012).

**Race as a Construct**

The United States' racial climate has been shaped since the signing of the Declaration of Independence. A racialized system was manufactured through an ideology of White Supremacy. Generally, other global nations view ethnicity as a recognized identity rather than how the United States socially constructed race. This approach created a hierarchy of privilege or marginalization based on skin color (Golden et al., 2022). The history of identity creation dates
to Bacon's Rebellion around 1676 (Fields, 1990). Young freedmen, enslaved, and lower-class indentured White servants united against colonial America, burning the capital. As a result, the government established policies to prevent future rebellions from occurring. They stipulated that the White indentured servants were deemed to have privileges over other Black and indigenous individuals involved in the uprising (Fields, 1990). Before this rebellion, racial identity was not a conceivable entity within the United States, despite forced labor from enslaved Africans (Fields, 1990). However, the construction of racial identification has changed over time. Sociologists Lee and Bean assert that ethnic and racial boundaries have been modified throughout the United States' history (Lee & Bean, 2004). They further mention that there were once ethnic immigrants considered 'non-White,' such as Italian or Irish ethnic identities (Lee & Bean, 2004).

While race is a socially constructed identity, its impact has created divisional barriers that influence how Black individuals are treated (Alexander, 2010). The social construction of racialized backgrounds has led to the unjust and often fatal treatment of Black individuals by law enforcement or other American institutions. In sustaining this biased ideology, various practices and organizations formed during reconstruction cemented White superiority (e.g., Jim Crow laws, Ku Klux Klan, Sundown policies, etc.). Such oppressive actions have lingered and ignited modern-day activism for racial justice (Alexander, 2010).

The racial eugenics movement promoted through science attempted to validate falsified claims that Black Americans were inferior, lacked empathy and had lesser intellectual aptitude (Stanley, 2020). This framing of the Black community has conditioned how anti-Blackness appears in education and other areas that warrant advocacy (Dancy et al., 2018). Additionally, the pervasiveness of White Supremacy has seeped into the fabric of legislation and legal principles that often require activism to spark change (Grace & Nelson, 2019). These practices
were evident from decisions rendered by the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) restricting Black Americans' public access and individual rights. The landmark case of Plessy v Ferguson (1896), which determined that "separate but equal" spaces between Black and White individuals did not violate constitutional rights, resulted from racialized bias. Plessy profoundly influenced how educational institutions admitted students onto their campuses based on racial classification (Plessy v. Ferguson, 1896). This rule of law permitted colleges and universities to enforce a "White only" policy for prestigious institutions. Fifty years after the Plessy decision, the highest court revisited separate but equal constitutional principles, overturning this earlier decision (Plessy v. Ferguson, 1896).

**Examining Case Law of Racial Equity**

Opposers of the separate but equal clause began challenging this precedence by asserting it violated Black Americans' rights under the fourteenth amendment. Challengers argued that this violation created a hostile climate subjecting Black Americans to racial bias supported by legal principles (Palermo & Fusani, 2021). Fifty years after separate but equal became the legal doctrine, SCOTUS reconsidered how this ruling promoted unfair and unjust practices. The companion cases of Sweatt v. Painter (1950) and McLaurin v. Oklahoma State of Regents (1950) served as a precursor to striking down the Plessy (1896) decision.

Both cases examined whether higher education institutions can legally use race to deny admission to Black Americans (Stefkovich & Leas, 1994). Under provisions of Plessy (1896), institutions could restrict admittance if there were equivalent institutions for Black individuals. This separation of educational facilities often uncovered that Black educational institutions were often under-resourced while predominantly White institutions-maintained prestige. SCOTUS justices determined that restricting an individual based on race violated their constitutional rights. In 1956, SCOTUS unanimously decided to overturn the separate but equal
doctrine through Brown v Board of Education (1956). The high court ordered that all educational institutions integrate their student population with "all deliberate speed" (Brown v. Board of Education, 1956). Although this decision corrected a racially toxic precedent, researchers suggested that the SCOTUS justices fell short and provided a strict timeline for desegregation (Stefkovich & Leas, 1994). Furthermore, the Brown (1956) decision sparked student activism for racial justice during the United States Civil Rights Movement (Meyer & Boutcher, 2007).

**Influence of College Students in Racial Justice Movements**

The 1960s was a decade that ignited profound change within the United States. College students began to protest various racial injustices while countering additional social issues involving the Vietnam War and the Stonewall Revolution for LGBTQIA+ rights. The Civil Rights Movement during the 1960s established a synergistic approach to combating racist ideology influencing anti-Blackness (Reed, 2019). As individuals such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, Malcolm X, Rosa Parks, and Medger Edgars led a movement to create social change, college students became critical assets. Although Brown (1956) dismantled segregation laws across the nation, southern states were still defiant towards being inclusive of Black identity (Meyer & Boutcher, 2007).

Black college students conceptualized sit-ins as an approach to counter these oppressive measures further. Sit-ins are described as civil disobedience designed to draw empathy from southern businesses' mistreatment and denial of services to Black Americans (Andrews & Biggs, 2006). College students were additionally involved in the Freedom Riders movement in protest of segregated busing terminals (Arsenault, 2006). Black Americans primarily led both activist tactics; however, White Americans began to empathize and join the movement for racial justice (Biggs & Andrews, 2015). Involvement in the Sit-in and Freedom Riders movement was often
met with resistance from Southern segregationists. Whether through town mobs or law enforcement, activists were subjected to threats, physical violence, or fatal encounters (Biggs & Andrews, 2015).

**Black Lives Matter Movement and Racial Accountability**

The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement originated as a hashtag in 2012 and subsequently became a measure after the killing of Trayvon Martin by George Zimmerman. Racial justice activists Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi created this hashtag to bring awareness to unarmed Black individuals killed by law enforcement or White vigilantes (Chase, 2017). Social media quickly galvanized around BLM, transcending this phrase into a social justice movement. In context, the concept of Black lives mattering dates to centuries of anti-Blackness and racist practices (e.g., ⅗ compromise, racial eugenics, etc.).

BLM, as a movement, promotes a platform of Black liberation due to racially systemic inequities and trauma inflicted onto a community due to skin color (Dixson, 2018). There is a clear distinction between the movement versus the organization. The American Civil Liberties Union describes the organization as a global decentralized network with over 30 chapters worldwide. At the same time, the movement is more aligned with a grassroots background led by youth to foster racial justice (Roberts, 2018). Conservative right-winged groups established the hashtag and phrase 'All Lives Matter' to counter the BLM (Dixson, 2018). The conceptualization of All Lives Matters is grounded in fragility, fear, and guilt by Whiteness. These groups' attempt to delegitimize BLM's purpose has willful negligence in understanding how race plays a significant factor in Black individuals being harmed by law enforcement and systemic racism (Dixson, 2018).
The continued success of BLM is credited to continued advances in technology and social media. Technology is a tool that has heightened several protests. Using smartphones and other handheld devices has allowed bystanders to record unjustified treatment from law enforcement (Bowman, 2021). Consequently, these recordings have created a national debate on policing Black bodies compared to their White counterparts (Chase, 2017). These recordings have increased law enforcement's requirement to utilize dashboards and body cameras when engaging with society. Technology has additionally promoted a level of advocacy reaching households nationwide. This method has fostered visibility and conversations on racial justice (Bowman, 2021). In recent times, the recording capturing George Floyd's murder led to sustained civil disobedience and contributed to law enforcement accountability. College students were a large part of demonstrations, online protests, and boycotts in this continued effort toward social change (Reny & Newman, 2021).

**Activism During the Trump Presidency**

The 2016 United States presidential election between candidates Hilary Clinton and Donald Trump created an unbalanced and divided political landscape. The 2016 election cycle underscored ongoing national social justice issues like race relations. (Logan et al., 2017) conducted a qualitative study titled Black and Brown Millennial Activism at a PWI (Predominantly White Institution) Campus in the Era of Trump to inquire what motivated this category of students to activate on social issues after Trump was elected (Logan et al., 2017). This study concluded that Donald Trump's first 100 days in office did not factor into how Black and Brown became activated. This finding is despite the numerous injustices emboldened by the Trump administration (e.g., race, gender, sexuality, immigration, etc.). Researchers further concluded that Black and Brown activism did not change due to the toxic climate adversely influencing identity-based belonging (Logan et al., 2017).
Through various interviews, this study unveiled that most participants conceptualize activism as a form of resistance. However, one of the participants grounded the idea that it should not be the sole burden of those marginalized to be in opposition to injustices (Logan et al., 2017). Additionally, participants utilized a contemporary version of defining activism that includes social media as a form of digital advocacy. The Trump administration's stance against the Black Lives Matter movement promoted a climate allowing overt racism. These actions were fueled after the former president cited "very fine people" when describing White resistance during the 2017 Unite the Right in Charlottesville, Virginia (Burston & Twine, 2019). The aftermath of this rally which subsequently led to the death of a counter-protester, has labeled this college town a symbol of racism. One study participant described how White empowerment is no longer so subtle after Trump was elected (Logan et al., 2017). The participant further explained that this created an environment fostering individuals to be more open to racist ideology. Despite this openness to racial bias post-Trump elected, students felt activism has always been a tool of resistance regardless of it being overt or covert (Logan et al., 2017).

**Generation Z's Influence on Activism**

Student demographics in higher education institutions are shifting to a more diverse population, prompting campuses to incorporate inclusive policies (Tanaid & Wright, 2019). Over the past few years, Generation Z students have begun to enter and reshape how universities and colleges conceptualize belonging. While the preceding Millennial generation transitions out as the majority in college attendance, it is critical to note that there needs to be more research on Generation Z at the collegiate level (Tanaid & Wright, 2019). Generation Z is the group of individuals born between 1995-2010 and is the first cohort to grow up as natives of the digital and online world (Seemiller & Grace, 2016). Moreover, this generation is among the most
diverse in United States history. While Millennials effectively contributed to digital activism, such as in the Black Lives Matter movement, Generation Z's connectedness as digital natives allows social awareness to quickly spread compared to past generations (Seemiller & Grace, 2016). According to Seemiller and Grace, more than 20 percent of Generation Z students reported they were involved in some form of activism. This percentage is slightly higher than Millennials, which yielded 11 percent when asked a similar question (Seemiller & Grace, 2016).

The savviness of navigating technology and social media allows Generation Z to receive information about societal happenings quickly. Media outlets have created innovative methods for covering breaking news compared to past media coverage. Through the emergence of technological applications such as Buzz Feed, Tik Tok, and Twitter, Generation Z has capitalized on being able to receive and share news in seconds. This innovative approach has reframed how individuals advocate for various causes and become aware of social injustices in real time. Further, this technological change has also influenced how Generation Z students engage in activism and advocacy.

Further research is necessary to determine whether this technological trend will promote more activism among Generation Z students than Millennials as this new group matures in college settings (Seemiller & Grace, 2016). Regardless of generational trends, the summer of 2020 demonstrated how technology was used to galvanize racial justice while expanding the core principles of the Black Lives Matter movement. Nevertheless, the influence of Generation Z in its current form is changing how activism and advocacy are implemented in the United States.

**Utilizing Theory to Explore Systemic Constraints**

Racial justice activism is a critical tool in reshaping deep systemic inequities. Moreover, an understanding of how White students unlearn socialized concepts and develop the ability to
serve as advocates in countering anti-Blackness can be triggered by examining their experiences (Gorski, 2019). Grounded theoretical principles can provide a roadmap for how this racialized processing of Whiteness was developed while examining how interconnected oppressions can formulate White identity development (Helms, 1997).

To explore the centralized question for this dissertation, Critical Race Theory and the theory of Intersectionality are frameworks that guided this study. Both theories provide an understanding of how racialized identities influence social justice practices. Further, Intersectionality can inform how racial justice activism is used holistically to support social change. Understanding intersecting identities can also influence how White college students combat anti-Blackness (Overstreet et al., 2020).

**Critical Race Theory**

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a framework conceptualized after legal scholars' American Civil Rights Movement (Bell, 1985). CRT surfaced during a timeframe to explain the failures of the legal system in promoting racial equity. Originators include scholars such as Derrick Bell, Kimberle Crenshaw, Cheryl Harris, Richard Delgado, and Patricia Williams (Choi, 2007). CRT grew from Critical Legal Studies (CLS), challenging that the legal system was neither objective nor apolitical. CRT contends that the construction of the American legal system is predicated on systemic racism due to the country's origin (Ledesma & Calderon, 2015). As CRT departed from prior neutral theoretical approaches, the originators felt the law was complicit in maintaining an unjust social order (Crenshaw, 2010). CRT critiqued the dominant frames of racial power and how activism was generated in opposition to the phenomenon. Although the framework of this theory was formed in the 1970s, Crenshaw coined the name
during the 1980s after calling legal scholars together to discuss the next steps (Crenshaw, 2010).

The ultimate position of this framework is dismantling how socialized practices of racial identity have structural subordinate and marginalization for communities of color. CRT identifies five tenets to identify systemic racism (Bell, 1985). These tenets consist of the following:

1. Counter-storytelling
2. The permanence of racism
3. Whiteness as property
4. Interest Convergence
5. The Critiques of Liberalism

This research, however, utilized counter-storytelling and interest convergence to provide context on CRT's impact on Black student activism. The overall construction of Critical Race Theory (CRT) emphasizes the necessity of activism in dismantling systemic oppression (Bell, 1985). Nevertheless, counter-storytelling and interest convergence highlight methods Black and White student activists can utilize on college campuses to create change and lobby their voices to senior administrators.

Counter-storytelling is a valuable tool that can dismantle these systems by ensuring narratives, stories, experiences, and truths of historically marginalized communities are told (Crenshaw, 1989). This allows authentic narratives to be centered rather than whitewashed and filtered. Storytelling and counter-storytelling are critical and powerful tools in unlearning socialized concepts fostered through society (Choi, 2007). Activism provides a counter-narrative based on the experiences of people of color, particularly Black students.
Furthermore, counter-storytelling can be an effective tool for activism to counter systemic injustices (Cabrera, 2018). On college campuses, this approach can enable administrators to directly connect injustices rather than individuals relying on instances far removed from their student community (e.g., George Floyd's death sparks students to be open regarding interactions with campus police).

Derrick Bell examines interest convergence as the accommodation of the Black community's interest in achieving racial equality when it aligns with the interests of White individuals. This tenet of Critical Race Theory (CRT) plays a crucial role in driving activism and advocacy on college campuses. According to Bell (1985), demands are granted only when White individuals perceive them as beneficial.

**Utilizing Intersectionality for a Holistic Approach to Activism**

During the late 1980s, Kimberle Crenshaw introduced a new theoretical framework to articulate interconnected levels of oppression an individual experiences due to overarching systems (Berger, 2009). This theoretical approach developed initially in the legal field but quickly expanded to humanity-focused studies in higher education institutions (Mitchell, 2014). Tenets within this framework initially focused on gender and racial identity; however, Intersectionality has been incorporated into a broad range of marginalized identities (Stenberg, 2020). This approach is an essential factor often absent in other theoretical frameworks mentioned in prior research. Intersectionality provides a comprehensive view of advocating for others while maintaining the importance of disruption intended to marginalize (Mitchell, 2014).

It is necessary to think about how Intersectionality influences activism and how this is fashioned through White identity. In 2020, the United States faced the COVID-19 global pandemic impacting various national identities (Fisher & Rouse, 2022). Researchers Dana Fisher
and Stella Rouse cite this pandemic as a catalyst fueling protests and civil disobedience after George Floyd's murder. Moreover, Fisher and Rouse assert that the outcry for racial justice triggered diverse identities to participate in long-sustaining demonstrations throughout 2020. These stats demonstrated an increased number of White-identified individuals present at these protests. Compared to past protests, the mobilization of diverse identities created an awareness breakthrough for communities not traditionally involved in fostering anti-racism (Fisher & Rouse, 2022).

Further, Fisher and Rouse underscored how intersectional interests created a foundation for various groups experiencing inequities to form coalitions for racial justice. Their study provided insight into the factors allowing intersectional activism to create more awareness of how social identities inform individuals' involvement in mobilizing against injustices. During this study, intersectional activism was grounded in racial, gender, and sexual orientation identities. This structure aligns with areas of marginalization (Fisher & Rouse, 2022).

Conclusive evidence from Fisher and Rouse's study provided a much-needed exploration into how Intersectionality is applied to racial justice activism. This work uncovered those other historically marginalized identities linked together for a common goal of eliminating systemic racism. Moreover, Intersectionality allows activists to garner a holistic view when applying social awareness and change (Fisher & Rouse, 2022). Consequently, this framework is essential in furthering how individuals show up and provide advocacy. It creates a layered approach to dismantling systemic oppression and is critical for racial justice activists' usage (Moradi & Grzanka, 2017).
A Need for Racial Justice Activism Amongst White Students

Critical conversations regarding anti-racist education have resurfaced in the United States following fatal police actions against unarmed Black individuals. Racial justice activism and civil unrest have been central to calling out these inequities. CRT and Intersectionality are essential to underscoring the need for racial justice activism by White individuals while equally factoring in intersectional identities (Selvanthan, 2018). Both theoretical frameworks around the socialization of bias and a need to practice unlearning these behaviors. White college students can utilize activism as a mode of accountability that speaks directly against targeted injustices (Grier-Reed, Said, & Quiñones, 2021). Being a racial justice activist requires an awareness and understanding of race as a construct and ongoing self-awareness (Reason et al., 2005). CRT and Intersectionality can serve as a tool in developing methods to counter systemic inequities.

Development of White Consciousness

Racial consciousness underscores how individuals see themselves and the world around them. A well-rounded understanding of White identity development and awareness is necessary to uncover how this group of college students respond to racial justice activism (Helms, 1997). American Psychologist Janet Helms developed the stages of White identity and ethnic development model to describe White consciousness.

Understanding racial privilege, guilt, and fragility is foundational to developing consciousness. Acknowledging racialized privilege grounds an awareness of how White Supremacy has fueled benefits to one group that is White identified while marginalizing others (Chesler et al., 2013). There is a core understanding of how systems of oppression operate and create traumatic experiences through anti-Blackness. Helms model gives developmental guidance in how students are likely to respond to conversations on racial justice if they have not
intentionally processed Whiteness as an identity. Consciousness involves intentional thought, and, in some instances, unlearning is necessary to challenge our socialization of racial identity (Chesler et al., 2013).

Further, this model provides a foundation for individuals identifying as White to raise awareness and challenge behaviors that maintain racial inequities. Helms' development of this theory was heavily influenced by the Black Identity development model created by William Cross (Helms, 1997). Although Helms' model lays foundational remedies for White identity consciousness, scholars argue that this approach is outdated, and that much societal change should derive from an anti-racist framework (Malott, 2015). Considerations on identity socialization and unlearning racialized behaviors can be instrumental in fully grasping racial justice activism for White identities.

**Identity Socialization**

Higher education institutions promote critical thought in how students view themselves and others. This critical thought highlights a need for racial justice activism to circumvent a legacy of systemic oppression (Harper, 2012). Experiences, family members, media, and other societal factors shape our lens (Harro, 2000). This process is described as identity socialization. Bobbi Haro introduced the Cycle of Socialization (1986) during the 1980s to describe how individuals learn early bias, intentional and unintentional. This process speaks to how children understand racial awareness due to various behaviors and experiences (Harro, 2000).

A salient example is seen through Dr. Mamie and Kenneth Lawrence's Doll's Experience. This qualitative study utilized Black and White dolls to ask children about their awareness of race and typical biases associated with an individual's skin color (Weatherford, 2017). The final
attributions of this study yielded that children from Black and White backgrounds usually associated negative traits with the Black doll while the White doll received positive remarks. The study conducted by the Lawrences demonstrated how socialization plays a critical role in teaching social dominance through the ideology of White Supremacy (Weatherford, 2017). This system purports privilege that shields Whiteness and centers this racial identity as the normative.

Moreover, this privilege can contribute to guilt and fragility whenever racial accountability surfaces within society (e.g., Black Lives Matter protests, criminal justice reform, educational equity). Harro later introduced the Cycle of Liberation (1986) as a counter to socialization and guidance on becoming more socially aware. A key component of liberation is being active in unlearning bias and discrimination (Harro, 2000).

**Unlearning Systemic Biases**

Socialization has created uninformed ideas and thoughts often expressed through unconscious bias (Kadrmas, 2017). This bias type occurs without intentional thinking and is constantly informed by what we have acquired through outside entities. Recognizing racialized stereotypes and biases can disrupt inequities that marginalize Black identities. Once this recognition or awareness becomes conscious, unlearning can be critical (Kadrmas, 2017).

Unlearning is a valuable technique allowing individuals to confront what an individual has been taught throughout their lifespan (Choi, 2007). This process enables critical thinking for questioning historical and social concepts that have been whitewashed to elevate power for dominant identities (Crenshaw et al., 1995). The socialization of Whiteness is taught in various forms within American society (Harro, 2000). Whitewashing indicates the removal of certain portions of history or the erasure of people of color to highlight the White perspective. This, in
turn, creates a standard that Whiteness is the norm and identities outside of this identification are susceptible to racialized biases or stereotyping (Liu, 2022).

This process often occurs in education, such as learning about the history of a nation but demystifying the actual narrative of enslavement and the permeation of laws influencing anti-Blackness (Liu, 2022). Unlearning is an approach that can directly connect to the counter-storytelling tenet of Critical Race Theory (cross, 2003). In conceptualizing systemic ideologies and unlearning, CRT is a framework that can understand the necessity for racial justice activism in the United States (Crenshaw et al., 1995). This theoretical approach clarifies how anti-Blackness has thrived through remnants of White supremacy and created an adverse narrative influencing Black identity.

**Developing White empathy**

Socialization has skewed how we see others outside the privilege or oppression binary. Helms's Model on White Racial Development (1990) highlights a course of action generally needed to alleviate guilt and fragility (e.g., contact, disintegration, reintegration, pseudo-independence, immersion/emersion, autonomy). This model creates a foundational road map for how White students conceptualize anti-Blackness when confronted with racial justice protests or campus biases. Subsequently, fragility and guilt are constructs that evade racial equity conversations. Fragility and guilt counter social justice actions and hinder the development of authentic racial consciousness. As described by Helms, racial consciousness can further rationalize the development of empathy towards others. Empathy is defined as understanding different perspectives while being concerned for others and their experiences (Selvanathan et al., 2018). Developing empathy for others can break the cycle of oppression and build coalitions for
racial justice. This empathy can provide an understanding of what triggers a majority identity to become involved in justice for marginalized identities (Selvanathan et al., 2018).

Geneva Cole (2020) conducted a qualitative study assessing White identification and attitudes toward Black Lives Matter. Cole's study utilized a lens of Whiteness to explore how White individuals perceived racial justice during the onset of many protests within the United States. Moreover, this research highlighted that race is central to political attitudes in the United States, informing how multiculturalism and globalization are fostered. This finding is critical in understanding how race manifests into disparities for Black Americans' livelihood while isolating these conversations from occurring within White communities. Promoting a revisionist history about the atrocities of race within American society serves to saturate feelings of racialized guilt and fragility (Cole, 2020).

**White Progressiveness**

The 2020 death of George Floyd by Minneapolis Police triggered a modern-day assessment of the persistent issue of race in the United States. The sustained protest calling for justice emphasized the question, what are White people doing to create racial change? Books surrounding White fragility and anti-racism were in high demand during this period as the nation grappled with the evident racial disparities and barriers impacting the Black community (Reny, 2021).

Additionally, many institutions and corporations began to adopt statements fostering anti-racism while adding positions emphasizing diversity, equity, and inclusion. Much of these efforts were ushered in by what many refer to as the 'White progressive' movement (Muhammad, 2019). The phrase 'White progressive' can have a positive yet negative connotation. This phrase refers to White individuals that have self-reflected on their Whiteness to create racialized systemic
change. Critics of this label argue that White progressives should foster an authentic anti-racist approach and appropriately reconcile any racialized fragility (Andersen, 2003). Researchers argue that potential unintended consequences could arise from this phenomenon of White progressiveness (Muhammad, 2019). One result is linked to performative allyship or activism. This course of action refers to White individuals engaging in behaviors and activities deemed inauthentic or self-serving. Another potential concern involves the perpetuation of White saviorism. This behavior often involves well-intended White individuals attempting to address systemic issues; however, they center themselves as a primary change factor (Buchanan et al., 2019). This approach can often overshadow current efforts being completed by members of the Black community. White saviorism reinforces an assertion of privilege and imbalances the dynamics needed to create impactful social change and awareness (Cole, 2012).

White progressiveness intends to create a more racially conscious and equitable society; however, it is critical to take heed of the unintended consequences addressed above (Muhammad, 2019). These consequences can erase the intersectional perspectives within racial justice movements if unchecked (Buchanan et al., 2019). Education and humility are essential in promoting self-awareness to alleviate adverse consequential behaviors of White progressiveness (Muhammad, 2019).

**Countering Anti-Blackness in Society and Higher Education**

Anti-Blackness is defined as behaviors, attitudes, and practices that dehumanize Black people while maintaining White Supremacy (Dumas & Ross, 2016). The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement was created to circumvent racial injustices experienced by Black individuals after the shooting of Trayvon Martin in 2012 (Saeedi & Richardson, 2019). BLM stipulates
systemic inequities embedded throughout society, triggering ill-treatment for the Black community (Saeedi & Richardson, 2019).

Although the BLM movement formed after the acquittal of George Zimmerman for the death of Trayvon Martin, issues of Black-identity mattering have gone back for centuries in the United States (Alexander, 2010). These issues thrived through Black enslavement and the Jim Crow era by identifying this community as lesser than others. Despite legal victories and legislation on racial treatment, anti-Blackness proliferated in institutions such as police departments and educational environments (Crenshaw et al., 1995). Hence the creation of BLM serves as a catalyst for accountability on how systemic racism impacts Black identity. BLM is often cited as an active version of activism after law enforcement encounters with unarmed Black individuals; however, racial justice activism can also form for covert issues. An example involves the removal of Confederate statues and building names from American institutions. Advocacy groups adamantly contested that Confederate symbolism is a focal point within the United States due to its association with racism (Forest & Johnson, 2019).

To actively have critical conversations on anti-Blackness racism, there must be a realization of how racist ideology has permeated at historically White universities (Dancy et al., 2018). Scholars argue that Black bodies at these institutions are commodified as property through adopted practices on the continued theorization of settler colonialism (Dancy et al., 2018). Settler colonialism is rooted in racism and White Supremacy. Further, it is based on theft and exploitation of property from ingenious groups and has a continually lasting influence of marginalizing the Black community in this instance (Dancy et al., 2018).

These existing barriers must be acknowledged as an active point of conversation and research to counter their ill effects. This approach also links back to the overall vision of Critical
Race Theory, which asserts that White Supremacy and colonization issues are deeply embedded in the fabric of America’s institutional policies and structures (Patton, 2016). In higher education, the interpretation of Black bodies as property is seen through the diversification of staff and faculty, racialized microaggressions, and the devaluation of Black thought (Dancy et al., 2018). Such systems at higher education institutions have continually been scrutinized as BLM has progressed and gained advocates from various racial demographics.

College students have actively participated in ongoing BLM protests and have challenged higher education institutions to counter systemic racism (Logan, 2016). Anti-Blackness is a continuing issue experienced by Black collegians, leading to heightened activism. Literature shows that anti-Blackness is prevalent in higher education and society (Grier-Reed, Said, & Quiñones, 2021). These acts of bias often serve as a premise for racial justice activism, channeling students to advocate for equitable university policies and mechanisms for the administrators to be vocal in societal issues involving inclusivity (Logan, 2016). For generations, activism at higher education institutions has transformed policies and centered demands for racial inclusivity. The 1960s Civil Rights Movement illustrates a critical time for racial justice activism and demonstrations (Joseph, 2003).

**Black Identity Development and Belonging**

**A Need for Racial Justice Activism to Foster Inclusive Spaces**

A sense of belonging is integral for students to feel campus connections. These environments are inclusive and diverse and allow students to feel valued. However, the history of Black collegians at higher education institutions has often had a unique experience due to historical factors outlined earlier in this review (Choi, 2007). Based on race, Black students can encounter societal and campus bias simultaneously. William Cross describes this self-development and exploration in his Black (Nigrescence) Identity Model. Exploring Black
identity has been essential since the onset of Black Americans entering the United States were stripped of their names, languages, religions, and way of living (Cross et al., 1991). Cross outlines five stages that initially examined a conversion into Blackness and self-acceptance (i.e., pre-encounter, encounter, immersion-emersion, internalization, internalization-commitment).

This model details how Black individuals become aware of the society around them. Race is a significant factor in shaping identity, and Cross argues that it often creates a consciousness of White Supremacy (Burrell-Craft, 2020). While considering racialized issues in the United States, Black identity development speaks to actively engaging campus communities with inclusive and equitable policies (Logan, 2016). This model speaks directly toward the need for White peers to foster anti-racism and active involvement in racial justice activism (Ritchey, 2014).

Over the past decade, college students have united with the Black Lives Matter movement whenever an injustice has occurred to Black Americans, often unarmed. George Floyd's murder ignited a more diverse group of activists lobbying for societal change (Fisher & Rouse, 2022). White college students were among this diversity as the nation called for accountable measures with law enforcement and racism. Higher education institutions were central to these concerns as many colleges and universities began to adopt anti-racism philosophies (Law, 2017). Students not only challenged societal inequities by law enforcement and the government but also increased advocacy for the solidarity of social justice issues on campuses.

Campuses that make authentic belonging for their students have the proper resources, staff representation, and equitable policies to promote retention amongst Black students. These measures create spaces where students can show up as their authentic selves (Okeeffe, 2013).
Moreover, these environments can deepen White students' understanding of advocacy for their Black counterparts (Reason, 2005). Another component of inclusivity regarding racial justice involves creating spaces that challenge White supremacy at its core and promotes restorative cultural awareness (i.e., building names or monuments with a racist past on college campuses).

**Institutional Demands and White Students' Response to Countering Racism**

Activism allows students to center their voices and hold campus communities accountable for any failures in fostering inclusion. A vital factor in campus student activism on racial justice involves the engagement of White students (Reason, 2005). A longitudinal study revealed that student demands focused on countering racism and inequality were influenced by their desire for institutional transformation (Byrd et al., 2021). Lastly, researchers of this study reported an unexpected outcome that campuses with documented student protests were not more likely to have demands issued by students. This assessment questions how higher education institutions actively equip students with practical tools for creating social change.

Further, another study explored how White students respond to societal racism that promotes inclusive spaces for their Black counterparts (Spanierman et al., 2008). This study sought to extend earlier literature on White students' openness to responding to societal racism. Conclusive evidence from this research describes how Black students experience injustices daily while highlighting how White students experience negative consequences from this socialized systemic behavior. This underscores the complexity of White students navigating and addressing racial bias (Spanierman et al., 2008).

These studies explain how racialized issues on and off college campuses can actively isolate Black students from feeling a sense of belonging. Equally, this research identifies opportunities for higher education administrators to prepare students with healthy discourse better
to dialogue and properly navigate race-related issues. The historical construct of race in the United States has created longstanding chaos without regard for Black identity development (Alexander, 2010). These studies correctly indicated a further need for representation and education that centralizes actionable accountability for inclusive and forward-thinking campuses.

**Summary of Chapter**

Understanding how anti-Blackness has been asserted through laws, legislation, and institutional policies is foundational in reckoning the need for racial justice activism. Oppressive systems, such as White supremacy, have fueled privilege, guilt, and fragility when discussing issues about race and color. Developing consciousness is a fundamental necessity of White identified individuals to create awareness outside racialized socialization.

The 2020 murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis law enforcement produced a sustained racial justice protest calling for accountability. Protests garnered one of the largest groups of intersectional activists since the conception of the Black Lives Matter movement. Research suggests that developing White consciousness and awareness contributes to White students' willingness to respond to racial disparities (Helms, 1997).

Unlearning supports the storytelling and counter-storytelling narrative of anti-Blackness taught in history books and media or passed down through societal customs (Choi, 2007). This allows White students to develop relationships with their Black counterparts in reshaping how Blackness is conceptualized. As higher education institutions continue to diversify campuses, recognizing systemic racism is necessary to advocate and develop students through an anti-racism lens. Additional research is needed to analyze how a lack of White students' awareness of racial justice issues can influence anti-Blackness on college campuses and society (Selvanathan et al., 2018).
Furthermore, future research can inform how racial justice activism can continually motivate White students to become involved in anti-racist practices authentically. These are necessary actions to provide belonging for Black students in higher education while recognizing the trauma outside societal factors can cause.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

This chapter presents the methodology used to examine racial justice activism among Black and White college students. Further, this chapter outlines areas such as the purpose of the study, the rationale for selecting an interpretative phenomenology under qualitative methods, data collection strategies, site description, participant recruitment, the role of the researcher, the trustworthiness process, and ethical considerations. The previously mentioned areas provide a deeper understanding of how data was used in this research study to explain the nuances of White racial justice activism and its perceptions by Black college students.

Purpose of the Study

This study examined how movements, such as Black Lives Matter, motivate White college students to mobilize for racial justice. Additionally, this research explored how racial consciousness and identity development influenced White students' openness to dialogue on issues of anti-Blackness. Another research component involved Black college students' perceptions of White racial justice activism. Further exploration of this topic yielded how intersectional activism enhanced White students' contributions to social change. Below are the research questions that guided this study:

2. How do White college students describe their experience with racial justice activism?
   b. In what ways are students involved in racial justice activism?

4. How does racial justice activism influence identity development in White college students at predominantly White urban institutions, and how do their Black peers perceive this development?

5. To what extent do racial justice movements (e.g., Black Lives Matter) influence how Black and White college students engage in campus activism?
   a. How do Black students interpret racial justice activism by their White peers?
Design of the Study

For this study, I selected qualitative research by using an interpretive phenomenon approach to respond to each research question. Interpretive phenomenology originated through health psychology to better understand experiential data for psychological studies (Eatough & Smith, 2017). Interpretive phenomenology focuses on understanding the lived experiences of individuals and how they make sense of the world around them (Eatough & Smith, 2017). This form of research allowed participants to describe their experiences with systemic racism while conceptualizing their involvement with racial justice activism in an authentic manner (Eatough & Smith, 2017). The qualitative approach allowed participants to contribute to the research issue under consideration directly (Banks-Wallace, 2002).

Moreover, qualitative research promotes advocacy and a participatory worldview (Creswell, 2009). This viewpoint is centered on a need to inquire about methods that can question and dismantle systemic inequities and oppressions (Creswell, 2009). This study's qualitative practices articulated the importance of activism to address racialized bias and inequities. Additionally, the research design analyzed what triggered social consciousness and allowed college students to mobilize for racial justice, specifically White identified students at urban higher education institutions. Additionally, this qualitative approach explored how the visibility of racial justice movements, such as Black Lives Matter, inspired White students to act.

Despite higher education institutions being in urban environments, they are not exempted from experiencing racial biases on campus or being held accountable for inaction taken when societal issues arise. George Floyd's murder by Minneapolis police officers in the summer of 2020 called attention to the disproportionate treatment Black-identified individuals experience from law enforcement. Qualitative protocols were developed for this study to investigate how this phenomenon motivates activism from racially privileged identities.

Using qualitative research strategies produced a summary of actions, behaviors, and situations that likely motivated White college students to counter anti-Blackness while confronting socialized behaviors institutionalized by White Supremacy (Spanierman et al., 2008). Unlike quantitative research
designs, qualitative approaches can promote a more participant-centered study allowing active storytelling about experiences (Creswell, 2013). These narratives informed how participants interpreted a phenomenon and what caused them to mobilize or engage—quantitative research tests theories by measuring the relationship among variables. The outcome of quantitative research is fixed and provides data that statistical instruments can analyze (Creswell). Alternatively, qualitative research allows marginalized voices to participate actively in the study (Lyons et al., 2013). These experiences contributed to developing themes, specifically navigating racial justice in this instance. I selected a qualitative research design to present counter-narratives contributing to racial marginalization. This method underscores the importance of hearing experiences that inspired White identified students to mobilize against racial injustices while providing space for Black students to share their perceptions.

**Site of the Study**

Temple University is a 4-year urban and public institution in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Temple University is classified as a predominately White institution, as over fifty percent of the 40,000 students are White identified. I selected this institution for several reasons, including the diversity amongst the student demographics and identity-based resources allowing thoughtful conversations about social justice issues. Temple University's Internal Review Board approved a research proposal permitting this qualitative study (See Appendix E, IRB APPROVAL FORM).

One resource of Temple University involves study away opportunities and immersive experiences. Temple University has committed partnerships with international institutions, allowing students to think about global culture and social issues. However, I am particularly impressed with the non-credit-bearing cultural and service immersion programs. Unlike study abroad opportunities, these programs are designed through a social justice curriculum, allowing students to think about their core identities. More importantly, one of the immersive experiences, Global Experiential Learning (Global X), focuses on attaining racial justice and discussing issues of anti-Blackness. This program is facilitated through the university's Office of Institutional Diversity, Equity and Leadership (IDEAL) in collaboration with International Student Affairs (ISA). Further, Temple University opened a Center for Anti-Racism
under the office of IDEAL to serve as a hub for developing scholarship and research on anti-racist practices. This designation of the Center for Anti-Racism received a heightened interest post the summer of 2020 as an initiative to guide various disciplines to better understand and counter anti-Blackness racism.

A second reason I selected Temple University is its proximity and location. Not only is this institution easy to navigate, but it also has a history of advocacy for historically marginalized identities. The institution is in an area that experienced civil disobedience and was a central part of the 1960s Civil Rights movement due to racialized identification. More specifically, the former Columbia Avenue, now Cecil B. Moore Avenue, was the subject of a racial riot in 1964. This riot was sparked by months of racial bias escalation in North Philadelphia, and a rumor sparked that police officers killed a pregnant Black woman sparked this civil unrest. Subsequently, the street was renamed Cecil B. Moore Avenue in 1987 due to his involvement in de-escalating the racial tensions between residents and law enforcement. The history of this race riot directly connected to behaviors of racial injustices experienced by the Black community and underscored a fundamental purpose for this research. During the summer of 2020, the institution invertedly became a landscape for racial justice, allowing access to protests in the Center City area. Temple's designation as an urban institution and proximity to an area close to city hall enabled this institution to be a prime location for students and community members to gather and march to the city against racial violence towards the Black community. Students and community members generally use the Broad Street and Cecil B. Moore intersection as a gathering point for walking into the city to protest injustices.

Further, Temple University has over 400 student organizations, and many of these groups operate to support and empower cultural identities. In recent decades, the Temple Student Government (TSG) has taken an active role in past systemic racism and campus bias issues by releasing statements, encouraging change, or fostering a climate for activism. TSG actions alongside the Office of IDEAL have often guided senior administrations to release statements and critical spaces to counter issues involving unlawful violence of police officers against the Black community. This is a vital point of this study, as many
members of past TSG administrations have identified as White. These student organizational and advocacy resources highlight what Temple University offers to its student body to foster belonging. For the purpose and intent of this study, participants are not required to have participated with any previously mentioned resources.

**Participant Recruitment**

An intentional and snowball approach was utilized to recruit students for this study due to the topical area of discussing racial relations. The recruitment advertisement utilized photography of unarmed Black individuals killed by law enforcement, such as Breonna Taylor and George Floyd [see Appendix G RECRUITMENT FLYER]. This imagery gave visual substance to this study's purpose. The eligibility survey yielded 32 responses; however, only 15 completed the demographics survey [see Appendix I, ELIGIBILITY QUESTIONNAIRE]. There was racial diversity and gender identity in the pool of interested participants. Three submissions were disqualified due to these students not identifying racially as Black or White. It is critical to note that three cisgender White men completed the demographics survey but were unresponsive to multiple attempts to schedule an interview.

Each participant was enrolled as an undergraduate student at Temple University. Preferably, this study engaged with participants considered to be involved with campus life and achieved this goal. (e.g., attended programming, membership in student organizations). All participants expressed being members of an academic or registered student organization at Temple University. The dataset includes the individual's racial identity, gender, university status, age, and assigned pseudonym. Demographical information was collected through the initial interest survey. These characteristics determined eligibility for active participation in this research study. Participants self-selected their racial identities and gender identities. Questions related to gender moved beyond binary standards to ensure students' gender identity inclusion. Two of the participants identified as either transgender or non-binary.

Recruitment information was sent through campus listservs (schools, colleges, and departmental lists), social media stories, and direct recruitment at student organizational meetings [see Appendix F, RECRUITMENT EMAIL]. Next, participants completed a brief survey on Microsoft Forms. All qualified
participants received a copy of the informed consent form, and this document was reviewed prior to the start of each interview. At the onset of each interview, the informed consent document explained the study's expectations, benefits, risks, and participants' rights to withdraw. Once explained during the virtual meeting, participants could ask questions and provided participatory consent through email confirmation or a digital signature.

After submitting their information, potential participants underwent screening, and upon review, they were invited to schedule an interview as the first step in this study. Eleven participants completed individual interviews, and ten completed either the Social Justice Dialogue Circle (SJDC) or a follow-up interview. All participants in this study self-identified as either Black or White. Among them, four identified as White, five as Black, and two as Black and Hispanic. These diverse core identities enabled a comprehensive examination of each research question concerning Whiteness and attitudes toward racial justice activism. The selection of participants ensured a significantly diverse participant pool as intersectional identities emerged, including individuals with multiracial backgrounds, diverse sexualities, gender diversity, transgender identities, and gender nonbinary identities. This allowed the study to honor the tenets of Intersectionality by highlighting the interconnected experiences of identity-based marginalization. It is worth noting that participants' academic ambitions and majors were also diverse, facilitating the integration of varied perspectives across disciplines.

Furthermore, I interviewed Black participants to provide insight into their perspectives on White racial justice activism. During the initial one-on-one interviews, participants were informed about the date and time of the SJDC. Incentives in the form of $25 Amazon gift cards were provided to participants upon completing the interviews and participating in the SJDC. One participant was disqualified from receiving the incentive because they did not participate in the SJDC. Nonetheless, this participant’s interview data was still utilized in the development of themes.
**Table 1. Demographics Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blaze</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Agender Transgender</td>
<td>4th year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorian</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Non-binary</td>
<td>Fine Arts</td>
<td>3rd year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eva</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Exercise and Sport Science</td>
<td>2nd year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felicia</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Global Studies and Political Science</td>
<td>1st year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamal</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>4th year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachael Lee</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>2nd year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raheem</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Event and Entertainment Management</td>
<td>2nd year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah Beth</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Criminal Justice</td>
<td>4th year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamia</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Criminal Justice</td>
<td>3rd year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiffany</td>
<td>Black American Indian or Alaskan Native</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Journalism</td>
<td>4th year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyrone</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Musical Theater</td>
<td>2nd year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Collection**

I utilized three qualitative data collection strategies to analyze data holistically. These strategies included a one-on-one 60-minute interview, facilitation of a 105-minute Social Justice Dialogue Circle (SJDC). After completing the SJDC, I reviewed the audio and video recording to conduct observations as the final data collection strategy. These three approaches allowed triangulation in developing research themes. All three approaches allowed participants to share firsthand experiences with racial justice activism.

I channeled professional experience as a social justice educator to facilitate intergroup dialogues and foster difficult conversations, allowing appropriate participant engagement. Intergroup dialogues are described as engagement allowing sustained face-to-face contact about
social identities that may conflict with structural marginalization. In this instance, the conflict was identified as White Supremacy and its' foundational development of anti-Blackness racism.

**Participants Interviews**

Individual interviews were used as an initial step in collecting data from participants. According to Creswell, interviews are opportunities to ask specific questions from the research and receive responses from selected participants (Creswell, 2013). I used a structured approach when designing and presenting questions to participants. The structured component indicates that I maintained all questions as noted in the interview protocol without modifying or introducing new questions based on how participants responded (Creswell, 2009). Additionally, all questions were open-ended to allow participants to share based on their experiences authentically story. For instance, I began interviews by exploring childhood interactions to examine socialized beliefs regarding skin color and race.

All interviews occurred virtually on Zoom, a cloud-based video conferencing software. Interviews ranged from 45 to 75 minutes, depending on the participants' details. Moreover, I cultivated a brave space and utilized storytelling as an intergroup dialogue technique while conducting interviews. This environment allowed participants to provide authentic responses about racial identity topics.

I developed questions for this study using a phenomenological framework to determine racial justice amongst White college students and how these actions are perceived by their Black peers (see Appendix A, INTERVIEW QUESTIONS). Interview questions and protocols were formed by utilizing Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Intersectionality to gauge participants' sense of racial awareness and social identities. For example, interest convergence counter-storytelling were CRT tenets used to understand better the selflessness and humility of White racial justice
activism being implemented to create social change rather than personal benefits (Creswell, 2013). Intersectionality was applied thoughtfully to various questions to investigate how fostering two or more historically marginalized identities influenced participants' motivation for racial justice advocacy. Although similar questions were presented to racialized identities, answers differed based on race, gender, and sexual orientation (see Appendix A, INTERVIEW QUESTIONS).

Questions were slightly modified for Black participants to gather further information on their perception of the responsibility of Whiteness with racial justice. The selected questions produced candid storytelling from White participants, generally deemed difficult dialogues. Equally, this opportunity embraced the experiences of Black participants to provide an untethered view of White racial justice activism. An additional technique explored perceptions and realities of what constitutes performative activism/allyship.

**Social Justice Dialogue Circle**

Facilitating a Social Justice Dialogue Circle (SJDC) was another technique used for collecting qualitative data in this study (see Appendix B, SOCIAL JUSTICE DIALOGUE CIRCLE). Facilitating the SJDC is an advanced usage of intergroup dialogue to untangle a specific social issue, such as racial justice. This dialogue circle requires a skilled facilitator that can adequately foster dialogues, promote healthy discourse through conversations, and an individual that can restore spaces when needed. A benefit of this data collection involves providing a space where peers can openly discuss social issues on racial identities in a group setting. This technique allows a continuation of topics discussed during individual interviews to confirm better how both racial groups interpret and explain anti-Blackness.
The SJDC was designed to discuss essential topics of White Supremacy, anti-Blackness, and racial justice activism concerning the social justice continuum. This continuum guides whether specific actions work against social justice compared to those that foster social justice and belonging (Bonnycastle, 2011). The SJDC discussed racial justice, anti-Blackness, Whiteness, activism, and social awareness. This dialogue circle was facilitated in a reserved space on Temple University's campus in a room free from disruption. The room's set-up included chairs in a 2-layered circular pattern and an inner and outer layer of seating for the dialogue. Seven students attended the SJDC in person, while 1 participant attended virtually due to a scheduled conflict. Follow-up occurred for the other three students that were not present, and 2 out of the 3 completed a follow-up interview allowing them to respond to SJDC questions.

Participants received advance notice about the nature of this dialogue to discuss their journey of racial consciousness and its influence on activism. Additionally, I informed participants that we were recording the SJDC and would observe their body language and mannerisms during a later observation of the video. The SJDC was a conversation amongst two groups: Black-identified and White-identified. Before the dialogue began, the participants established a community agreement [Appendix C, COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS & BRAVE SPACES]. This agreement was vital to fostering an authentic and brave environment that encouraged healthy discourse (Zúñiga et al., 2007). A potential challenge in facilitating this type of dialogue is ensuring that participants contribute transparent and authentic responses based on their experiences. As an advance facilitator, I developed and maintained a brave space throughout the discussion where participants did not feel targeted or singled out for any responses while effectively encouraging healthy discourse.
Like the interview protocol, open-ended questions aligning with qualitative practices were used (Creswell, 2013). Participants were briefed about time allocation for each group to respond to question prompts. When designing the SJDC, it was critical to provide a minimum of 90 minutes for sufficient timing for both groups to engage with question prompts and the concluding debrief actively. In this instance, both groups were given up to 30 minutes to respond to prompts. After the instructions were explained, participants sat in the inner or outer circle. The inner circle is the participants actively speaking while the outer circle observes their dialogue silently. Once the dialogue began, participants in both groups actively and comprehensively answered questions, resulting in the omission of one prompt. Their robust comments from previous responses contributed to the decision to ask only five out of the six prompts. Both the Black and White participant groups responded to the same question prompts. After 30 minutes, the groups changed roles so that the outer circle was now responding to questions. After both groups responded to each prompt, a dialogue debriefing occurred. Debrief questions were designed to gain insight into how participants perceived self-involvement and the involvement of others throughout the SJDC experience.

**Social Justice Dialogue Circle Observation**

An observation of the Social Justice Dialogue Circle (SJDC) was the final data collection point, allowing triangulation. Triangulation is a multi-tiered approach to using datasets to respond to research questions appropriately. I utilized the video and audio recording of the SJDC to review the mannerisms, behaviors, confidence, and hesitations participants displayed. To achieve this, I developed an observation protocol to guide the analysis. I reflected and based the observation notes on some of the following descriptive categories in Table 2.
Table 2. Sample Observation Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Descriptive prompts for observation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Influence of creating a brave space for dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Observing participant mannerisms and body language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Specific actions from the outer group while inner group responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Determine if groupthink influenced how participants responded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Identifying any participants monopolize the space and restricted others from speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Identifying any points that restorative practices had to be implemented</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In recognizing that observations can be valuable in collecting qualitative data, I developed a protocol to guide this process (Creswell, 2013) [Appendix D, OBSERVATION CHECKLIST]. Participants will be advised prior to the start of the SJDC that I will act as an observer to re-watch the Zoom video post the dialogue (Creswell, 2013). My role as an observer means that I carefully reviewed interactions and documented how this supported any assumptions.

**Data Analysis and Trustworthiness**

Memos and notes were documented after each data collection phase to synthesize all information using qualitative standards (Creswell, 2009). Analytical memos allowed a reflective approach to organizing thoughts, responses, and emerging themes. Secondly, I used memos to follow up with participants and ensure their narratives were fully captured, particularly in the interviews. Additionally, I sent individual transcripts to each participant to confirm the accuracy of their responses. Although Zoom software provided transcripts for each interview, I exported the data to rev.com for improved accuracy and organization. Producing memos was later used in developing the initial coding and organization of interviews, conversations, and the SJDC
observations (mannerisms or other behaviors when asking/answering questions). Further, developing memos can encourage critical thinking and alleviate assumptions (Creswell, 2013). The developed coding strategy identified themes produced throughout interviews and memos. This strategy used an inductive process to review all raw data and information to inform coding. After reviewing all transcripts, I created a research codebook to guide the identification of subsequent themes. While analyzing all data and transcripts, I actively captured the participants' authenticity through observations of the SJDC.

I incorporated direct quotes and participant narratives without editing or paraphrasing to achieve this goal. We conducted testing on all coding to ensure the validity of the research. I used a respondent validation technique by reviewing initial results with participants to ensure their racial justice positions remained the same. Much of this was completed through facilitating the SJDC, as this was a second layer to understanding how conceptualized racial justice. Furthermore, I actively sought feedback from other social justice educators as I developed the codes. The selected reviewers were individuals who research and facilitate racial justice or identity-based dialogues. This feedback allowed a comparison of codes based on similar and different responses for each racialized identity.

I revisited all video and audio recordings to establish the trustworthiness of coding and theme development. Moreover, I created an Atlasti.com report utilizing the artificial intelligence (AI) feature to highlight coding. This approach provides an unbiased analysis without any assumptions made by a human coder when working with raw data. However, I ultimately used a coding strategy without any assistance from the AI software. I compared the method of coding completed manually versus through AI. The results were similar; apart from my knowledge of participants allowed a more profound development of subthemes across interviews.
Critical Race Theory (CRT) and the Theory of Intersectionality were vital to developing codes leading to themes. CRT was foundational to this research study by centering racial identity and anti-Blackness racism in all analyses. The Theory of Intersectionality allowed this study to adequately apply a critical framework to questions, protocols, and participant responses with interconnected marginalized identities. Intersectionality also provided an intersectional lens to better acknowledge participant experiences based on social systems that marginalize. To further assess data collected within this study, both theories were applied to define themes while reviewing all transcripts and memos.

Further, I utilized Creswell's definition of epoche throughout the review process to remove any bias relating to the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As previously mentioned, I reviewed codes with peers to assist with objectivity and eliminating bias. This processing is necessary due to the identity-based research in understanding racial justice activism among Black and White college students. After completing these steps, I combined the codes while creating overarching themes to support the findings, following the methodology outlined by Creswell and Poth (2018).

To comprehensively analyze and organize data, I tracked initial codes using Microsoft Excel, Microsoft Word, and Atlasti.com to record all memos. This process led to an open coding strategy to draft common themes. I utilized open coding to segment the data into meaningful expressions based on the narratives provided through interviews and the SJDC, following the methodology described by Glaser (2016). This method played a crucial role in identifying responses related to different categories concerning the outcomes of racial justice activism. After developing codes and themes, I conducted follow-ups with participants to ensure the reliability and credibility of their interviews, aiming to capture all narratives accurately.
Additionally, triangulation by having three data collection points furthered reliability and credibility. The concluding analysis produced thematic findings, and I assigned each participant a pseudonym to protect their identity (Creswell, 2013).

**Role of Researcher and Positionality**

Social justice education and higher education administration are intertwined to create inclusive spaces and belonging for college students. As an experienced social justice educator, I have significant expertise that involves programming and educating around racial justice. Interpretative phenomenology allows researchers to tap into previous knowledge to better understand issues under examination (Eatough & Smith, 2019). Scholars have asserted that this foreknowledge does not create a bias but can strengthen a researcher's assessment when assessing findings for a phenomenon. My personal and professional experience working with social justice activism serves as a benefit for this critical study.

As a southern Black man, I believe these core identities allow a deepening understanding of White Supremacy and anti-Blackness within the United States. Further, I identify as a racial justice activist with a heightened understanding of organizing and protesting through several Black Lives Matter movements. My activism extends beyond protests and rallies through using social media platforms, mainly Twitter, to continually educate on racial justice. As mentioned, this experience complements this research topic by allowing familiarity as a practitioner and activist.

Growing up in Montgomery, Alabama, I experienced several moments of racial discrimination prior to being able to name this behavior. This is the genesis of what sparked my social awareness and desire for social change. After graduating from graduate school, I began working professionally in the diversity, equity, and inclusion field. My scholarship and
experience have led to my being an invited speaker for several years at the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity (NCORE), training on social justice facilitation. NCORE was established in 1988 by the Southwestern Center for Human Relation Studies based at the University of Oklahoma to address the resurgence of racist incidents in higher education. NCORE's scope has increased to provide an annual conference that unites scholars, educators, and theorists on critical topics of diversity, equity, and inclusion. The Office of Institutional Diversity, Equity, Advocacy, and Leadership at Temple University appointed me as the director of student engagement to directly guide supporting our student population. In this capacity, I collaborated with colleagues to establish the University's Global Experiential Learning program, which annually takes a cohort of students to South Africa. The primary aim of this trip is to educate students about the South African Apartheid and its connections to racial injustices in the United States. The program's purpose aligns parallel to the findings of this research.

This research study focused primarily on the confidentiality of participants. Due to my role as a social justice educator, I placed measures to ensure that no participants are directly supervised or participating in leadership opportunities I facilitate. I also spoke candidly with students about my history and experience as an educator to provide credibility in fostering brave conversations and signal to students that I can facilitate these difficult dialogues. Secondly, an understanding of the informed consent was presented to each participant to transparentize the study's focus. A final consideration involves ensuring identity protection for each participant. This is critical since this study channeled participants to self-reflect on racial justice sentiments, which is often a topic some individuals may need to be more willing to disclose if their identity is exposed.
Ethical Considerations

I implemented several measures to minimize ethical concerns throughout this study. Temple University's Institutional Review Committee has approved all strategies and protocols used to engage participants as specified in the consent forms. Establishing an environment that fosters open and honest discussions about participants' racial justice experiences is essential for ensuring trustworthiness. To mitigate groupthink and confirmation bias, I incorporated techniques within the Social Justice Dialogue Circle (SJDC), particularly for White students who may have hesitated to discuss issues related to anti-Blackness openly. One technique I utilized involved having the White participants be a part of the inner group first to discuss their experience with racial justice in an effort for this group to not base responses on resolutions that Black student participants discussed. Secondly, I asked all participants to contribute by using personalized examples illustrating and connecting to questions.

Additionally, community agreements supported the development of brave and accountable spaces. One tenet of this space in shaping the agreements is honoring privacy and not sharing any information discussed without permission. Further, this agreement highlighted the importance of being authentic to their experiences while recognizing the importance of compelling storytelling. Further, a participant debriefing followed the SJDC to mitigate perceivable biases within the space.
CHAPTER FOUR
FINDINGS

In this chapter, I analyze qualitative data collected from each participant's interview and the Social Justice Dialogue Circle activity. I began by providing participant profiles on all 11 students highlighting their background, experience, and knowledge of racial justice activism, methods on how participants define performative activism, and my interpretation of their responses. Afterward, I analyze the observation and implementation of the Social Justice Dialogue Circle activity.

In line with qualitative methods, participant interviews provided detailed accounts of lived experiences that conceptualize how racial justice is perceived between Black and White college students (Creswell, 2009). Pseudonyms were issued to protect the participant's identity. Further, any additional information or identifiers linking to the participant's identity have been disguised to ensure privacy. Lastly, I present the main themes identified through participant interviews, the Social Justice Dialogue activity, and group observation. Each theme addresses the following research questions:

1. How do White college students describe their experience with racial justice activism?
   a. In what ways are students involved in racial justice activism?
2. How do racial justice activism influence identity development in White college students at predominantly White urban institutions, and how do their Black peers perceive this development?
3. To what extent does racial justice movements (e.g., Black Lives Matter), influence how Black and White college students engage in campus activism?
a. How do Black students interpret racial justice activism by their White peers?

After describing all the themes, I provide a summary and interpretations for the Social Justice Dialogue Circle. In the subsequent chapter, I discuss how these findings can influence current literature and future practices.

**Participant Profiles**

Participant profiles offer a glimpse into each student's background, demographic space on campus and in society, and social justice activism experience. Each provides a meaningful way to contextualize responses and comments captured in individual interviews and social justice dialogues.

**Participant: Rachael Lee**

Rachael is a 20-year-old, second-year psychology major at Temple University. She identifies as a White woman with a moderate awareness of racial justice activism. Rachael communicated during her interview that she is a member of the lesbian community. Being a member of the LGBTQIA+ community and a woman are salient identities informing how Rachael has developed awareness of herself and others. Rachael grew up in a predominately White community and began having conversations about social justice due to a passion for women's issues and advocacy. She expressed uncertainty about who can be termed a racial justice advocate due to the complexity of race relations in the United States. "Yea, I Dunno if I consider myself to be an advocate because I am White." Despite this uncertainty in defining an advocate, Rachael communicated the importance of White individuals being active participants in addressing racial injustices in the United States.
Rachael communicated a holistic awareness of how systemic issues influence marginalized identities. "I learned about Intersectionality and how important it is to include all races, all genders, all sexualities, all abilities because it makes for a richer dynamic and better inclusivity for everyone involved." Her unique understanding of Intersectionality has been chiefly a self-learned process through women's studies and Feminist Theory. Rachael's passion has been primarily driven by exploring ways to create a more equitable society for women; however, she recognized how anti-Blackness surfaces during this transformative discovery. Rachael consistently shared the amount of research she has completed to articulate better what being an anti-racist means while citing that White individuals should go the extra mile of being racially aware.

**Rachael's Racial Justice Activism Experience**

Rachael's experience working with racial advocacy extends to her volunteering throughout high school. Most notably, Rachael collaborated with an organization with a mission to decrease gun violence. "Something that we emphasized there was a lot of the shootings that you see are in lower served communities, and victims tend to be Black and Brown communities of those shootings." Rachael saw disparities heightened through gun violence as a motivating factor in becoming a racial justice advocate. She later discussed the importance of having common sense gun laws to serve as racial justice and counter-historical biases. Although Rachael acknowledged the constant need for advocacy throughout her interview, she also questioned whether it was her place as a White person to take up space from the Black community when racial justice issues occur.
Participant: Blaze

Blaze is a 21-year-old, fourth-year environmental studies major at Temple University. Blaze identifies as a transgender, non-binary White man. Due to this identification, I use they/them/their pronouns to describe Blaze in the third person. During this interview, Blaze expressed that, as a White person, they do not understand all perspectives of Blackness due to not having lived experiences. “So, it’s kind of up to me to learn the perspective and to do what I can as a person with White privilege to help out the Black community, to help out Black justice efforts because I am very aware through my personal life and education of how ingrained racism is in the American society.” Although Blaze grew up in a predominately White community with an absence of diversity conversations they have a strong affinity for working with transgender advocacy often intersects with questions surrounding racial identity.

Blaze demonstrated a fundamental understanding of how White identified individuals could use their privilege to deconstruct racialized biases. “And I believe I have a strong sense of justice, so I kind of just do what I can to help others.” Conversations during their interview provided context towards how they consistently think about Whiteness and privilege associated with this identity. Blaze asserts that racial justice is substantial because several friends and family members identify as Black, demonstrating a personal connection towards social change.

Blaze’s Racial Justice Activism Experience

Blaze’s experience working with racial advocacy stems from proximity to others identifying as Black and their affinity to create inclusive and accountable spaces. Their work has been paved by using intersectional methods to ensure all transgender individuals are seen holistically. Understanding race is a critical factor of this work as Black and Brown’s trans
women are amongst the highest percentile to be discriminated against within the LGBTQIA+ community.

**Participant: Tyrone**

Tyrone is a 20-year-old, second-year theater major at Temple University. Tyrone identifies as a Black man. He grew up in a predominately Black community; however, he attended a predominately White school in a different school district from sixth to twelfth grade. Tyrone did not specifically identify why this switch occurred; however, he communicated that this change influenced his racial awareness. When prompted, Tyrone shared that this interview provided an opportunity to be authentic and have a courageous conversation about race. “So, it was just a really good opportunity to just state my peace and hear other people and be put in those uncomfortable conversations because that’s really what provokes change.” He expanded that these dialogues allow individuals to focus on how systems can be disrupted.

Additionally, Tyrone expressed policing in the United States as a significant factor leading to being outspoken about race relations. “Basically, I guess you would say just growing up and just listening to all of the, let’s say, the police against the Black community or just growing up in a predominately White school and not really being seen, heard, or just being looked over for a lot of situations that were completely wrong.” This conversation exposed the racialized bias Tyrone experienced from being in a predominately White space as a Black person. Tyrone underscored the influence of his mostly Black-identified church in having critical conversations on race.

**Tyrone’s Racial Justice Activism Experience**

Tyrone’s experience navigating society as a Black man has motivated his desire to work for racial equity. During high school, an organization was created under his leadership to address
social justice issues. The focus of this organization was addressing ongoing racial trauma and violence commonly afflicted the Black community. “Growing up, I was put in many organizations and even started one. It was for high school. During 2020 we started one to advocate for change through art, art performance, fine art to perform, and stuff like that.” Tyrone highlighted how emotional baggage is associated with advocating for racial justice while being the subject of racist behaviors and attitudes.

Participant: Felicia

Felicia is an 18-year-old first-year global studies and political science major at Temple University. Felicia identifies as a bi-racial Black and Hispanic woman. She lived in a large Connecticut city and later moved into a smaller town during her last few years of high school. Felicia grew up in a racially diverse city, but her new town was an affluent majority White community. Felicia noted that Connecticut is historically segregated; however, she shared that her new town is highly dedicated to social justice. "I always say that's the best and worst place for you to see how racial justice applies itself in a real-world context. There's a social justice council, and there were multiple clubs focused on different ethnicities, certain groups of focus for different marginalized identities."

The social justice council and clubs provided a foundation and space of belonging for Felicia to become involved in extracurricular activities. These clubs allowed Felicia to focus on furthering her passion for social change and awareness. "We have an event every year where we do social justice presentations, social justice week, we call it. And there are presentations done every day, about four or five, that are researched by students, planned by students, and presented to peers." According to Felicia, these presentations on social justice and highlighting marginalized identities allowed her to fall into her new community easily.
Felicia's Racial Justice Activism Experience

Felicia's racial advocacy experience extends to her racial identities and involvement with various social justice initiatives. Felicia highlights that these spaces allow her to be around others with similar cultural and racial identities. Representation was a critical point discussed by Felicia. "And I found that communities that support racial justice have always been that kind of space for me." Felicia is self-described as an outspoken person that has to say and address discriminatory issues. Her background of moving into different cities and towns within Connecticut has cultivated how she views her role in impacting social justice, mainly racial equity.

Participant: Dorian

Dorian is a 20-year-old, third-year fine arts major at Temple University. Since they identify as White and non-binary, all pronouns in this section are in the third person. Dorian grew up in a predominately White community; hence their k-12 school experience reflects this demographic. "The place I grew up in is not diverse in almost any sense racially and just through class; we are all very privileged." Further, Dorian discussed the necessity of this research piquing their interest to discuss experiences of advocating for racial justice while identifying as White.

Much of Dorian's reflections on becoming motivated into racial justice activism were sparked during the summer of 2020, post the deaths of George Floyd, Ahmad Arbrey, and Breanna Taylor. According to Dorian, this was a peak time for activism in which things were going well to center a conversation on race relations in the United States. Their empathy of caring for others and background in art has led to creative ways to express advocacy for others. Dorian also underscored their experience of being a student at an urban institution. These
experiences highlighted concerns about how the institution converses about gentrification and educates students on North Philadelphia's history.

**Dorian's Racial Justice Activism Experience**

Dorian's experience with racial justice advocacy is a self-reflective process allowing them to assess falling into habits and actions that benefit the impacted community rather than themself. Dorian struggled with labeling themself a racial justice advocate and explained that they were uncertain whether this was a term they could personally claim. "So, I don't really know if I would say I am an abolitionist activist, and I would love to say those things, but I don't feel like that's a title I'm allowed to give myself." Dorian further elaborated being at an urban institution has allowed them to explore their role as an advocate due to being in a diverse environment. Their environment has also triggered an unlearning process enabling them to "flip the script" on race socialization.

**Participant: Tiffany**

Tiffany is a 21-year-old, fourth-year journalism major at Temple University. She identifies as a Black woman from a racially mixed background. Tiffany grew up in a predominately White area. Her racial and ethnic heritage includes Jamaican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban. Tiffany's cultural heritage has had a considerable influence on how she identifies. Her experience as a Black woman has contributed to various motivations toward racial justice while reconciling multiple aspects of being multi-racial. During her interview, Tiffany discussed how colorism is a critical part of the racial justice conversation. She highlighted the difference in treatment she receives as a fair skin tone versus her darker toned peers. "I've also seen how my darker-skinned friends or brown-skinned friends get treated differently to, I would say... I'm a lighter skin tone."
This heightened awareness of treatment based on skin tones is an aspect that she gained awareness of while in college. Although Tiffany recounts that she has never had a racial injustice happen to her, she confirmed that she had experienced racialized microaggressions. Tiffany experienced these while attending her predominately White high school and Temple University. A salient example of these microaggressions involves her hair texture and volume. "I used to wear my hair less curly than I do now because, in high school, a lot of it was even from not just White counterparts, but some lighter-skinned people or maybe Spanish community telling me, oh, you look so much nicer with straight hair."

*Tiffany's Racial Justice Activism Experience*

Tiffany's experience with racial justice advocacy surfaces through her intersection of being Black and a woman. Additionally, Tiffany was initiated into a historically Black sorority with a mission to uplift the Black community while providing services and programs to counter social injustices. Her primary focus while advocating racial justice is fighting for Black women to be seen, heard, and treated equitably. "But I think more of my fight is geared to Black women because I've seen so much, especially with a social media age, so much being taken from us and our culture and the way we are used." Tiffany's passion for this area of advocacy and activism led her to complete a course focused on Black women in society.

**Participant: Tamia**

Tamia is a 21-year-old, fourth-year criminal justice major at Temple University. Tamia identifies as a Black woman growing up in Upstate New York. She mentions that Upstate New York has racially diverse communities; however, Tamia attended a predominately White high school. Due to her mother’s involvement, Tamia spent much of her childhood around members of historically Black sororities and fraternities. She affirms that this exposure allowed
her to develop constructive ideologies about Blackness. "This was my mom trying to expose me and my siblings more to people that looked like us and had similar experiences in ways we could not get in high school.” This involvement influenced how she became involved after being admitted to Temple University. Tamia further stated that while the strategy of having a village to support her identity, she self-classified as living a sheltered life growing up.

Tamia discussed her interest in racial justice research to engage in deep conversations that can spark authentic change. She recounted thinking about these issues as a high school senior during the onset of COVID-19 and racial justice protests during the summer of 2020. “I had received certain text messages from my White friends, and some seemed genuine, and then others felt more like they had to send a text or else I would think some way about them.” This conversation sparked Tamia’s initial thoughts about the motivations of her White peers to support and counter racial injustices.

**Tamia’s Racial Justice Activism Experience**

Tamia’s experience with racial justice initially began through her family and extended friends, which included historically Black sorority and fraternity members. Tamia subsequently became a member of one of the sororities due to their promotion of “scholarship and Black excellence.” Tamia also performed service opportunities with community organizations while in high school. These organizations focused on promoting social justice, and Tamia questioned the motives of her White counterparts whenever they were present for service. “And I feel like there were some Saturdays where I saw some White people. I was like, wow, okay. Are you here just because you are guilty or feel bad?” In addition to community service projects in precollege, Tamia has membership in many of the Black-identified organizations at Temple University.
Participant: Sarah Beth

Sarah Beth is a 21-year-old, fourth-year criminal justice major at Temple University. She identifies as a White woman from a predominately White community. Sarah Beth is a transfer student from a neighboring community college. An area that has shaped Sara Beth's awareness involves her parents being forty years older. She spoke candidly about the intergenerational challenges around her parents' understanding of her experiences of growing up in today's context and their perceptions of social justice. "My parents had me late, so they are super Republican and exposed me to some, I wouldn't say extreme views, but not informed perspectives and still using expired language and terms that I didn't understand when I was younger, and it was almost like funny." Subsequently, Sarah Beth went through an "edgy" phase while in high school to counter many of her parent's views.

Although Sarah Beth lived in a predominately White community, her high school was racially and culturally diverse. She credits attending Temple University and majoring in Criminal Justice as principal factors in developing social consciousness. Sarah Beth further states that her major allows awareness to identify oppressive systems impacting the Black community. These are contributing factors motivating Sarah Beth's involvement in racial justice advocacy.

Sarah Beth's Racial Justice Activism Experience

Sarah Beth's experience with racial justice advocacy is limited to courses and diversity, equity, and inclusion organizations in a professional setting. "I've taken some cutting-edge classes, specifically last semester I took one called Hate Crimes, and the professor just did such a phenomenal job of outlining these bigotries and what needs to be done in order to combat these and had us think critically about these issues." Sarah Beth also acknowledged that the DEI work on racial advocacy has been online tutorials and mentioned these can often fall "flat" on
their intended purposes. Sarah Beth concluded this portion of her interview by stating she wants to complete research under a professor involving White supremacist posts and their social cohesion.

**Participant: Eva**

Eva is a 21-year-old, second-year exercise and sport science major at Temple University. She identifies as a Black woman. Eva grew up in a diverse community and attended a predominately White Christian high school. Eva also described being a part of a soccer team, which was also predominantly White. She provided these descriptors as an authentic view of how her experiences heightened racial consciousness. "It was really easy to see how diminished and secluded Black women were, and the stereotypes were projected on them all of the time."

Throughout the interview, Eva focused on how Blackness intersects with being a woman while recognizing the importance of racial justice.

Eva has an advanced understanding of identity socialization and how this contributes to racialized biases. Her work in this area led to her utilizing her voice as a gun violence activist. Eva contends that gun violence disproportionately affects the Black community and is an issue of racial justice. Through these efforts, Eva joined a coalition that would travel to Harrisburg and lobby lawmakers to protest firearm reform.

**Eva's Racial Justice Activism Experience**

Eva's experience working with racial justice advocacy is expansive from her efforts in high school and her understanding of systemic issues. In addition to her advocacy work with gun control, Eva was a critical part of her high school's Black Student Union. She needed to extend conversations beyond gun violence to address police brutality. "I became president of our Black Student Union and began to facilitate walkouts for the injustices that were going on in my
community and have conversations with the city mayor to begin giving a voice to these issues."

Eva saw a need to become engaged through activism to begin openly sharing experiences of the Black community from her lens and discuss how racism can impact communities.

**Participant: Jamal**

Jamal is a 22-year-old, fourth-year advertising major at Temple University. He identifies as a Black-Nigerian man. Jamal is from a predominately White city in New Jersey and attended a college preparatory high school that was predominately White. A core part of Jamal’s identity is being a student-athlete at Temple University. The intersection of his race, gender, and being an athlete has framed how Jamal sees the world around him. The onset of his interview began with Jamal speaking on the importance of racial representation. “Just through personal experiences while growing up, by the time I got to college, I realized I was missing many things as a Black man just when it comes to communication, work life, organization, discipline, and structure.” Jamal’s conversation alluded to a lack of resources often provided to the Black community that can make a person successful.

Jamal’s discussion of race and sports provided insight into how some athletes navigate race-related issues in society. Many of these issues are generational and have been passed down from parents, grandparents, and others. This conversation provided a space for Jamal to speak on his experiences and perceptions of college athletics supporting racial justice principles.

**Jamal’s Racial Justice Activism Experience**

Jamal’s experience with racial justice advocacy heightened after the summer of 2020. Jamal took a lead role in organizing a response and creating dialogue amongst student-athletes regarding racial reckoning in the United States. Jamal further asserted that the newly formed group allowed athletes of color to authentically share experiences while utilizing their status as
athletes to create social awareness. “I would say really just creating that platform for Black student-athletes on campus. I feel that it is important that we have our own safe space to come together, see what resources we need to empower, and come together as a community.”

**Participant: Raheem**

Raheem is a 20-year-old, second-year event and entertainer management at Temple University. He identifies as Black and is originally from South Carolina. Raheem grew up in a predominately White community while attending a majority White high school. Growing up in the South, Raheem's strong ties with his religion are principles that shape his commitment to social justice. Raheem has an affinity for teaching others about current issues and navigating their identity development. "I am interested in this study because of not just educating youth, but particularly African American youth and how my teaching and being a role model can have a big effect on them."

Raheem was most interested in better understanding how Black students identify authentically and also recognizing how the university supports students through racial injustices. A section of his interview focused on a recent shooting that yielded the death of a Temple University Police Sargent, identifying as Black. While Raheem took a moment to process this tragedy, he connected the shooting and representation of Temple in a predominately Black neighborhood as opportunities to understand the history and culture of the North Philadelphia community.

**Raheem's Racial Justice Activism Experience**

His identification of being Black inspired Raheem's experience with racial justice advocacy. Raheem noted that he had to have a heightened racial development due to his participation in activities that are perceived as historically White. "I'm a swimmer, and
swimming is a predominately White sport, and I also do theater. I play lacrosse too. I was always in areas where I'm usually one of the only Black kids or the only Black kid." Raheem then shares that representation is critical to creating equity amongst the Black community. Raheem centered his responses on fair and consistent representation in careers, majors, and activities historically dominated by White individuals when prompted to define racial justice advocacy.

**Introduction of Themes**

In this section of Chapter 4, I will identify five themes. These themes consist of (1) White racial justice activism, (2) inauthentic and performative activism, (3) learning to be White, (4) White Racial justice activism and Black peers, and (5) overcoming racial justice barriers for campus advocacy. The previous profiles provide insight into students’ backgrounds to understand better how they interpret racial identity and advocate for others. Each participant contributed unique experiences towards defining and immersing themselves in racial justice activism.

Throughout individual interviews and the Social Justice Dialogue Activity, themes highlighted how each participant conceptualized racial justice activism. Several themes and sub-themes were identified, allowing an interpretative phenomenological analysis. I provide a detailed account and interpretation of themes correlating with each research question. All themes utilize participant narratives to describe their authentic voice on how racial justice influences Black and White college students at an urban institution.
### Table 3. Themes and Subthemes

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### White Racial Justice Activism

*I've done a lot of research, and I think that it is; this is a new perspective of mine, but I think that as a White person, it is your responsibility to educate yourself. You have that responsibility to the rest of the world because there are people; most of the world isn't White.*

*Rachael Lee*

The first research question asked how White college students describe their experience with racial justice activism. I define activism as an approach to advocating for others that are marginalized by systemic constraints. Research demonstrates that White-identified individuals must reconcile their racial identification to actively achieve racial justice for others (Helms, 1991).
This initial inquiry led to a significant theme of White racial justice activism. White-identified participants shared an equal hesitation in labeling themselves as racial justice activists. However, in many of these interviews, these participants later referenced a need for White individuals to increase their awareness of racial inequities within the United States. While developing the theme listed above, three subthemes emerged consisting of 1) What makes a White racial justice activist, 2) White guilt and White fragility, and 3) Intersectionality and White racial justice activism.

**What Makes a White Racial Justice Activist?**

During participant interviews, a subtheme involving definitions around racial justice activism by White individuals began to emerge. Through various descriptions, Black and White participants openly discussed their insight on what qualifies as non-performative racial justice activism. Each response is based on how Black participants have witnessed supportive activism from their White peers while White participants spoke from direct experiences or involvement in racial justice work. In describing this type of advocacy, Sarah Beth says:

> Being present and it goes further than listening. It's participating actively and learning just like you would with anything.

Sarah Beth's assertion of being an engaged activist for White individuals involved possessing an ability of humility and learning as they encounter racialized issues affecting the Black community. Rachael Lee further elaborated on learning by providing specific examples. She states:

> Showing up but not stepping on the toes or not stepping over educating themselves so that microaggressions can be decreased. Learning about, especially at Temple, learning about the roots of violence. And it's not the fault of the people who live here learning about poverty, how it affects people of color disproportionately just to understand the climate better being at a university like this. Yeah, awareness of White privilege and guilt can go a long way.
Rachael Lee identified how education not only elevates humility but can also unlearn socialized ideas around racial identity. This progressive approach can allow White individuals to consciously think about microaggressive behaviors and other racialized biases learned through various societal factors. On this topic, Dorian, another White participant, discussed their involvement in characterizing what embodies a White Racial Justice activist. Dorian says:

So, it's my job to take those experiences and not exploit them, but just to amplify them and then hopefully continue to make waves and provoke change and start change. We are just supposed to be megaphones and little step stools to elevate actual people who experience racism, actual people of color.

Like Sarah Beth, Dorian believes that White individuals must channel their racial privilege to counter these injustices. Utilizing such privilege allows White racial justice activists an opportunity to navigate spaces that are otherwise not accessible by Black individuals. The topic of White privilege is discussed more in-depth within another subtheme.

Moreover, a fascinating part of understanding what designates a White racial justice activist involves listening to the narratives of individuals subjugated to racial injustices. Several Black participants weighed in on what they feel is needed by their White counterparts to advance racial justice and actively create social awareness. The following response captures how these participants distinguish non-performative activism by White individuals. Sarah Beth says:

Being present and it goes further than listening. It's participating actively and learning just like you would with anything...and that takes everybody to be on the same page and to learn the same skills and the same understanding of, okay, that's not okay anymore.

Unlike other Black participants, Jamal took a different position in recognizing White Racial Justice activism. Raheem provided a unique perspective on this conversation that grounds fragility and fear. Raheem mentioned:

Through social media. It's kind of easy to repost and say this and that, but it's hard because when White people try to be activists, I feel as though sometimes, as a
Black community, we tear them down. Cause we say they don't know what they're talking about, but which is right? Sometimes they don't. But if they're making an effort to try and put their best foot forward to make things right in the world, you should give them credit for that. But yes, I have seen a fair share just involvement with couple of student-athletes on campus that are White that want to help social injustice issues.

**White Guilt and White Fragility**

White guilt is described as a collective feeling of guilt or embarrassment by some White-identified individuals due to historical racial disparities. On the other hand, White fragility is classified as discomfort when White individuals encounter conversations about race.

During participant interviews, students were prompted to respond to questions about how White guilt can influence racial justice activism. White participants illustrated how fragility, guilt, and fear surface from their perspectives in several ways. Rachael Lee mentions:

> But having White guilt doesn't do anything other than immobilize youth. So I think that, um, through education there are, I do experience still feeling of guilt, um, but through education, I'm learning more ways to not make that field a private thing but put into action that can create a cause of change.

Blaze adds to this topic by mentioning the following:

> I think some White people can also use White guilt as their form of activism, which, like, I don't agree with, I don't think it's activism, but someone I've known, someone that will just, like, they'll read books about like Black tragedies or like movies, other media. And I'm like, okay, that's cool, but like, what, what else are you doing? Like, you're just making yourself feel worse, but you're not doing anything to help the people that are alive and dealing with racism like right now.

Rachael Lee and Blaze were open to sharing their involvement with White guilt while underscoring education's importance. Rachael Lee, in particular, feels that learning about racial inequities can create a roadmap for White individuals to overcome guilt and deflect personalized shaming. While performative activism is discussed in the next theme, Dorian communicated that it is not just enough to read books but also to apply action and humility to these learned efforts. Dorian further expanded on this concept by mentioning:
So then it becomes like a, a little pity party of like White Deal and like, oh, I feel so bad. Like, what can we do? And then you sit there, and you're all just like, feel like it's not productive. As you said, there's so much to do. But instead, like you discuss this with your peers, I think that's good. That's a good start. But then it typically halts at, like, okay, we're guilty. And then it's like, okay, now I'm gonna do like everything I can, but that is not coming outta a place of like actual desire to produce change. It comes out of like; I just don't wanna feel guilty anymore.

A standard trend surfacing throughout White participants' responses in describing guilt, fragility, and fear involved a state of confusion about when they should participate in racial justice movements while recognizing how much space is taken to advocate for Black identity. Dorian further shares the following thoughts that link to the White fear concept:

But I do feel like there's, like, I feel hindered because I worry so badly about making more of a negative impact than a positive one. Um, and I also think that I don't want to be seen as someone who is doing things selfishly. I don't want people to see my White guilt. Why would, if you have White guilt, like you don't wanna admit that you have it, and especially you don't wanna admit that's a person of color, you know, because it becomes tense, I guess.

Black participants also weighed in on the concept of fragility, guilt, and fear around White identity. Many Black participant narratives discussed how this microaggressive bias influences how Black culture navigates society. Black participants could share these thoughts as a collective during data collection. Tiffany says:

And then it's like, um, also when they say they can't help what their family thinks or things like that. I mean, you can directly combat what they're saying. Yeah. If you're sitting there in silence because you're too afraid to speak up or too afraid to, um, yeah. Say something to your racist uncle, like you're in compliance with it if you don't speak up about it. Um, like the White guilt of them coming to like their Black friends or anything like that, trying to get educated. Like it's not our, um, responsibility to educate you on something that you can go out of your way to educate yourself with.

Tyrone continued this thought by adding:

I feel like White guilt, White fragility honestly sometimes hinders the Black community. Cause they can take all problems and they can go bother themselves, and they're just like, well, I wouldn't do it, and I can't control my ancestors. Okay. I can't control my ancestors either, so now I'm getting discriminated against cause
of the color my skin. So let's talk about the root the problem. And it's like they are
just trying to progress, they're really just holding Black people because they're
thinking about, well, I, it wasn't me. I didn't do it was my ancestors, but you're
still living off of the benefits of your ancestors. Just how we're still rooting and
reaping like the downfall of ours.

Tiffany and Tyrone highlighted the importance of discussing the root of racial injustices
while communicating that White-identified individuals must do the work rather than expect the
community to educate them on historical racial atrocities. Moreover, these two participants hit on
another critical point: everyone is responsible for creating social awareness and deconstructing
systems established historically under a doctrine of White Supremacy. Over ninety percent of the
Black participants mentioned similar statements regarding a phrase I call "White Responsibility."
This responsibility stems from being aware of oppressive systems and effectively managing
fragility and guilt when discussing race.

To conclude this section, Blaze dialogues about White individuals being able to assist the
Black community despite any privilege of not experiencing racial injustices. Blaze utilizes the
Black Lives Matter movement in the following comment to illustrate this point:

Given the history of police brutality in the knowledge of how Black people are
treated by the police institution and they think it's wrong, and they feel guilty
because of that, and they feel that they have to do something about it, but they
don't have the experience with the police system to have essentially the fear
instinct.

**Intersectionality and White Racial Justice**

Throughout this study, participants responded by discussing how they felt
Intersectionality influenced racial justice awareness and experiences. Although I classify these as
marginalized identities that intersect with Whiteness, White participants expressly referred to
these experiences through the lens of Intersectionality.
Through their narratives, responses linked to how Kimberle Crenshaw currently describes Intersectionality as interconnected oppressions experienced by two or more marginalized identities. This section emphasizes how White participants have channeled their understanding of Intersectionality, allowing them to be receptive in foreshadowing what is needed to counter racial injustices. Dorian mentions:

So I'd say anything that I really involve myself in comes from the perspective of a queer person, a White queer person. So I'm not contributing anything that is outside of my demographic. And I'm not sure if that's a good or bad thing because it's supposed to come from my own experience. But I would say any work that I have done helping other people formulate their own uses of that; it's really just been from my queer perspective.

I note that each White participant possessed two or more marginalized identities ranging from gender, abilities, and sexual orientation. Rachael Lee underscored how her passion for women's rights cemented her continued research of her identities while using her experiences to develop empathy and awareness for racial justice. Rachael Lee says:

I learned about Intersectionality and how important it's to include all races, all genders, all sexualities abilities, all that kind of stuff into the conversation because it makes for a richer dynamic, just better inclusivity for everyone involved.

In a response inquiring why there is such a push to exclude educating on Intersectionality as a concept in schools, Sarah Beth says:

So they don't want to learn about Intersectionality. They want to learn about how everybody's nice, and they really just want their kids to have such an artificial experience of what life is at that point, almost so that they are good kids because now we have to worry about what happens when kids can get access to guns, and we see the mental health crisis rising.

I asked participants whether they felt Intersectionality allows adaptability for White students to understand better how to advocate for racial injustices affecting the Black community. On this topic, Blaze mentioned the following statement:
For me, I mean obviously, I'm not a racial minority, but I am like a sexual minority, and I suppose like a gender minority amongst other things. And I think that, like if there was like a White cisman sitting in that chair right now, as I would also like be stressed out, uncomfortable first of all. But I also think like, um, me and participant six, like I think that there's also like, just in the back of my mind that, like I, this is exactly how I feel about my queerness. I have absolutely no idea what it's like to be a Black person in particular, like a Black person in America. Um, but like, I know what it's like to be a queer person in America and a trans person in America.

As a White queer-identified individual, Blaze shared that the presence of a White cisgender man would likely have changed the dynamic of the conversation for the White group. This statement further dissects how identity-based privilege engages with activism and can sometimes produce challenges when having social change dialogues. Rachael Lee follows up with a comment discussing the complexities of navigating humility to actively discuss White racial justice activism while navigating fragility and guilt. Rachael Lee says:

I feel hindered because I, I worry so badly about making more of a negative impact than a positive one. Um, and I also think I don't want to be seen as someone who is doing things selfishly. I don't want people to see my White guilt. Why would, if you have what guilt, like you don't wanna admit that you have it, and especially you don't wanna admit that's to a person of color, you know, because it becomes tense, I guess. And with my activism, I think I get confused a lot and I'm like, I don't know where I fit.

In addition to White participants citing Intersectionality as a motivating factor, some Black participants discussed how Intersectionality applies to Black identity. During these interview responses, participants disclosed how their efforts have an intersectional lens of recognizing racial injustices and how this further marginalizes Black women. Felicia and Tamia provided insight into how gender in being a Black woman can influence racial justice and Intersectionality. Felicia says:

But at the end, it's just about like understanding people have different experiences in this world, or I feel like for Black women, when you walk into a room, you're Black, and then you're a woman, so you're Black... so now you're super discriminated against, and it's like you can't escape.
Themes in this section provided insight into what defines White Racial Justice activism. Additionally, subthemes explained how guilt, fragility, and intersectional marginalized identities could motivate Whiteness to advocate for racial justice and inclusion. The next theme introduces how inauthentic and performative activism can hinder social justice activism.

**Inauthentic and Performative Activism**

*I think it's just automatically having opportunities and automatically being put in the spotlight or getting praise for things that say the Black community or people of color have been doing for years or not having to work as hard just because I guess people trust White people more.*

*Tiffany*

Performative activism involves an inauthentic commitment to influence social change and awareness. The summer of 2020 saw a heightened amount of activism from a diverse pool of students. This spike included an influx of White participants desiring social change through communicated messages on social media accounts. However, a significant dilemma is whether such activism was done so with clear intentions of aiding racial justice for the Black community. Participants responded strongly to understanding what constitutes being performative or inauthentic when executing racial justice. From these responses, two subthemes emerged in this section: 1) the influence of social media and 2) narratives of performative experiences and anti-Blackness.

**Influence of Social Media**

A clear indicator of how students interpreted activism as being performative was through the usage of popular social media platforms. Tyrone captures these sentiments by stating:

But then you always see, I don't know, you see, it's kind of trendy just to be a part of those things. So I guess for me resonating-wise, it just feels like many people do it for the trends that go around TikTok in 2020 when everybody was for the people and everything like that. And then, once that ended, it was out of their life. It was like, did you really care, or were you just trying to be a part? I don't know,
just for clout, I say that just for clout or just say you're furthering your cause. So that's how I feel about that.

Tyrone provided context that various individuals and companies were highly active in aspiring for racial justice after the death of Floyd, Taylor, and Arbery during the summer of 2020. Tyrone continued to discuss this phenomenon by concluding that this was a temporary trend and that participation has lowered in subsequent years while suggesting some individuals may undergo these performative actions to receive accolades from others.

Dorian later added to this conversation by stating the following:

I think that even when I was protesting in 2020, it was all White people organizing those events. And that's great that the events were getting organized, but a lot of the times, I felt like we were being prioritized more than the actual people of color that we were supposed to be rallying for.

Dorian's commentaries are directly connected to Tyrone's point regarding how White individuals can be driven to these protests to elevate their status or to gain influence and additional followers on social media accounts.

Sarah Beth equally described her viewpoint on what she perceived as performative actions through using social media by mentioning:

I mean, the black square trend that went around at the height of the Black Lives Matter people posting a black square on their Instagram, what does that do?

Technology has created unprecedented activism, leading to an innovative platform for individuals to use their voice in the wake of many Black injustices. Over seventy percent of participants indicated that usage of the black boxes on social media showed solidarity with the Black community by their counterparts. Still, advocacy behaviors did not extend beyond changing avatars.
Narratives of Performative Experiences and Anti-Blackness

Unlike the other Black participants, Jamal took a different point of view when prompted to discuss inauthentic activism. His lens describes this in a manner reflecting on how the Black community sustains itself internally regarding systemic barriers. Jamal says:

Yeah, I see it. I've seen inauthentic activism happen in person with people that are out in the streets screaming justice for all. Then at the same time, that same night, they're going out maybe selling drugs or carrying guns on them, or not uplifting Black women or just not uplifting each other.

Other participants, like Tamia, began underscoring interactions with her White peers regarding their support whenever racial injustices occur. Tamia stated:

I had received certain text messages from my White friends, and some seemed genuine, and then others felt more like they felt like they had to send a text or else I would think some way about them.

Tamia's response during the interview is critical in unraveling how she perceives her White counterpart's involvement with racial justice matters without taking up space, muting Black voices, being a White savior, or speaking on behalf of a marginalized community.

Similarly, Felicia describes a group of White students she knew while critiquing their commitment to being selfless and intentional with racial justice activism. Felicia says:

And then there was the outer group of people who wanted to be allies, but they were not willing to put in any type of work, but they'll look from the sidelines and clap you on when you put in the work.

Tiffany conveyed a vital viewpoint relating to performative activism that was a typical conversation among many Black participants. She asserts:

I think it's just being automatically having opportunities and automatically being put in the spotlight or getting praise for things that say the Black community or people of color have been doing for years or not having to work as hard just because I guess people trust White people more, I guess especially on thinking of a money aspect, or they think that White people have the most credentials or even if they don't have the qualifications, they just give them things because they trust them more.
Without saying the specific terminology, Tiffany described how levels of anti-Blackness can influence the believability and perceptions of Black narratives. She further explains how Whiteness is held to a standard that is often unquestioned, leading to a fundamental cause of co-opting Black spaces under the guise of activism or identity-based advocacy. Tiffany later suggested that her White counterparts navigate beyond performative actions. She mentions:

But it speaks volumes when someone doesn't go and post and say, and just post one thing or post may be that you are acknowledging that this is happening because one White person posting something can lead to a magnitude, can lead to a lot of influence, especially if they have a lot of following.

Tiffany's assertion speaks to the influence of group thinking and likability. In this context, Tiffany suggests that role modeling of a White-identified individual is necessary for activating the moral compass of other White peers. This is an active way for this community to be engaged bystanders and not rely on silence, guilt, fear, or fragility, which can often inhibit her White peers when addressing racial injustices.

When asked for the prompt on performative activism, Blaze extended their response by discussing how White saviors can directly influence individuals' participation in inauthentic behaviors. This conversation expanded on the approach Tiffany previously discussed, exploring the impact of intentional role modeling on other White individuals being a disruptor to anti-Blackness. Blaze describes this view by stating the following:

We did talk about race and racism in my classes. It was just the fact that so many of us were White, including my teachers, that it was good that we talked about it. It felt a bit like White saviors growing up, but we did talk about it. White saviorism is basically White people talking over Black people or people of color about their own experiences.

Blaze's stance provides a perspective that classifies saviors as a performative gesture that does not create reasonable social change or awareness. Further, this illustration demonstrates
how educators in Blaze's schooling history taught racial justice and Black identity. This statement alludes to how students can be socialized in various ages to dialogue on race relations in the United States by using saviorism to navigate fragility and guilt. Another participant, Rachael Lee, also conveyed how she has experienced performative behaviors through her college faculty using her assigned syllabus. Rachael Lee states:

I guess I don't even know if this might be, I guess, the diversity statement that professors put on their syllabus, reading that out, being like, oh, we accept everyone. It can feel performative. I understand that they have a good intention with that, but it can just kind of feel performative. I accept people of all races and genders, but I'm not going to really say more about it. I'm not going to practice it in my class. I'm just going to say this one statement and move on.

Themes in this section reviewed how performative activism transpires. Subthemes further examined how social media and anti-Blackness correspond to inauthentic and performative behaviors. All participants connected the usage of the black square post-George Floyd's murder as a symbol of inauthentic activism and advocacy due to a lack of action, understanding, and follow-up on ways to dismantle systemic racism. The next theme, learning to be White, examines how White privilege is developed while discussing how Black individuals are often taught survival codes to navigate anti-Blackness.

**Learning to be White**

*I was like, wow, I can't believe my parents think this way. But a lot of the time, it was just that they didn't ever think to think any differently. And after we had those conversations and opened it up, they were like, now I'm thinking differently.*

*Rachael Lee*

Learning to be White symbolizes the socialization of Whiteness as a societal norm. Exploring how these behaviors are developed is critical to recognize better how privilege, guilt, and fear manifest amongst Whiteness. During interviews, I asked participants questions linked to conversations about racial identity during their childhood while recalling their interpretation of
White privilege. Subthemes in this section yielded a deeper discussion on White privilege and Black codes – intentional or unintentional guidance of Black parents to protect children due to their racial background. This section identified two subthemes involving 1) White privilege and 2) the socialization of Black codes.

**White Privilege**

All participants had an advanced understanding of White privilege and could define this phrase effectively. The ability of everyone to have similar responses demonstrates how the notion of privilege has been socialized to White identity, hence how this behavior is learned through a societal lens. Sarah Beth illustrates her understanding of White privilege by mentioning the following:

> Really just having any sort of enumerated advantages. The analogy people always started uses is starting the race 20 miles ahead or something like that. But even I, in the familial structure, you know, see these totems that still show the White privilege really, that the structures that certain groups have in order and just the luxury of being yourself and that is the norm.

Sarah Beth's example is a common application to visually explain how White privilege provides distinct advantages allocated to a person's racial background. She asserts that privilege denotes normative practices that provide a "luxury" of not thinking about how you navigate society based on racial identity. Tyrone contextualizes White privilege by saying:

> White privilege is, to me, the experience. It all alters through the experiences in which we can do certain things. So I feel like all of White privilege stuff that happens basically on the experiences in which you're going for those things that White people are also going for. And it'll, it'll be given to the White person over you anytime.

Tyrone used a real-world example of employment discrimination to speak about a person's experiences. Tyrone continued to mention that despite any elevated experiences or education level, the White person is assumed to be the better candidate.
Dorian and Blaze approached responding to this conversation similarly. Both participants used intersectional language to describe White individuals possessing other marginalized identities who can still navigate to the top racially due to their Whiteness. Dorian describes this by saying:

I would say White privilege comes when you can have hardships in your life and, you know, could be in poverty, you can be marginalized, but your skin color isn't something that makes that more difficult. You're not targeted. That's just not another thing that you're targeted for and you're marginalized for. I think for me, growing up, I realized that I just wasn't affected by things that my neighbors were the only Black people.

Blaze led their response by discussing impoverished communities and low socioeconomic status that White individuals experience as a precept before discussing privilege. Blaze mentions:

So the thing about my family also is that a lot of my family members are from rural Pennsylvania and are very working class. So don't always like to say that White privilege is you have all the benefits going for you because that's not the case. There is poverty in White communities, but White privilege is definitely being given the benefit of doubt in any situation. Regardless of your background, regardless of what kind of crimes you've committed, or your personal history, in any sense, if you're White, people are usually going to assume that you are more trustworthy or intelligent or any other stereotype that goes against people of color.

Additionally, Rachael Lee describes this phenomenon by recalling a conversation with her mother. Rachael Lee says:

So I asked my mom about that, and she said, well, White people have more money from historically, they have the privilege. But she was like, Catholic schools are more expensive, and White people tend to have more money to be able to pay that kind of tuition to send their kids to Catholic school, and public schools are free, so anyone can send their kids to public school. So it was probably problematic because she is implying that people of color aren't, don't have money, or whatever. But yeah, I guess that was probably another instance where I noticed my privilege as a White person.

Most White participants discussed finances and economic status when describing what White privilege means while recognizing that Whiteness advances opportunities often unavailable for Black individuals. Consequently, Eva's response gives a glimpse into her
perspective on how White privilege was created and how it benefits Whiteness today. She explains:

Yeah, I feel like White privilege is something that people want to dismiss, but it's like if you look at it, these, and our entire society was built around White men, so, of course, they're going to have it the easiest. This was built for them by them. It was never meant to serve anyone. The rules and regulations in place were put in place when we were still three-fifths of a person and Black women being less than that. So you have to understand, of course there's going to be right privilege. They didn't even expect us to be people. They didn't even want us to be people.

Socialization of Black Codes

Black codes emerged as a subtheme when participants were asked about stigmas associated with Black identity. Moreover, responses from a majority of Black participants yielded that family members and caretakers gave cautionary guidance about being Black in the United States.

Each participant responded that these codes came from parental influences. Tyrone starts by discussing his youngest memory of being taught to be cautious of behaviors due to his racial identity. Tyrone says:

I feel like actually when stuff started to be; I started to absorb what my parents were telling me. It was more so in sixth grade because that was when my big transition from my all Black school to a White school happened. So that's when a lot of the knowledge that I was given throughout that time, no, you can't do these kind of things. No, you can't do that. It started to really show cause it was hard. You could count the number of Black kids on your fingers.

Eva expands this thought by mentioning code-switching for environmental awareness. This concept derives from passed-down guidance about ways to mitigate or lessen anti-Blackness. Eva states:

Yes, I definitely did. And code-switching became, honestly, it was just a switch. It's easy for Black people to realize, oh, I'm in a different space. I have to act a different way. So you're not seen as aggressive and angry all the time when you're really just a Black woman being a Black woman, and my hair, it was like, that
was the biggest thing because people saw that as, oh, you're just a regular Black girl and you got dreads and all the stereotypes, I could come with that.

Several Black participants responded with vivid examples of how their parents, specifically mothers, prepared them for societal anti-Blackness. Tiffany describes the restrictions she encountered as a child in response to these conversations. Tiffany states the following:

I couldn't really go to sleepovers. I couldn't, and this is sleepovers to friends; this is sleepovers to my family. I didn't start sleeping over at my aunt's house until maybe I got older. I would only stay with my grandparents, and that was if I stayed with my grandparents. But I think my mom and dad kept me in the house.

Jamal and Raheem's maternal protection was centered on "driving while Black." This specific conversation was an example provided primarily by participants identifying as Black men. Participants frequently engaged in this conversation to diminish stereotypical perceptions of aggression often associated with Black men and women.

On this topic, Jamal says:

Growing up, my mom always made sure she knew where I was going or who I was hanging out with. She always made sure I grew up in a diverse community. I had a diverse childhood, so I had my White friends, and I had my Black friends, but we always hung out as a group. So anytime I hung out with anybody White, she always wanted to make sure someone of the same color was there. She always used to mention to me just, even when I was a teenager, who you get in the car with, don't be blasting music, don't be speeding, stuff like that. Driving while Black anything, even when it came to driving home with White friends, my mom always mentioned to me that make sure you wear your seatbelt, and stuff like that. It was a lot.

Raheem's guidance was more descriptive on what actions should be taken once there is a traffic stop by law enforcement. He details:

But, um, there's times where my parents, they have to tell me like, when you are driving, if you ever get like pulled over, pull over, keep both hands on the wheel and kind of stuff like that, kind of that in kind of that, um, scenario and how I, I do what the cop says. I say, yes sir, no ma'am, all that stuff. Um, and just being respectful, saying yes, agree to whatever they have to say because if you don't, you can possibly lose your life.
Tamia had similar conversations with her parents about identity-based safety with the other Black participants. Her parents articulated that she would have different encounters than her White peers due to the racial climate. The most compelling part of Tamia's response involves her parents having a separate conversation with her brother akin to what was noted with Raheem and Jamal. Tamia mentions:

I think it was just different from my parents when they gave me the conversation as to when they gave my brother the of when we get pulled over, stay calm, don't make any quick, fast movements.

The themes in this section focused on the socialization of Whiteness and how White privilege is learned throughout American society. This section also discussed how anti-Blackness has surfaced due to White Supremacy, leading members of the Black community to adopt cultural codes. Black participants described these codes as mechanisms to foster safety while acknowledging that racial privilege from their White counterparts exempts them from these experiences. The next theme examines how White individuals utilize this privilege to promote racial justice and the perception that their Black peers have for these actions.

**White Racial Justice and Black Peers**

“I feel like they don't understand how mentally and mentally this has set us back for years; family exposure to new things just set us back completely all around. And I don't think they get that part in why that, I think us as a Black community, we're just mentally trapped in this cage.”

*Jamal*

During interviews, Black participants were asked about their perceptions of White Racial Justice activism while questioning their White peers' thoughts on the Black Lives Matter movement. These prompts explored how Black students view racial justice by White individuals and an opportunity to contextualize the purpose of this form of activism. Another subtheme examined White participants' involvement, participation, and understanding of a movement to
counter racial injustices. Two subthemes emerged in this section, including 1) Black students' perception of White racial justice activism and 2) White students' knowledge of Black Lives Matter.

**Black Students' Perception on White Racial Justice**

Jamal links historical context to why it is apparent that White individuals should be active in racial justice activism. He says the following in acknowledging this critical point for White individuals engaging in racial justice:

> To first understand where they went wrong in history and why it's affecting today's society, why it's affecting our culture, and why we're reacting this way. I think that their first approach is to understand. I feel like they're just kind of like, oh, give the Black community what they want so they can shut up.

A key point in Jamal's comment involved promoting authentic, intentional activism that recognizes the root of such issues. Tamia also expressed a need for White individuals to confront the past to move racial relations forward but also provided the caveat that there must be recognition of how past actions have fostered our current environment. She says:

> I need them to admit that things happened that shouldn't have happened. I feel like the first response is, well, that happened in the past; we don't need to bring it up. But we do because it did happen, and it was life-changing for so many people, I feel like we can't just brush it off. I feel like the first thing everybody needs to do is sit down and talk and admit that some fudged up stuff happened and that we're not trying to relive the past. We're trying to use what happened in the past to make sure it doesn't happen in the future.

Tiffany added to this concept by discussing the importance of White racial justice activists not placing the moral reasonability onto Black individuals for teaching them about racial trauma and the construction of White Supremacy. She says:

> We shouldn't have to be responsible for teaching them about our history. We know history, and we also that's just another thing of us doing something for a White person that doesn't necessarily benefit us when they have the resources, probably more resources than we do, to go out and do their research, read a book, or anything like that.
Eva illustrates how a White individual can advocate for racial justice. This is another example of how social media is being utilized to promote authentic racial justice activism. Eva describes this occurrence by stating:

There was this White lady on TikTok who was pulled over. She was purposely pulled over by a cop to ask him why he was the only cop in that area to pull over 200 people. And out of those 200 people, about 80% were Black. But the population in that town, only about 20%, was Black. So how are you pulling over these people who are mostly Black in this community where there are barely any Black people? What do you have to do about that? I feel like that's a great example of her using the color her skin because she knows she's not going to get shot for saying that, or she pulled out of her car or berated for talking about those type types of things that go on.

In this example, Eva described how the White bystander understood systemic issues of policing Black identities. She explains that this bystander effectively educated herself on racialized matters in the community and even told how White privilege was tapped into for this conversation not to end adversely.

In Raheem's response, he put into context that having White privilege means lacking racialized discrimination and bias. However, like Eva's point, this privilege can be used subtly to create social change and awareness. Raheem explains:

There's things that they never experienced and things they would never, things they would never understand. But I think having the White privilege and being able to stand up and just like spread awareness; I guess in their own way, it's kind of like, it's kind, it's all you really need to do. Cause I'm not asking you to go to these protests. I'm not asking you to post this on social media, but like, as long as you advocate, and you recognize it and some and do what you do authentically.

**White Students’ Knowledge of Black Lives Matter Movement**

Each White participant was asked what Black Lives Matter (BLM) means to them. This question utilized open language to determine how participants subjectively thought about the
phrase being a movement, collective group, or both. Blaze provided a descriptive explanation of what they felt the phrase represented. Blaze mentions:

Black Lives Matter is a response to the society that continuously shows that Black lives don't matter. By which, I mean it was made in response to police brutality, which is a very literal interpretation of Black or police officers are killing Black people, Black Lives Matter. We need to stop police violence and police brutality.

Blaze's response articulated a fundamental understanding of the genesis of BLM. The initial response began about why the movement exists to combat White Supremacy directed towards the Black community. Blaze further discusses the importance of mattering and speaking to a holistic approach to achieving social change. Blaze adds:

But I think it goes further than that because there is so much more to life than just living. So Black art matters, Black music matters, Black academics matter, the food, everything that makes life-like human life, you know? I mean, everything that contributes to human life. Black people have something to contribute to that. They have their own stories, their own cultures to contribute to that experience.

Dorian spoke about a sense of heaviness when asked to reflect on BLM. Their understanding of the phrase evoked a certain degree of emotion, liking the concept of mattering that Blaze pointed out earlier. Dorian says:

It's just such a heavy phrase, and it's ridiculous that it is because it should be something that is so simple, but it's not. It's ridiculous. And it makes me mad and sad and passionate and angered and fueled, and it's like what Black Lives Matter means to me is, I don't think I could give you of one word. I think what it means is people are tired. I think what it means is kind of just a call to action make sure that people know this. Make sure that people know the bare minimum. Make sure that people can actually think that a Black person does matter.

Rachael Lee and Sarah Beth discussed a key point involving how conservative right political-leaning individuals perceive BLM to counter this phrase with "All Lives Matter."

Rachael Lee illustrates these sentiments by the following comparison:

There's two houses, and it's like my house is on fire, the one house is on fire, and the one house isn't on fire. And people would say, oh, my house matters. Your house isn't on fire right now, so we don't need to give it help and resources. We need to call the fire department for your house to prevent a fire when the one next
to it is on fire. So just understanding that, of course, all people's lives matter, but just taking, understanding that there is a very big problem with the way that Black people are incarcerated and treated by the police force in this country, and understanding that that's where we need to focus our attention on right now. Because other ethnicities, specifically White people, haven't had that problem and don't have that problem currently. So just basically mobilizing our efforts, our resources, to try to prevent any more senseless killings or injuries of Black people at the hands of law enforcement.

Sarah Beth adds:

I feel like a lot of Republican people feel like it's meant to be some sort of attacking. It's a title for a movement of creating equity and of itself. It really just symbolizes, it's a symbol of the people who have unfortunately been lost because of the racism that is so deeply seen in this country. But it's important, but it's just another facet of the fight.

Themes within this section reviewed how Black participants perceived White racial justice activism. Participants discussed how self-learning about racial disparities is critical in developing humility as a counter to fragility and guilt. White participants' knowledge of the Black Lives Matter movement provided context towards what these participants knew and how they participated in racial justice activism. The final theme examines what is needed to overcome barriers for students to become involved with racial justice movements.

**Overcoming Racial Justice Barriers for Campus Advocacy**

*I personally feel like the fact that the world kind of stopped during Covid-19 and, you actually have time to think about life and seeing life play out...it kinda started a fire, and people actually had time to stop and think about how people are treated.*

*Raheem*

This theme describes barriers discussed by participants that can hinder racial justice. While considering obstacles to racial justice, these can impede advocacy on college campuses. This section discusses three subthemes consistent with 1) race and political divisiveness, 2) COVID-19, and 3) the inability to have courageous conversations. Participants indicated that these subthemes are necessary when considering campus activism.
**Race and Political Divisiveness**

Given the current political climate, strict scrutiny is applied to discussing topics involving racial justice, diversity, and inclusion. Participants were asked to identify how conservative politicians' attempts to limit conceptualizing social justice in educational, state, and federal institutions influence the implementation of racial justice.

Tyrone began by discussing the importance of education and how removing these conversations erodes authentic historical facts. Tyrone says:

I would say, honestly, it's a coverup. I feel like a lot of the schools in institutions in anything are always trying to cover up what they haven't done. For instance, let's say Florida, they're taking away all of African American history basically, and the schools, and they're not teaching it anymore. But it's like, why? What is the purpose of that? Because I feel like all of the truth lies in those classes.

Like Tyrone's perspective, Tamia discussed the critical need to educate about this history while not allowing individuals to operate in a utopian frame of mind. Tamia furthered her assessment by pointing out the lack of the American education system discussing Black culture and history. She mentions:

Because I think they don't want kids to learn anything. I think they want to build brains with certain things that they find important and that they don't want, I guess, important conversations to be had. There was more time spent in my history class on the Holocaust and 9/11 than on slavery. Slavery happened much longer than both of those events, but we spent more time on both of those than slavery. And I feel like now, especially because everybody's like, oh, this next generation, you guys are it. You guys have to fix what is broken. I feel like they don't want us to live in this bubble of history and facts that they've been shoving down our throats our entire lives.

Felica expressed that she feels people are doing this because they are "afraid of anything to change." Dorian expands Felicia's point by saying:

I think that is it a fear of White guilt and having to teach kids and to learn about the actual hardships and oppression that comes with being a person of color in America or just in general. It will make you feel like shit. It will, as a White person, you will feel like you have just done all the wrong things and that you're a terrible person because you're White. And people are just scared of that feeling.
Rachael Lee speculates that this surge in the culture war debate is linked to people becoming more aware and these movements gaining traction. She says:

It's becoming so much part of the mainstream. The movements are succeeding, and they're people in power are scared of those movements succeeding. I think the movements are succeeding because people are realizing it's common sense. But I don't know. I guess the pushback, maybe just xenophobia people who are different than seeing differences and being frustrated with that.

The Global Pandemic’s Influence on Racial Justice

Participants identified that the COVID-19 global pandemic influenced racial justice and how individuals were motivated as activists post-summer 2020. This subtheme reflects on how the pandemic aided in conversations or actions to improve and acknowledge racial disparities in the United States.

Jamal and Eva similarly shared that COVID-19 placed society at a standstill causing intentional reflection on American race relations. Jamal specifically mentioned:

...but the George Floyd situation was really intense because Covid-19 allowed everybody to get a good look because we were trapped in our homes. We were looking at our phones all day. Everything you were coming across was George Floyd. Every single thing, you couldn't escape it. So, the fact that it allowed people to dig deeper into issues that many people weren't worried about, and it caused a lot of change to it.

Jamal and Eva alluded to racial awareness made possible by the shutdown of society and media outlets consistently broadcasting the death of unarmed Black individuals. In contrast, Tamia underscored how she felt the pandemic was used to prevent large crowds from gathering as the Black Lives Matter movement strengthened during this period. Tamia expands on Jamal's and Eva's thoughts by adding the following:

I feel like that made it seem like we know that these terrible things happened and we know that it wasn't okay, but we're not going to let people gather and share information about it just because I feel like they used Covid as a shield. You can't
gather in large groups. But really, I feel like it was like you can't gather in large groups. We don't want this to get out. We don't want awareness to be spread.

Although Blaze's answer to these discussions during their interview initially started as a grim prediction, they underscored how systems were exposed throughout the pandemic's duration. Blaze says:

I'm kind of sad to say that I don't think, or at least that I'm aware of; there haven't been a lot of concrete changes. However, I think people have become much more aware of racial systems in the world because of the pandemic. I think that really made the systems in place obvious to some people, and that's all connected to race because while again, White poverty, White class workers, a huge percentage of the working class in the United States is either citizens of color, we'll call them, or immigrants’ majority from Mexico and South Central America.

Rachael Lee, however, felt that the phenomenon occurring for racial justice at the onset of the pandemic will be well documented in history as a turning point for American society. She goes on by saying:

So I'm wondering how people in the future explain why 2020 was the time that racial justice, because this could be called a civil rights movement in 2020. I, I don't really exactly know why. I think that George Floyd was a high publicity case and having that firsthand video in the age of social media where videos can be spread easily and quickly in the age of having cell phones that can record videos easily and quickly.

**Courageous Conversations**

Creating courageous environments provides a platform for engaging social justice dialogues. Throughout participant interviews, students consistently highlighted how courageous conversations can further racial justice while allowing individuals to be authentic.

Felicia shared throughout her interview that her parents' background of being immigrants created complexities in her being able to share about her racial justice work openly. Much of Felicia's parental concerns involved the frequent deaths of unarmed Black individuals. They likely had these stances as a protective mechanism not to see their child harmed while standing against racial oppression. Felicia mentions:
I tend to be the one to avoid tough conversations with my parents. But regarding my mom, I know that they both know of the work that I've done in high school and so they're definitely proud of that. I haven't had much pushback of them disagreeing with anything I'm doing.

Dorian also discussed having race-related conversations with their parents and how specific terminology impeded discussing critical issues. In describing this situation, Dorian says:

I think I was talking to my parents about this, and I mentioned the term White Supremacy, and I think it scared them because it's a very intense term, and they only think of the worst aspects of it. And I was describing to them how it is kind of implemented in small aspects of our life, the school system and not teaching things properly and really opening up the conversations. And I think anti-racism is really a way that we can implement it in the way that I've seen it in my life is to just talk and to listen.

Tyrone described his experience in having difficult dialogues by reflecting on a university experience with one of his White professors. This example questioned how the professor was being inclusive to students of color. Tyrone says:

It was a senior who really blurted out this question, and it was like it caught the whole crowd, everybody like a collective gasp because it was like, oh, that was a crazy question to ask. It was bold. It was courageous of her to ask that question to this White professor. So everybody was like, oh. And, of course the White professor started crying and didn't answer.

Tiffany also weighed in on how college courses have gotten her to think critically about creating courageous spaces. She argues that these are necessary for providing skills to embrace conversations through humility and vulnerability. Tiffany shares:

But I think the most things that have gotten me to think about it are the classes that I've taken on my own, again, that aren't necessarily offered openly or that you're not forced to take. And I think a lot of White students or students will benefit a lot from an anthropology course if it was, and it can be an intro one because then they get that true history. And I think if a lot of the classes were maybe one course was mandatory for everyone to take, maybe as gen ed, then that could change a lot about the dynamic around Temple.

The themes in this section highlight practical ways to overcome and acknowledge barriers that can restrict activism from occurring. Political divisiveness and the COVID-19
pandemic contributed significantly to how participants described having conversations about racial justice in their everyday experiences, which flows to their college life. The following section provides an overview of findings from the Social Justice Dialogue Circle that participants attended once individual interviews were completed.

**Social Justice Dialogue Circle**

After completing individual interviews, participants were invited to participate in a Social Justice Dialogue Circle (SJDC). The SJDC was another data collection point allowing participants to discuss racial justice issues. This activity provided critical data supporting themes and subthemes developed from individual interviews. This section elevates all five themes previously discussed and underscore how participants can dialogue about racial justice activism in a group setting. In conjunction with facilitating the SJDC, we later utilized the video recording to observe participants' body language and nonverbal cues during the dialogue.

**Social Justice Dialogue Circle Findings**

The Social Justice Dialogue Circle (SJDC) expanded data collected from individual interviews. It enabled participants from different racial classifications to discuss these critical topics while being observed. This controlled environment was designed to actively identify how disruptors such as fear, guilt, and privilege show up when discussing race and anti-Blackness.

Common areas surfaced during the SJDC centered on the rise of Donald Trump as a politician, describing U.S. race relations as toxic, the influence of George Floyd's murder, expanded conversations on White racial justice activism, and a discussion on civil unrest. Of these topics, I expand on the role of the former U.S. President in addressing the racial divide. From this interpretation, I highlight how politicians can influence anti-Blackness.
The United States political climate has tremendously affected how students engage in racial justice conversations. Moreover, the President of the United States is responsible for unifying the nation; however, Trump's untethered power expanded societal racism, according to participants. I utilize a few excerpts of participant voices to capture these narratives to underscore their experiences fully.

Participants were asked to share their interpretation of former U.S. President Donald Trump. Blaze says:

I don't know about took the backseat, but I think that's what polarized everything because, like, I'll say it, Donald Trump was a fucking racist. Like he was so obvious in his racism, just how he spoke about Black people, about Mexican immigrants, about Chinese people and other East Asians.

Dorian added to this conversation by mentioning an intergenerational comment.

They add:

And I think that he helped cultivate, um, an extremely racist generation. And I don't mean just the older generation. I think we think that like Gen Z is liberal awesome place, but like, no, there were like 16-year-olds. He thought he was a genius and they're gonna grow up and they're not gonna think that people of color are any minority.

Sarah Beth calls into question how Trump’s legacy has a lasting impact on future generations and how a person of color is perceived. Both participant groups identified that the former president had an influential role in furthering anti-Blackness by stoking fear and affirming White fragility for many. During the Trump administration, there were various racial justice protests; however, the death of George Floyd sparked sustained protests. Participants weighed in on their thoughts on the purpose of these protests occurring. Sarah Beth says:

When George Floyd was murdered, I talked about how it was like a tragedy, and online someone came into my dms and was like, you're virtue signaling for a criminal. I'm like, okay, well, I'm not even gonna respond to that because who the hell are you? Like, get outta my DMs. But like people, crime and race is so like intertwined in the United States that I think it's really easy for people to just like
kind of brush off Black people being killed because like, oh, they should have, you know, they should have.

Dorian added to their earlier statement:

I think we find people are just like looking for excuses to not admit that there is like racial spirit. Like they are just searching and calling for any reason. Like, oh, that was a counterfeit dollar bill, or Oh, he was running or he wasn’t supposed to be, or Oh, he, you know, fought back cause he was defending like someone was defending himself against brutality. Like, we are like villainizing and criminalizing Black people when at like, the hands of the police just to excuse the fact and to ignore the fact that that was targeted.

Participants then discussed their understanding of why occurrences continue to happen amongst unarmed Black individuals. Blaze’s response characterizes some of the discussion occurring on this topic. The outcome of this conversation by participants deemed that the United States has an issue of policing, specifically within the Black community. On this topic, Blaze says:

... this is moving away from people of color as in race, but just like cops kill White people too. Not at the same rate at all. But cops kill White people too. And that says more about police brutality; I think about race, but the fact that police brutality is so excusable in the United States, it becomes legal, like this is a horrible word. Still, it's like a legal form of extermination for people of color. Like the police force has historically been to either recapture ex-escaped enslaved people or just like, pretty much do the worst to any preformed Black community.

Each of the responses above defines essential topics discussed during the SJDC.

Consequently, this dialogue allowed students to openly discuss and interpret their perceptions of racial justice. The SJDC additionally supported and expanded data collected during individual interviews. The following section outlines the SJDC observation and how this final step completes the triangulation of all research data.

**Dialogue Observation**

As discussed in Chapter 3, participants were placed into two groups – Black-identified or White-identified. Only participants in the inner circle were allowed to talk during the facilitated activity, while those in the outer circle observed the conversation for later discussion.
during the SJDC debrief. I utilized the developed Observation Protocol to guide observed behaviors from the video recording [see Appendix D OBSERVATION PROTOCOL].

All information in the proceeding section is consistent with reflective notes from the observation protocol. Observations occurred on Temple University's campus for one hour and fifty minutes, inclusive of preparation efforts. Participants were briefed on logistics and expectations for the day and asked any questions before the SJDC started—the sections below guide observations made from reviewing the video and audio recordings.

**Developing a Brave Space for Dialogues**

Before starting the dialogue, I developed a brave space, a common approach for identity-based conversations. Participants openly contributed to the development of this space and understood the importance of establishing this environment before the dialogue. Tenets of the brave space ranged from confidentiality to "being authentic in your dialogue and responses." Participants agreed to the brave space tenets provided and utilized these parameters throughout the SJDC. This was apparent in how participants spoke from their points of view and fostered constructive discourse.

**Participant Body Language and Mannerisms**

While observing mannerisms and body language throughout the SJDC, I better understood how students processed and navigated racial justice conversations. Participants displayed open and inviting body language toward the beginning of this activity. Despite this research setting utilizing aliases, students still maintained a comfortable demeanor. White participants became more guarded and careful with responding to question prompts once conversations began, compared to their Black peers. Within the White participant group, Dorian and Blaze often led many conversations while Rachael Lee chimed in after they disclosed their
feelings about each question. The Black participants, however, equally contributed to the dialogue.

White participants generally responded to questions from a third-party perspective, while Black participants used personal and direct experiences about race-related matters. An initial observation of White participants is consistent with limited usage of self when describing issues of bias, privilege, or guilt when prompted during the inner circle. Next, there were moments when one or more participants remained silent or directly avoided responding to questions. Third, many White participants guarded their responses to prevent being perceived as racist or anti-Black. A final observation involved differentiating their Whiteness from White individuals with problematic behaviors.

In contrast, Black participants demonstrated opposite behaviors when switched to the inner circle. There was a level of comfort in being amongst one another and confirmation that these are topics often discussed within their social circles. An initial observation of Black participants is consistent with displaying openness and confidence in discussing race-related social justice topics. Next, Black participants' personalized examples are linked to any experiences or unjust treatment due to racialization. Further, Black participants discussed how Intersectionality applies to gender and race when discussing racial justice activism. A final observation involved Black participants actively collaborating with other Black peers during the dialogue to affirm everyday experiences.

Debrief and Reflection

After the conclusion of the SJDC, a debriefing occurred. Participants were asked to reflect on and assess their experience within the dialogue circle. During this debrief, participant responses aligned with patterns from the observation protocol. For example, Tamia says:
The Black conversation, it's kind of more we're talking about experiences. Yeah. And it's a very shared experience and a very relatable experience. Um, and there's a sense of community in that there's a sense of like, um, kind of like shared acceptance and kind of just like, yeah, like a sense of community.

Tiffany goes on to mention:

Um, but then like, I guess from the, the White group, um, you could just see like a lot more like, I don't wanna say anything to offend type vibe. Like you, you not like stepping on eggshells kind of like, I don't wanna say something that's going to, you know, get me in trouble basically, or like get me, you know, uh, caught up or something like that. So you could just see a lot more of that.

White participants also provided their perspectives on how both groups responded to prompts while considering vulnerability to response and body language. Blaze replies to a comment from one of the Black participants regarding being in a shared community regarding how members might be satirical when speaking about oppression or anti-Blackness. Blaze shares:

So it was a little bit uncomfortable to talk about 'cause I just don't do it. Like, I just don't have any reasons to talk about it. Cause I have the privilege. So I mean, like, that's your experience. I talk about race; I talk about it with my friends cause we're all just like really driven into activism. But also like, racism is a big part of my major. Like environmental studies, urban studies, we talk about it all the time. We have to, but for me, like it is a mix of, like, I'm trying to be respectful, so I'm talking about it seriously, but also, like, I'm not gonna joke about something that doesn't impact me.

The SJDC group debriefing provided a space for participant vulnerability to identify actions by the inner and outer groups constructively. The dialogue circle proved valuable in fostering critical conversations on racial justice between Black and White students in higher education. It provided a brave space where participants could share their experiences, despite the observed differences in participation among White participants. Additionally, the SJDC provided an inclusive environment where participants openly contributed and interpreted their thoughts of White racial justice activism while expanding on how these actions can counter anti-Blackness.
This observation yielded that the SJDC allowed participants to have a deeper understanding of racial empathy and strategies that strengthens identity consciousness and social awareness.

**Summary of Chapter**

Chapter 4 began with presenting profiles to connect each participant's experience and understanding of racial justice activism. Later in this chapter, I described the Social Justice Dialogue Circle (SJDC) findings and the subsequent observation by reviewing video and audio recordings of this activity. I connected these themes and findings to research questions and theoretical frameworks in the next chapter. Further, I provided five key themes consistent with (1) White racial justice activism, (2) inauthentic and performative activism, (3) learning to be White, (4) White Racial justice activism and Black peers, and (5) overcoming racial justice barriers for campus advocacy. Each theme was supported by at least two subthemes and participant narratives.

The themes revealed four summaries of these findings in connection with each research question. The first discusses how Black students often perceive White allyship as performative when it lacks foundational identity-based education and a general understanding of race as a construct. Secondly, themes show that possessing marginalized intersecting identities is a connector in motivating White students to empathize and support racial justice. Thirdly, themes highlighted a compound conclusion: White racial justice activism is highly influenced by a racially divisive social-political system and the global pandemic – COVID-19. Fourth, themes revealed an intricate discussion of technology's role and intergenerational changes that have transformed activism. In chapter five, I thoroughly discuss these summaries while identifying limitations and recommendations for future research on racial justice activism.
CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In this chapter, I discuss the key findings of this research study. I organize information by answering each research question, underlining theoretical connections, outlining limitations, and presenting recommendations for researchers and higher education practitioners. I begin this Section by acknowledging that scholars contend that George Floyd’s death significantly changed modern-day racial justice activism (Reny & Newman, 2021). While technology has assisted in this change, sustained non-violent protests facilitated through the Black Lives Matter movement have created intersectional activism (Smith et al., 2020).

Data from this study reveals that Black and White students communicate, understand, and experience racial justice activism differently due to how race is socialized within the United States. For instance, the Social Justice Dialogue Circle (SJDC) uncovered how Black participants were generally more comfortable in conversing about White Supremacy and anti-Blackness racism, while White participants demonstrated slight hesitations in discussing these racialized issues in a group setting openly. Moreover, Black participants utilized personal experiences and anecdotes in describing how anti-Blackness has influenced their navigation of society. White participants, on the other hand, spoke about anti-Blackness and White Supremacy from a third-person stance that was not connected to their actions. In these instances, White participants spoke about how relatives, friends, and media promoted racist ideology but were shy in discussing self-actions that opposed these thoughts.

I sought to explain the motivations for White racial justice activism to counter systemic anti-Blackness. Critical Race Theory (CRT) and the theory of Intersectionality were frameworks used to guide data collection and analysis. Both theories properly assessed how anti-
Blackness influences harmful behaviors towards the Black community, often leading to conversations and protests about Blackness mattering. Using an interpretive phenomenological approach, data from this research produced five themes through data triangulation. Consequently, these themes yielded four summaries of the findings in response to each research question. Summaries consist of (1) Black students perceive White allyship as performative when it lacks education and a general understanding of race as a construct; (2) there is a connection between White students with intersecting marginalized identities empathizing with racial justice; (3) White racial justice activism is highly influenced by a racially divisive social-political system and the global pandemic- COVID-19; (4) and technology and intergenerational changes have transformed activism.

**Discussion on Racial Justice Activism**

**White Racial Justice Activist’s Involvement**

An initial question grounding this study assesses how White college students described their experiences with racial justice activism while examining different ways of involvement. Two overarching themes raised from this research question center on White racial justice activism and overcoming racial justice barriers for campus advocacy. The four White participants were candid in their assumptions for characterizing a White person’s participation in movements such as Black Lives Matter. Although White fragility and guilt are connected to other themes throughout data in this study, participants highlighted these as significant inhibitors in recognizing racial justice activism’s importance.

Prior literature demonstrates that guilt and fragility contribute to a fear of being outcasted as a racist if mistakes occur through the White racial justice activist journey (Cabrera, 2014). Racial justice activists generally face challenges, including unwarranted threats, violence,
or separation from social groups, which could result in burnout in activism (Gorski & Erakat, 2019). This understanding of true activism can deter how White college students engage in activism countering anti-Blackness. Gorski further asserts that without careful thought, White racial justice activists can create undue stressors for Black activists (Gorski & Erakat, 2019).

Data from this research identified these stressors as Black identities having to consistently educate Whiteness on past racial atrocities without considering the trauma this conversation can produce. A significant finding in answering the initial research question, including guilt and fragility, is that the current state of divisive politics and COVID-19 influenced how White college students became involved with racial justice activism. Participants from this study indicated that being enrolled at an urban institution heightened their sense of self to engage in conversations around race and White Supremacy (Matias & Grosland, 2016).

Much of this was attributed to Temple University being in a predominately Black community and having a history of experiencing racial inequities. Further, two participants that transferred from non-urban, predominately White institutions revealed that Temple University is moderately responsive to the racial crisis by sending out formal and informal statements; however, this is often prompted by student and alums pressures. Further, an ability to engage in courageous conversations around racial identity through selective courses and extracurricular activities was a contributing factor to how many of the White participant’s motivation with racial justice (Cabrera, 2016).

Divisions in socio-political movements and parties often question how the United States discusses systemic racism (Feagin & Elias, 2013). One side of the continuum fosters the Black Lives Matter movement. In contrast, the opposite side maintains that All Lives Matter does not consider how anti-Blackness influences marginalized communities’ experiences
(Carney, 2016). Black and White participants clearly articulated how the American nation changed with race issues after Donald Trump secured the White House in 2016. Scholars have weighed in on this social realignment as ‘Make America Great Again’ prompted a dog whistle allowing individuals to heighten racialized and abhorrent rhetoric (Drakulich et al., 2020). An example of this is Trump’s racialized antics that occurred in Charlottesville, VA when White supremacists targeted peaceful protests for the removal of Confederate monuments from public areas (Atkinson, 2018). As noted in Chapter 4, one of the White study participants referred to the former President as being “racist” and argued that a critical role of White racial justice activists is to counter these narratives with accurate history actively.

Additionally, COVID-19 was a common theme discussed when participants were asked, “What changed in the summer of 2020 regarding racial justice?” Research shows that George Floyd’s murder hit the country in ways that previous protests may not have reached due to the pandemic (Oriola & Knight, 2020). The global pandemic not only shut down the United States but also forced the world to be at a standstill and bear witness to police brutality and racial inequities within the country. Media outlets’ role in recording Floyd’s death sparked a similar outrage in White progressives to how children of the 1960s Civil Rights movement were brutalized by raging White mobs (Theoharis, 2018)). Research has demonstrated and identified that COVID-19 significantly impacted the unveiling of existing racial disparities (Oriola & Knight, 2020). Despite lockdown protocols, 2020 saw some of the longest-sustaining peaceful civil unrest since the beginning of the Black Lives Matter movement (Cabrera, 2014). Additionally, these sustained protests were racially diverse and stimulated racial awareness and reckoning of White identified individuals and their responsibility in social change (Cabrera, 2014).
Racial Identity Development, Urban Campuses, Racial Justice Conversations

The second research question examined how racial justice influences identity development in Black and White college students at an urban institution. "Learning to be White" is the central theme surfacing from this question's inquiry. One significant finding within this Section includes identifying a connection between White students with intersecting marginalized identities empathizing with racial justice (Duran, 2019). Another finding shows that technology and intergenerational changes have transformed racial justice activism (Logan, 2016). Individual interviews and the Social Justice Dialogue Circle (SJDC) revealed that the Black participants had a well-rounded understanding of racial identity and the socialization of anti-Blackness in the United States (Meer, 2019). Black participants pointed out having a 'double consciousness' allowing them to interpret Black and White cultures simultaneously (Meer, 2019).

However, six out of the seven Black participants indicated socialization of learning Black codes to navigate the rigors of White culture for safety purposes when engaging law enforcement (Anderson et al., 2022). Eva, one of the Black participants, described this awareness for safety against anti-Blackness racism but also stipulated that this was learned outside her household. In this instance, Eva identified as a first-generation Caribbean, and her parents navigated the United States through an ethnocentric Jamaican lens (Duran et al., 2020). In Chapter 4, I pointed out Jamal's response to inauthentic activism to further illustrate double consciousness and the complexities of how Blackness intertwines with White cultural socialization. To revisit, Jamal mentioned:

Yeah, I see it. I've seen inauthentic activism happen in person, with people out in the streets screaming justice for all. Then at the same time, that same night, they're going out maybe selling drugs or carrying guns on them, or not uplifting Black women or just not uplifting each other.
Jamal's statement was an anomaly compared to his other Black peers. He focused primarily on Black-on-Black identity when speaking about inauthentic activism rather than considering Whiteness while discussing this phenomenon. Jamal identifies as Nigerian American and much of his upbringing was community oriented. Although he recognized how White Supremacy and anti-Blackness could be a hindrance, he focused on restorative practices internal to the Black community. Jamal's assertion introduced the concept of community healing and recognizing how to withstand togetherness in an already racially toxic climate (Duran et al., 2020).

The concept of "Learning to be White" for White participants was understandably a different narrative, contrary to their Black peers. Research has shown that privilege has shielded and often delayed racial development for White individuals (Chesler et al., 2013). Each White participant confirmed during interviews that their household discussions on race issues were limited while growing up. White participants further conveyed that when race-related comments were introduced during family or caretaker conversations, they would be met with discriminatory and stereotypical commentary. The sheer nature of White avoidance of topics of race is linked to privilege (Picca & Feagin, 2020). It demonstrates to opting in and out of conversations or disregarding the issue of anti-Blackness altogether. Further, this socialization of privilege may stimulate fragility, causing a shutdown of conversations or defensiveness when discussing race-related issues.

Throughout this study, White participants openly shared their marginalized identities, citing them as qualifiers under the Theory of Intersectionality. Moreover, they articulated their understanding of Intersectionality as a concept from previous academic lectures or by self-discovery. Conversations with White participants during individual interviews and the SJDC
provided insight into how other identities influenced their experiences in navigating life and determining their involvement with racial justice (Moradi & Grzanka, 2017). White participant narratives also provided a more transparent comprehension of how components of marginality allowed them to process consciousness and racial awareness (Moradi & Grzanka, 2017).

Despite possessing Whiteness as an identity, a collective interest has begun to ignite social change, and participants in this study echoed this sentiment (Fisher et al., 2017). In their study seeking to explain how Intersectionality motivated coalitions to attend a Women's March on Washington after the election of Donald Trump, Fisher et al. (2017) argued that collective actions allow individuals to cross social categorization for the common good. There is limited research demonstrating how Intersectionality can mobilize non-Black racial justice activists; however, I argue there should be a distinction between the usage of intersection of identities, and the theory of Intersectionality as these concepts interconnect differently with Whiteness (Christoffersen & Emejulu, 2022). Although I discuss this approach in the implications for theory section, it is essential to note that the interconnection of Whiteness in conjunction with marginalized identities was profound in White student participants to mobilize for racial justice.

A final consideration examines how technology and intergenerational contributions have influenced modern-day identity-based advocacy. In 2012, Millennials created a movement that galvanized thousands of individuals to act on the harm attributed to unarmed Black individuals (Tanaid & Wright, 2019). This movement would, later be identified as Black Lives Matter, utilized social media platforms to bring awareness to anti-Blackness that often led to the needless death of a Black person. As Generation Z has come of age, the use of technology to mobilize for a cause has significantly increased since 2012 (Tanaid & Wright, 2019). Eight years after the creation of the BLM, George Floyd's murder by Minneapolis police fueled the
movement's purpose of building coalitions across racial lines to end anti-Blackness (Fisher & Rouse, 2022).

Intergenerational voices from Boomers to Generation Z united to successfully advocate for the accountability of law enforcement officers when interacting with unarmed Black individuals. Generation Z has ingeniously activated advocates through social media platforms such as Tik Tok and social network stories. It is also critical to mention that technology has allowed a necessary level of storytelling that was traditionally only reported by news outlets (Matia & Grosland, 2016). Further, Millennials and Generation Z have adopted different philosophical positions on issues from older generations, and technology has contributed to this advancement (Tanaid & Wright, 2019). The availability of news and other media information has expanded, allowing a different mode of critical thinking about social injustices (Matia & Grosland, 2016). Data from this study reveals that generational activism was a central topic during interviews and the Social Justice Dialogue Circle, as each participant identified as Generation Z.

In context, participants described specific personalities connecting their generational identity in how they respond to injustices. These personalities included being authentic in sharing how environments should foster belonging, creating innovative strategies to move away from traditional systems, and speaking about the need for radical revolutionary change from our current institutions. These traits were apparent as participants were perceivably authentic and often vulnerable with responses while demonstrating a passion for racial justice. This study's data made these traits routine practices for most participants.
Black Students' Interpretations of White Racial Justice Activism

The third research question sought to recognize how racial justice movements influence Black and White college students to engage in campus activism. Moreover, this question also examined how Black students interpret racial justice activism by their White peers. Themes emerging from this inquiry consist of recognizing how Black students explain inauthentic racial justice and how they interpret White allyship.

A significant finding highlights whether Black students perceive White allyship as performative when it lacks education and a general understanding of race as a construct (Wellman, 2022). Prior literature demonstrates that self-actualization of Whiteness involves awareness of how anti-Blackness racism influences the racial climate (Chesler, 2013). Moreover, this consciousness extends to navigating fragility and guilt while recognizing how to use racial privilege to counter injustices the Black community faces. Data from this study found that many Black students had a heightened sense of their racial identity due to the response of racial justice movements, such as Black Lives Matter (Grace & Nelson, 2019). In contrast, White students need a holistic awareness of why and how anti-Blackness racism has impacted Black livelihood (Malott et al., 2015).

Moreover, it is essential to emphasize the diversity of thought amongst Black participants, providing intraracial objectivity. Intraracial refers to attitudes, actions, and behaviors within a single race. This observation demonstrated that although each Black participant had commonalities in describing racial justice movements, they were not monolithic in discussing their experiences with anti-Blackness. This spectrum of thinking ranged from how Black participants communicated their beliefs on solidarity and unity. In contrast, others highlighted more resounding support for understanding diverse viewpoints and experiences.
within the Black community. Much of these intraracial perspectives surfaced through speaking about identities, such as gender, multiracial identities, and ethnic identity or nationality.

Additionally, many of the Black women in the study explained how they experience gender-based discrimination alongside racial injustices. These explanations described how the actions of Black women in racial justice movements often go unnoticed or overlooked and underscored this group's strength and resiliency. Despite these different experiences based on an intraracial perspective, each Black participant articulated clear perceptions and recommendations for White racial justice activists.

Further, participants provided substantial data when describing performative and inauthentic activism. Black participants offered their own opinions on how they perceive the actions of White individuals when involved with racial justice work. In addition to acquiring White consciousness, all participants discussed education as a foundational approach. Consciousness or awareness of systemic issues and how these influence identities was a key discussion point when asked during participant interviews. In a 1962 essay on the climate of race, James Baldwin contributed the following statement on consciousness:

If we- and now I mean the relatively conscious Whites and the relatively conscious Blacks, who must, like lovers, insist on, or create, the consciousness of the others- do not falter in our duty now, we may be able, handful that we are, to end the racial nightmare, and achieve our country, and change the history of the world. pp 126-152.

Baldwin's critique provided a glimpse into the critical need for racial consciousness to dismantle the cycle of anti-Blackness racism. Baldwin further argues that this consciousness is necessary when channeling actions authentically to advocate for others (Baldwin, 1962). Consciousness is essential in uncovering socialization, contributing to how society frames opinions and stereotypes that fester and evolve into racialized bias.
Additionally, our education system significantly contributes to how students understand their sense of self and racial identities through diverse representation in curricula. Learning the authentic history of race through secondary education is seen as an opportunity generally offered at progressive institutions. This process allows students to see an unfiltered part of United States history while involvement with anti-Blackness is often removed from texts to promote a facade of American exceptionalism (Brown & Brown, 2020). This extends to how educators are trained to have historical conversations while advocating for curricula that embody diversity (Epstein et al., 2011). Much of this learning influences how White students can ascertain the realities of a racialized system outside of privilege (Tatum, 1994). Black and White participants underscored this as necessary to alleviate inauthentic White racial justice activism.

Each participant shared how they have been involved throughout high school and in Temple University's student organizations that promote social change. While agreeing that the urban campus provides an adequate number of identity-based organizations, students unveiled a need for further support from senior administration in recognizing and responding to social issues involving racial justice. Student involvement is a critical connector in exploring interests and providing self-discovery (O'Keeffe, 2013). The interviews revealed that four out of the seven Black participants identified themselves as members of a historically Black sorority or fraternity. Their involvement with these organizations is linked to service and promoting social justice for Black identity. Other participants discussed involvement with groups that foster belonging for historically marginalized identities, many of which have activism components (O'Keeffe, 2013). Often, these groups work with the student government to adequately support the organization's core mission of inclusivity.
Inauthentic activism was highlighted throughout the data by participants providing firsthand experiences of how these performative characteristics have shown up. This type of activism is an inhibitor of racial justice’s progression. Literature shows that inauthentic and performative behaviors lack investing in social change by completing actions for self-gratification (Kalina, 2020). In his article "Trickle Down" Racial Empathy in American Higher Education, Ezell (2021) asserts that performative actions do not allow proper acknowledgment of racially motivated structural violence or identifying prolific strategies to counter White Supremacy.

As described by participants, black squares were shared on social media accounts after Floyd's death, denoting solidarity for justice. However, Black and White participants identified this as a salient example of performative activism. Research has also identified that many social media influencers used these elements to develop credibility and gain followers (Wellman, 2022). This specific type of performative activism created an influx of White creators benefiting from Black trauma and violence (Correa & Jeong, 2011). Wellman (2022) further mentions that several White creators participating in this performative behavior were posting black squares without fundamental awareness or providing measures that further the purpose of the Black Lives Matter movement. Education, awareness, and purposeful intent are essential in understanding being an authentic racial justice activist. Data from this research has shown that Black students perceived White racial justice activism as performative or inauthentic without these appropriate measures.

Limitations

In conducting this study on racial justice activism, there were several limitations noted. Although this dissertation provided an interpretative phenomenological view of Black and
White students' experience with racial justice, all participants were at one urban-identified institution in the northeast of the United States. This limitation does not consider how predominantly White institutions outside an urban environment would respond to racialized issues on and off campus. Nor does it factor in how urban institutions create an enlightened social awareness to counter injustices based on being in predominately Black areas.

Next, the climate on discussing race as a construct in the United States may influence how students respond to interview questions or prompts during the Social Justice Dialogue Circle. In recent years, diversity education has been scrutinized in how students are educated and how non-educational organizations develop their teams. For example, the use of Critical Race Theory and Intersectionality has been challenged as approaches that undermine identity development, specifically for White-identified individuals (Gillborn, 2015). This messaging can reinforce socialization and influence students' willingness to participate in such research.

A final limitation of this study involves White students' openness to speaking about racial injustices through incorporating cultural humility. This study lacked participation from cisgender White men. White men signed up to express interest in this study but failed to respond after numerous attempts to complete the demographics survey and schedule an interview. This lack of participation by White men demonstrated the possible implications of social constructs that hinder identity consciousness in navigating fragility and guilt.

**Study Implications**

**Implications for Racial Justice Activism in Higher Education**

This study underscores the importance of racial justice activism and how it lends to developing consciousness and fostering belonging through countering anti-Blackness. Higher education institutions play a critical role in providing foundations allowing students to think
critically about racial relations while identifying programs and other actions that aid students in
devlopment. As college students are historically and increasingly a part of activism,
colleges and universities must have fundamental resources that cultivate social change.

This study found that authentic education of the country's history is vital in discussing
racial justice. Colleges and universities strive to inspire students to be global thought leaders and
change agents. Higher education institutions should remain informed on societal realities as
many of the nation's leaders have traditionally been influenced by colleges and universities
(Cabrera, 1995). As students participated in racial justice activism in 2020, they utilized their
voices to implore a 'what next' approach toward senior administrators for campus accountability
(Harper, 2012). This often consisted of how institutions responded when an unarmed member of
the Black community was harmed by law enforcement or as other issues of anti-Blackness
occurred on campus. Students want to see more action than an obligatory statement sent out, and
they further argue that sustained actions should show the institution's commitment to social
change (Harper, 2012). Institutions are responsible for creating belonging by fostering policies
that counter anti-Blackness and further racial consciousness within their student population. As
study participants reflected on Temple University's commitment to racial justice, several
comments acknowledged the creation of the Center for Anti-Racism as one element for
responding to systemic anti-Blackness.

Institutions must continue challenging historical norms as colleges and university
demographics diversify. The subsequent sections discuss the implications of Critical Race
Theory and Intersectionality in this research while examining implications for practice afterward.
Implications for Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) and the Theory of Intersectionality were frameworks used to investigate, examine and respond to each research question within this study. Both theories effectively outlined prescribed measures to recognize how anti-Blackness and White Supremacy operate in society and ultimately motivate White racial justice activism. Kimberle Crenshaw was an influential contributor to CRT and the later coining of Intersectionality to describe how race as a socially constructed ideology has created inequities and structural racism violence for Black individuals (Crenshaw, 2017).

The CRT framework guided the development of themes and interpreting interview responses; however, Whiteness as a property, counter-storytelling, and interest convergence were vital tenets of this study (Crenshaw et al., 1995). Understanding Whiteness as property involved participants providing narratives about their knowledge of race as a social construct. This also incorporates how privilege fuels opportunities toward White identified individuals while non-White communities are influenced by a racialized and often oppressive system. Moreover, counter-storytelling is a CRT technique that allows authentic narratives to characterize experiences with structural racism and White Supremacy (Merriweather, 2006).

Each of these tenets was implored throughout the research study allowing Black and White participants to share their authentic experiences with race, racial discrimination, and motivations to act for racial justice. The Social Justice Dialogue Circle (SJDC) best illustrated this approach as interviews allowed individual narratives to be expressed. At the same time, this group activity provided a space to actively listen to counter-narratives from both Black and White participants. Interest-convergence is a tenet that indirectly surfaced throughout this research in the form of inauthentic or performative activism. Additionally, this tenet speaks
directly to what and how White individuals are motivated to act on social change or whether these behaviors are based on self-benefits. Prior literature, in culmination with this research, described these benefits through actions of White content creators during 2020 (Wellman, 2020).

The theory of Intersectionality was vital in providing this study with an intersectional lens for data collection, inclusive language usage, and interpreting how each student viewed their identities. Crenshaw's (2017) original position of Intersectionality asserted that racism and sexism are interconnected, and Black women were subjected to more structural inequities. The original intent of Crenshaw coining this theoretical approach was not to present a hierarchy in identity oppressions but to explain how society has historically treated these independently without consideration when an individual possesses multiple marginalizations. Like CRT, as Intersectionality grew as a concept, it migrated to social sciences and became an area of framing other approaches, such as intersectional feminism. Three out of the four White participants in this study identified with having Intersectionality due to marginalized core identities intersecting with their gender, sexuality, or perceived abilities. These participants, however, maintained that they still possessed a great deal of privileges due to their racial identity of Whiteness. A limited amount of literature focuses on who can assert Intersectionality and whether progressive Whiteness has racially co-opted this framework. Prior literature speaks to its original intent and the expansion of its definition yet lacks the critical discussion on whether racial identification of Whiteness can influence whether an individual has Intersectionality or intersecting identities that happen to create marginalization (Levine-Rasky, 2011).

Moreover, we must explore how White individuals with marginalized identities can expand our understanding of identity-based intersections. By acknowledging that Whiteness is
non-monolithic, this new approach can provide a deeper understanding of how marginalization based on sex, gender identity, sexuality, and disability can produce a different livelihood despite racial privilege. This new framework can further inquire into how areas of privilege and oppression can create complexities and nuances for dominant racial identities while challenging the concept of homogenous White identity. This new theoretical perspective can critically analyze how the interconnectedness of White individuals possessing marginalized identities could motivate empathy and awareness for racial justice activism.

Although there is an absence of a theoretical framework explaining White individuals with marginalized identities, CRT and the theory of Intersectionality broadened how this research sought to understand White racial justice activism. Furthermore, each framework's purpose supported the development of racial consciousness by White individuals to better understand their role in activism while blending how Black students perceive their counterparts in movements such as Black Lives Matter. The following section discusses implications for practice, which guides the role of higher education professionals in racial justice.

**Implications for Practice**

The current study has several implications for higher education practitioners and administrators. By utilizing Critical Race Theory and the theory of Intersectionality to frame this study, these approaches demonstrated a significant need to foster discussions and dialogues about racial identity. The initial implication involves having a foundational understanding of anti-Blackness racism to shape policies, procedures, and programs that promote belonging amongst Black students. Additionally, this implication allows recognition of how Intersectionality can create a broader awareness of how university community members use an
intersectional lens to work with implicated students while properly educating them on this theory.

A second implication explores how institutions respond to anti-Black issues like George Floyd's murder. Higher education administrators are often conflicted when acknowledging and sending solidarity statements supporting students protesting and countering structural racism. This study revealed that students expect university officials to recognize when systemic issues manifest on campus and in society. Higher education institutions should have an organized communication strategy as high-level incidents of anti-Blackness racism happen. In addition to this strategy, these communication personnel must have adequate training to understand concepts of bias, anti-Blackness, and racial justice. These developments are offered through offices like Institutional Diversity, Equity, Advocacy and Leadership. My position as a social justice educator, allows me to assert that institutions offering substantial programming and training on identity issues are often better equipped to handle these matters. Higher education institutions must have training that provides foundational knowledge on diversity, equity, and inclusion through human resources learning and development or college/departmental-specific training. More specifically to racial justice, higher education institutions should explore workshops that discuss areas of implicit bias, bystander intervention, and ally/advocate development to provide a deeper understanding of systems influencing anti-Blackness. Communication personnel can utilize components of this training to develop inclusive content for digital strategies.

As technology has increased the implementation of activism, it is beneficial for colleges and universities to assess how they utilize websites and social media platforms to foster inclusive messaging. Data from this study concludes that proactive planning and
acknowledgment of high-level incidents of racial violence are necessary for campus communities to feel heard and supported. Participants sought strong statements that opposed anti-Blackness and clear action steps on the university's commitment to racial justice. Students scrutinized the performative use of websites, emails, and social media accounts on how the university addresses discrimination and racism publicly. While participants indicated that senior administrators could refine language to be specific in calling out anti-Blackness racism, they also showed a need for institutions to support and better educate on becoming involved as an activist.

In a research study involving Black graduate students' perceptions of the university's president's response to racialized incidents, Briscoe (2022) found that this group of students felt the senior administrator inadequately communicated these issues. Further, the students in this study held the president's role as a high commodity when role-modeling and sending out statements to condemn racist behaviors. However, this research concluded that the Black graduate students found racialized issues were addressed untimely and were unsupportive of the Black campus experience (Briscoe, 2022).

Continued research is needed to explore how college administrators are prepared, trained, and advised to handle racialized campus issues. Additional literature can add to perceptions communicated in this study to encourage higher education administrators to be more engaged and timelier when handling racialized incidents. Further, more research is needed to examine how students engage with technological activism, expanding this definition. This can also underscore how students respond using social media to perceived inactions of higher education administrators. An additional area of opportunity for this future research relates to perceptions of how college students interpret anti-discriminatory messaging sent out by senior administrators.
A third implication involves recognizing that additional research is warranted to explain how diversity has influenced Generation Z's perception of being an engaged activist that counters anti-Blackness racism. This transitional focus on diversity is likely due to increased representation and inclusion of identities often marginalized. Despite calls from many legislators to uproot diversity programming, these practices are needed to guide how students develop a sense of self while understanding the importance of advocacy. As student life programming is often tasked with helping students navigate identity awareness, it is essential to provide efficient resources and allocations to campus diversity offices and anti-racism centers (Worthington et al., 2020). For instance, Temple University structured the Office of Institutional Diversity, Equity, Advocacy and Leadership (IDEAL) to house all the institution's resources focusing on identity and scholarship to sustain an inclusive campus community.

IDEAL incorporates the Center for Anti-Racism, engagement, and training resources for students, staff, and faculty. Additionally, IDEAL houses Title IX and Equal Opportunity as compliance units to investigate related identity-based discrimination. These units allow IDEAL administrators to collaborate with campus partners in developing reasonable strategies to support the campus communities. A fourth implication for practice of this research includes a university's ability to foster racial consciousness development and awareness. As previously mentioned, higher education institutions can serve as a tool for assisting students in navigating their identities. Students entering higher education arrive on different journeys of understanding inclusivity. These experiential differences are dependent on what is taught in secondary schools around learning authentic historical perspectives forming anti-Blackness. Universities should have curricula that educate students on the unknowns of promoting racial justice. This process also provides opportunities for institutions to stimulate healthy discourse and critical thinking or
stimulate an unlearning of socialized bias. Further, this study highlighted how the Center for Anti-Racism was established at Temple University to provide effective programming and engagement to counter anti-Blackness actions.

A fourth implication examines how experiential programs such as the Global Experiential Learning (Global X) to South Africa allow students of diverse backgrounds to engage in dialogues about racial justice locally and globally. Global X is an initiative at Temple University hosted through the Office of Institutional Diversity, Equity, Advocacy and Leadership. This initiative is designated a racial justice education program by providing comparative analysis and dialogue of the South African Apartheid system with racialized systems in the United States. On average, this program takes 10-12 students to Cape Town and Johannesburg, South Africa, for eleven days during the summer. This experiential program is uniquely designed as a 360 social justice learning trip comprised of a pre-departure seminar, on-site experience, and a post-experience symposium. Global X students facilitate a distinct symposium to reflect and present information annually to the Temple University community during Cultural Unity Week. Aside from Global X’s innovative presence at Temple University, students can also participate in service immersive experiences through the Office of Student Activities. These opportunities are available to students to trigger conscious thinking about identity and social awareness. Like Global X, service immersion has a particular social issue and is hosted in other states within the continental United States. For instance, the El Paso, Texas, service immersion trip engages students on immigration and access to the United States. Journaling and reflection by students are common themes for Global X and the service immersion program. These experiential programs allow students to engage in critical identity-
based topics learned outside the classroom as an extracurricular trip to promote cross-cultural awareness.

A fifth implication for practice is recognizing how identity-based language and terminology evolve. Data from this study demonstrated a difference in articulation and meaning for advocate and ally. This is a critical observation of this study, as diversity, equity, and inclusion professionals can often use these terms interchangeably. Contrastingly, participants within this study aligned the word advocacy with a deliberate action of racial justice. On the other hand, Ally was a term used to describe inauthentic and performative behaviors by individuals. The conveyed distinction participants had between these terms involved deeply understanding what has prompted a need for racial justice. At the same time, allies were perceived as individuals communicating support without aligned behaviors or actions that create social change. In essence, this study’s data demonstrated that the use of technology amongst Generation Z has skewed some of this terminology. While social media provides more access to becoming involved with social movements, the black square, for instance, created stigmatization towards the term ally due to co-opted behaviors in White content creators to elevate their platforms rather than the purpose of the movement.

The above implications for practice are necessary to equip practitioners on responding to and cultivating racial justice education properly. As states across the nation have begun removing African American Studies and diversity topics from curricula, the role of higher education institutions in fostering identity development is critical (Freeman, 2023). Further, the Supreme Court of the United States ruling to overturn affirmative action can influence campus diversity and racially marginalized students' access to higher education. As educational institutions are scrutinized for how topics of diversity, equity, and inclusion are administered,
this can significantly influence how college students navigate racial consciousness and advocacy for others. This study speaks to a growing need to impart students with inclusive knowledge that generates social change and awareness. These decisions by politicians and the high court have created speculation on the evolution of discussing topics such as racial justice and how offices on college campuses will be structured in the future to counter bias and injustices. The following section discusses recommendations for future research to enhance racial justice literature continually.

**Recommendation for Future Research**

Various studies and literature discuss how activism is critical to rectifying racial injustices. However, many of these studies focus on the impact and experiences of Black identity on fueling racial justice movements. In contrast, conversations on White racial justice activism are still being examined. Further information is needed to advance how urban colleges and universities can heighten students' understanding of racial justice due to the proximity of being in predominately Black communities. Considering these points, I provide several recommendations for future research and practice.

The first recommendation involves increasing participation amongst cisgender White identified men in racial justice activism research. While this study utilized narratives of a White transgender man's experiences, it is noteworthy that this individual's sense of self was shaped through a marginalized lens. Participation from cisgender White identified men can likely provide context from a purview of privilege to have a deeper understanding of how to approach and educate on guilt and fragility while processing what sparks participatory motivations for social change. Developing a holistic approach in recognizing the development of Whiteness as it intersects with other privileged identities, such as gender, sexuality, and economic status, can
inform how this student population is developed through necessary dialogues on racial justice. Data from this study infers that White fear is likely a hindrance to engaging this population. This fear involves uneasiness when discussing racial justice due to a perception of being labeled racist or biased because of a skill deficit on anti-Blackness and White Supremacy issues. Secondly, researchers should further investigate the concept of intersecting identities and the theory of Intersectionality and how racial identity might influence these definitions. This is necessary as intersectional activism is a growing phenomenon primarily emerging after George Floyd's death. In this study, I identified how many White participants characterized their motivations for being involved with racial justice as prompted by self-identified possession of Intersectionality. Future research is necessary to determine whether dominant racial dynamics of Whiteness can influence or create oppressive conditions despite this racialized privilege. I identified through this research that it is crucial to educate on these approaches by recognizing how race played a vital role in the development of Intersectionality.

A third recommendation involves how American states are removing African American studies from curricula can influence students learning about the authentic history of the United States, which can assist in progressing racial justice movements, such as Black Lives Matter. As right-wing legislators have begun passing laws and restricting diversity, equity, and inclusion in public institutions, other literature is needed to examine how these decisions can undermine existing anti-racism work achieved since 2020. This research is necessary as a restriction in having these conversations and offering programs, organizations, and curricula designed to discuss identity can likely influence students’ sense of belonging. This recommendation is critical as social justice educators are likely to strategize creatively to ensure identity-based development remains central to fostering social change.
Fourth, a deeper inquiry into intergenerational coalition building is an essential topic that can inform researchers how transformative activism can be influential through different age groups. Researchers have begun investigating how newer generations perceive advocating for others; however, this research can be strengthened by asserting how access to technology and around-the-clock news cycles continually transform racial justice activism amongst college students. This research is beneficial as it can guide how higher education professionals can effectively respond to anti-Blackness racism.

A fifth recommendation involves expanding the data collection and study participant groups to include staff, faculty, and administrators from various racialized identities. This expanded research can further assist individuals charged with developing and educating students to understand racial justice while highlighting any actions of racial justice activism. The sixth recommendation is connected to how higher education institutions provide authentic support, training, and resources to campus communities on racial consciousness and do not treat their students as having monolithic identities. Institutions should consistently evaluate policies and campus climates to remain informed about culture shifts and awareness needs.

The seventh and final recommendation involves exploring other methodological strategies when researching racial justice. Mixed methods can capture a more comprehensive analysis of what motivates racial justice activism amongst Black and White college students. Additionally, mixed methods can integrate qualitative and quantitative strategies to capture data that may have yet to be achieved in this study. For instance, surveys, opinion polls, and questionnaires could foreseeably capture critical data from populations not engaged in this study, mainly White cisgender men. This input can heighten how White fear and privilege contribute to racialized advocacy by examining all opinions attributed to racial justice activism. Moreover,
participatory action research methods allow participants to be more engaged in informing data collection. Finally, using innovative digital tools, webinar conferencing, and artificial technology can be integral in expanding how data has been traditionally collected.

These recommendations provide suggestive guidance on how future research and practices can enhance the development of students’ racial consciousness that may underscore their motivations for being involved in racial justice activism. As research expands on this topic, it is essential to conceptualize the role of deconstructing White Supremacy to have critical conversations about race socialization and how these efforts connect with racial justice movements.

**Conclusion**

This study examines the motivations of White racial justice activism and perceptions of these actions by Black college students. Findings from this study offer vital information to higher education professionals in navigating anti-Blackness and cultivating student-based racial justice activism. Moreover, narratives from this study presented Black and White students' narratives authentically, which can serve as a resource for future racial justice activists. The global phenomenon of unification under the Black Lives Matter movement, sparked by the tragic murder of George Floyd in 2020, highlighted the urgent need for racial justice and equality.

The widespread dissemination of videos depicting Floyd's death and the unique stillness brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic motivated many White individuals to address systemic racism actively. These actions are seen as performative or inauthentic by Black students when absent of racial consciousness or foundational education of structural racism by their White peers. Insights from this study are critical for higher education to challenge systemic constraints and promote social change for a continually growing, diverse nation. In answering
'What makes an activist?' in the context of racial justice, this individual can recognize the influence of anti-Blackness while possessing a selfless desire for social change.
REFERENCES CITED


APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL AND QUESTIONS

Overview:

Participants will be briefed on the purpose of this research. This will also provide an opportunity to ask any questions before being interviewed. Additionally, participants will be read the consent document and informed that they could choose not to respond to any questions or stop the interview at any given time.

Before beginning, the student investigator will set a brave space and advise the participant that their name will have a pseudonym. This is an opportunity to be open and authentic about their involvement and perceptions of racial justice. Further, the student investigator will provide an overview of the interview and explain the terms Intersectionality and Critical Race Theory.

Question prompts:

1. Tell me a little about yourself and why you decided to be a part of this research study?
   a. What has prompted you to personally identify as an advocate for racial justice, racial equity, and/or racial inclusion?
   b. How do you define being an anti-racist? In what context does this word resonate with your life experiences?

2. What was it like growing up in your household and engaging in topics surrounding diversity and racial identity?

3. At what age did you become aware of your Black/White identity? Would you mind sharing examples of how this was triggered?
   a. (White participants) Describe any awareness of White privilege you navigated as you developed racial consciousness. Describe any negative or biased language referencing your racial identity that you heard while growing up (e.g., from parents, siblings, education, media, etc.).
   b. (Black participants) Did your caretakers do anything specific to caution you regarding safety while growing up Black? Describe any negative or biased language referencing your racial identity that you heard while growing up (e.g., from parents, siblings, education, media, etc.).
4. What messages (affirmative or negative) did you learn about the Black community in the K-12 school system? Higher education?
5. How do you define racial justice activism?
6. In your opinion, what does inauthentic activism look like? Are there any contemporary examples you can share that illustrate performative actions when it comes to racial justice?
7. How have you utilized your understanding of racial justice activism to counter bias on campus?
8. Can you describe how the campus climate and culture has prepared you to think critically about racial justice and equity?
   a. Please describe any specific programming, student life activities or immersive experiences that have allowed these conversations.
9. Can you tell me a story about your first time witnessing white privilege or white guilt?
10. What do you feel is the role of White individuals in promoting racial justice?
11. What does the phrase "Black Lives Matter" mean to you?
12. How do you feel COVID-19 impacted the conversation on racial justice?
13. Why do you feel a pushback is happening with schools to discuss concepts such as Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Intersectionality?
APPENDIX B

SOCIAL JUSTICE DIALOGUE CIRCLE PROTOCOL AND QUESTIONS

Overview:
The Social Justice Dialogue Circle (SJDC) is a 60–90-minute dialogue between two identities, specifically Black and White for this research. Students will be divided into two racial groups based on self-identification and information disclosed on the intake study survey. Each identity will have 30 minutes to respond to the prompts listed below. To limit conformity bias, the White-identified will go first to share experiences. Both identity groups will be asked sample questions. At the conclusion of both groups' discussions, a facilitated debrief will explore reactions, perceptions, and responses to what was revealed during the dialogue.

Instructions:
Students will be briefed on the scope of the SJDC activity. During this explanation, the in group out group dialogue will be described for students to understand when they are observing conversations versus engaging with responding to facilitated prompts. Other important items are:

- Only the identity-based group within the inner circle can speak and answer question prompts introduced by the facilitator
- The identity-based group in the outer circle should observe and write down any notes or comments they have about the inner group’s dialogue
- At the conclusion of 30-minutes, the inner group will outer group will switch roles

Afterwards, students will be led in a conversation to establish a community agreement that will promote a brave and accountable space. Students will then be asked to enter the racial identity group they closely identify with (in the event a student identifies as multiracial, and prompt will be read to allow them to select an identity based on how their color or other characteristics have been socialized).

Dialogue prompts:

1. How would you describe racial relations within the United States? Do you have any specific examples to share?
2. Discuss how the former U.S. President, Donald Trump’s years in office influenced racial justice.
3. Discuss your thoughts about civil unrest that often occurs after an unarmed Black individual has been killed.
4. Have do you feel White guilt and White fragility influence racial justice in the United States?
5. How have you as a college student engaged in activism?
6. What are some of the perceptions you have experienced centering around White individuals acting against racial injustice?

Debrief and processing questions:

1. What themes did you notice throughout the dialogue?
   a. Specifically, from your group with responding to question prompts.
   b. Specifically, while you were observing the other responding to question prompts.

2. How did you feel during the dialogue?

3. At the beginning of this dialogue, you felt ____, now you feel ____?

4. What is one thing you heard that you agree with?

5. What is one thing you heard that you disagree with?

6. How did you feel while on the outside of the inner circle?
APPENDIX C

COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS AND BRAVE SPACES

Objective:
Develop ground rules/community standards to ensure open, respectful dialogue and increased participation from all members.

Time: 10 minutes
Materials: chalk board and chalk, dry erase board and dry erase marker, huge post-it pad and marker (whatever you have available).

Prep:
Designate someone to write down the ground rules (as the facilitator you can do this, or have someone else do it). Keep them posted throughout the session and refer back to them as needed.

Process:
Ask participants to think about what they, as individuals, need to ensure a safe environment to discuss difficult and controversial issues. If the participants are having difficulty coming up with ground rules, or if they do not come up with a particular ground rule you feel is important to the success of your facilitation, try to prompt them toward it.

If they still do not mention it, you can add it to the list. Explain that this is a working document and can be added to as necessary. The following list of common ground rules from equity, diversity, and social justice related classes and workshops should serve only as a starting point for your process of creating a similar list suitable to your own situation:

1. Listen actively – respect others when they are talking.
2. Speak from your own experience instead of generalizing ("I" instead of "they," "we," and "you").
3. Do not be afraid to respectfully challenge one another by asking questions but refrain from personal attacks -- focus on ideas.
4. Participate to the fullest of your ability -- community growth depends on the inclusion of every individual voice.
5. Instead of invalidating somebody else's story with your own spin on her or his experience, share your own story and experience.
6. The goal is not to agree -- it is to gain a deeper understanding.
7. Be conscious of body language and nonverbal responses -- they can be as disrespectful as words.
8. Be willing to challenge yourself and step out of your comfort zone.
The observation will take place after the social justice dialogue circle [see activity document] has been facilitated. The SJDC video recording will be utilized to assess and review behaviors throughout the 60–90-minute activity. Participants will be advised that the SJDC activity will be video recorded and can decline not respond to questions or withdraw at any time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive Notes</th>
<th>Reflective Notes (during observation)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How did creating a brave a courageous space (community agreements) allow students to respond openly and authentically during the dialogue activity? Did participants add any conditions to the agreements?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How were students’ mannerisms throughout the dialogue activity? Identifying whether body language was open or closed when having conversations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What were some of the reactions of the outer group while the inner circle responded to questions?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying whether students spoke from their own experiences about racial consciousness or if this information was other oriented.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were there any persons in either the Black or White group that shared a lot of information restricting the remainder of the group to share experiences?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At any point was there a need to use restorative practices to build trust amongst the group due to a comment, descriptions, or storytelling by any individuals?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did participants describe activism in their own words? What were some of the action words used to highlight this term?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reviewing how each group provided commentary of their own observations of the inner and outer group conversations during debrief.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did the layout of the room contribute to the dialogue? Did this create any foreseeable barriers to the ongoing dialogues?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What were some of the non-verbal or visual body language of members from the outer group as the inner group responded to questions?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What was the overall feeling of this activity amongst participants? Ultimately, how did they leave the space?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did participants discuss anything they learned about themselves and their own racial consciousness through this activity?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX E

IRB APPROVAL FORM

Approval for a Project Involving Human Subjects Research that is Approved as Exempt

Date: 20-Dec-2022

Protocol Number: 30175
PI: JAMES DAVIS
Review Type: EXEMPT
Approved On: 20-Dec-2022
Risk: Minimal risk
Committee: A2
Sponsor: NO EXTERNAL SPONSOR
Project Title: What Makes an Activist? An exploration of how racial justice movements mobilize Black and White college students

The IRB approved the protocol 30175.

The study was approved under Exempt review. The IRB determined that the research does not require a continuing review, consequently there is not an IRB approval period.

As this research was approved as Exempt, the IRB will not stamp the consent or assent form(s).

Note that all applicable institutional approvals must also be secured before study implementation. These approvals include, but are not limited to, Medical Radiation Committee ("MRC"); Radiation Safety Committee ("RSC"); Institutional Biosafety Committee ("IBC"); and Temple University Survey Coordinating Committee ("TUSCC"). Please visit these Committees’ websites for further information.

Finally, in conducting this research, you are obligated to submit the following:

- Amendments - Any changes to the research that may change the Exempt status of this study must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to implementation. Examples of such changes are: including new, sensitive questions to a survey or interview, changing data collection such that de-identified data will now be identifiable, including an intervention in the methods, changing variables to be collected from medical charts, decreasing confidentiality measures, including minors or adults lacking capacity to consent as subjects when previously only adults with capacity to consent were to be enrolled, no longer collecting signed HIPAA Authorization, etc. Please reach out to the IRB Staff with any questions about if a change to the study warrants an Amendment.
- Reportable New Information - Using the Reportable New Information e-form, report new information items such as those described in HRP-071 Policy - Prompt Reporting Requirements to the IRB within 5 days.
- Closure report - Using a closure e-form, submit when the study is permanently closed to enrollment; all subjects have completed all protocol related interventions and interactions; collection of private identifiable information is complete; and analysis of private identifiable information is complete.

For the complete list of investigator responsibilities, please see the HRP-070 Policy – Investigator Obligations, the Investigator Manual (HRP-910), and other Policies and Procedures found on the Temple University IRB website: https://research.temple.edu/irb-forms-standard-operating-procedures.

Please contact the IRB at (215) 707-3390 if you have any questions.
Dear [Name]:

Are you an undergraduate student at Temple University who racially identifies as being Black or White? I am conducting a qualitative research study titled: “What Makes an Activist? Exploring how racial justice movements mobilize Black and White college students”.

By participating in this study, your experiences will contribute to an area that has limited research. Participants will be asked to participate in an interview, social justice dialogue activity, and observation during this study (total time, 155-205 minutes). The interview (60-90 minutes) and the social justice dialogue activity (60-90 minutes) are scheduled for completion approximately within three months. Participants completing all stages of this study will be compensated with a $25 gift card.

If you are interested in participating, please complete this brief questionnaire [https://forms.office.com/r/55Ab7aXJNt]. Feel free to share with others who may qualify. If you have questions about this research, contact student investigator Nu’Rodney Prad, Ed.D. candidate of Higher Education at Temple University, at nprad@temple.edu.

Thank you for your assistance in this critical research!

Peace,
Nu’Rodney
APPENDIX G

RECRUITMENT FLYER

WHAT MAKES AN ACTIVISTS?

Research study on Racial Justice Activism

Join a qualitative study on what mobilizes White college students to participate in racial justice movements and their Black peers’ perceptions of this activism. A $25 gift card will be offered to participants as an incentive.

CRITERIA:

- Identify racially as Black (e.g., Afro American, Afro Latine, Afro Asian) OR White
- Enrolled as an full-time undergraduate student at Temple University
- Identify as an individual with a general understanding of racial justice movements

PARTICIPATE:

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete a prequalifying survey, complete a 60-90 minute interview, complete a 60-90 minute social justice dialogue activity, and any follow-up necessary. All conversations and interactions will be set up in a brave/safe space.

VOLUNTARY:

Participation is voluntary and there is minimal risk associated with this study. Some questions during the interview or the social justice activity may make you feel uncomfortable due to the current racial climate. You may skip any questions or withdraw from the study at any time.

DOCTORAL STUDENT RESEARCH:
NU’RODNEY PRAD AT TEMPLE UNIVERSITY
APPENDIX H

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

RESEARCH SUBJECT CONSENT FORM

Title: What Makes an Activism? Exploring how racial justice movements mobilize Black and White college students

Investigator: Nu’Rodney Prad

Daytime Phone Number: 215-204-5509

RESEARCH CONSENT SUMMARY

You are being asked for your consent to take part in a research study. This document provides a concise summary of this research. It describes the key information that we believe most people need to decide whether to take part in this research. Later sections of this document will provide all relevant details.

- What should I know about this research?
- Someone will explain this research to you.
- Taking part in this research is voluntary. Whether you take part is up to you.
- If you don’t take part, it won’t be held against you.
- You can take part now and later drop out, and it won’t be held against you.
- If you don’t understand, ask questions.
- Ask all the questions you want before you decide.
- How long will I be in this research?

We expect that your taking part in this research will last approximately 2.5-3.5 hours for the total time commitment. These hours are reflective of completing the questionnaire (5-10 minutes), participating in an interview (60-90 minutes, participating in a social justice dialogue activity (60-90 minutes), an a follow-up interview (30 minutes). Collection of this information will take place from December 2022-February 2023.

Why is this research being done?

The purpose of this research is to This study aims to describe how White college students can serve as activists for racial justice while examining what sparks their involvement as engaged bystanders. Moreover, it will provide narratives on how White college student activism connects to racial justice. Lastly, this study will also highlight Black college students' perception of their White peers' involvement in facilitating racial justice.

What happens to me if I agree to take part in this research?
If you decide to take part in this research study, the general procedures include completion of the screening questionnaire (5-10 minutes), participation in a one-on-one interview with student investigator (60-75 minutes), participation in the social justice dialogue activity (60-90 minutes), and a brief follow-up interview to clarify any responses (30 minutes). Interviews and dialogue activities will be concluded by February 15, 2023.

Participants will be asked questions about their background, perceptions, and experiences with racial justice activism. Interview responses and the social justice dialogue activity responses will be used as data for this study.

All participants that complete the research study will receive a $25 incentive for their participation.

Could being in this research hurt me?

There are no expected risks for participating in this research. Participants may experience limited discomfort and/or uneasiness during the interview session and the social justice dialogue activity as the reflect on their experiences. To minimize risk, participants will be reminded that their participation is completely voluntary at the beginning of each data collection.

Will being in this research benefit me?

Potential benefits for participants will be the opportunity to reflect on their racial consciousness and development while also providing their narratives on social change.

DETAILED RESEARCH CONSENT

You are being invited to take part in a research study. A person who takes part in a research study is called a research subject, or research participant.

What should I know about this research?

- Someone will explain this research to you.
- This form sums up that explanation.
- Taking part in this research is voluntary. Whether you take part is up to you.
- You can choose not to take part. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.
- You can agree to take part and later change your mind. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.
- If you don’t understand, ask questions.
- Ask all the questions you want before you decide.

Why is this research being done?
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Participants will be asked questions about their background, perceptions, and experiences with racial justice activism. Interview responses and the social justice dialogue activity responses will be used as data for this study.

What are my responsibilities if I take part in this research?

If you take part in this research, you will be responsible to meet and interview and participate in the social justice dialogue circle with the researcher.

Could being in this research hurt me?

There are no expected risks for participating in this research. Participants may experience limited discomfort and/or uneasiness during the interview session and the social justice dialogue activity as the reflect on their experiences. To minimize risk, participants will be reminded that their participation is completely voluntary at the beginning of each data collection.

Will being in this research benefit me?

We cannot promise any benefits to you or others from your taking part in this research. However, possible benefits to you include the opportunity to reflect on their racial consciousness and development while also providing their narratives on social change.

What happens to the information collected for this research?
Your private information will be shared with individuals and organizations (if applicable) that conduct or watch over this research, including: The research sponsor

- The Institutional Review Board (IRB) that reviewed this research
- Temple University

We may publish the results of this research. However, we will keep your name and other identifying information confidential.

We protect your information from disclosure to others to the extent required by law. We cannot promise complete secrecy.

Data or specimens collected in this research might be de-identified and used for future research or distributed to another investigator for future research without your consent.

Who can answer my questions about this research?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think this research has hurt you or made you sick, talk to the research team at the phone number listed above on the first page.

This research is being overseen by an Institutional Review Board (“IRB”). An IRB is a group of people who perform independent review of research studies. You may talk to them at (215) 707-3390 or irb@temple.edu if:

- You have questions, concerns, or complaints that are not being answered by the research team.
- You are not getting answers from the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone else about the research.
- You have questions about your rights as a research subject.

Can I be removed from this research without my approval?

The person in charge of this research can remove you from this research without your approval. Possible reasons for removal include:

- It is in your best interest
- You are unable to keep your scheduled appointments

We will tell you about any new information that may affect your health, welfare, or choice to stay in this research.

What happens if I agree to be in this research, but I change my mind later?
If you decide to leave this research, contact the research team so that the investigator can remove your data from consideration in the study. Additionally, your decision to participate or to withdraw will be confidential and will not be shared with other participates.
APPENDIX I

ELIGIBILITY QUESTIONNAIRE

[I am at least 18 years of age]

- Yes
- No

[I identify racially as being either Black (e.g., Afro American, Afro Latine, Afro Asian, Afro Caribbean) or White]

- Yes
- No

[I am familiar and have a general understanding of racial justice movements (e.g., Black Lives Matter)]

- Yes
- No

[I am enrolled as an undergraduate student at Temple University]

- Yes
- No

[I feel comfortable engaging in conversations about racial justice, race, race consciousness or race as a construct?]

- Yes
- No
APPENDIX J

DEMOGRAPHICS QUESTIONNAIRE

[Name]- TEXT

[Date of birth]- TEXT

[Gender pronouns]- SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

• She/her
• They/them
• He/him
• Ze/hir
• Other
• Prefer not to respond

[Gender identity]

• Woman
• Man
• Transgender
• Gender non-binary
• Agender
• Prefer not to respond

[Racial background]-SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

• Black (e.g., Afro American, Afro Latine, Afro Caribbean, Afro Asian, etc.)
• White
• American India or Alaskan Native
• East Asian
• South Asian
• Southeast Asian
• Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian
• Indo-Caribbean

[Do you identify as being Hispanic, Latino/e, or Spanish origin?] -SELECT ONE

• Yes
• No

[Are you enrolled as a student at Temple University?] - SELECT ONE
• Yes
• No

[What is your major or area of focus?] - TEXT

[What is your classification at Temple University?]
• First year student/Freshman
• Second year/Sophomore
• Third year/ Junior
• Fourth Year +/Senior